

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE*

Sample Outline

Your Statement of Purpose should be clear, concise, and complete in sentence structure. However, try to be as informative as possible throughout the Statement. Before you submit your Statement of Purpose to the department of your chosen field of interest and/or to the graduate school, you should ask your advisor or a faculty member to read and comment on your written work. Prior to this, drafts should be shared with your friends and family.

Opening Paragraph. Here, you want to introduce yourself and give your general reasons for pursuing graduate study. Because the selection committee members will read many applications, make your statement relevant by stating your particular talents and individuality.

Qualifications. In this section, the aim is to build a foundation for your forthcoming work. You should discuss your experiences in the following:

1. Explain why you chose this field. What motivated you.
2. Your expertise and accomplishments in your major field, including any research you've performed. You should mention the project and the name of the professor who you worked for or under the direction of.
3. Your undergraduate studies in general and how they relate to what you intend to do in graduate school.
4. Your specific experiences that demonstrate your motivation and inspiration for continued study.
5. Other relevant experiences (i.e., jobs, community activities, leadership in school organization, awards, honors, etc.). Be sure to include names of person/s, names of organizations, and other important details.
6. Explain (briefly) any discrepancies on your transcript which would include having a lower GPA in a particular semester or year. No details are necessary.
7. Mention specific faculty you are interested in working with.

Background. Here, you want to tell the school about yourself. Also, describe your family and your community (or a community in which you once lived). You could include whether your family, a family member in particular, or someone in your community influenced your chosen field of interest. Also, you want to give examples of personal attributes or qualities that you know will help you successfully complete graduate study. For instance, describe your determination to achieve your goals, your initiative and ability to develop ideas, and your capacity to work through problems independently.

Closing Paragraph. Finally, leave the reader with a strong sense that you are qualified and will be successful in graduate or professional school.

The statement should only be 1 to 1-1/2 pages long so you need to be concise.

*Thanks to the University of California System for their contribution in writing this sample Statement of Purpose.