

Letter/Statement of Intent Guidelines

Please note that these are only general guidelines for writing a letter of intent for graduate admissions. We strongly encourage you to consult your program of interest's website or handbook for program-specific guidelines and requirements.

What Is A Letter Of Intent?

- An intellectual autobiography that conveys the continuum of experiences and events in your academic life which have led you to desire an academic graduate education
 - What you did academically, why and with whom
 - What you want to do academically, where, why, and with whom

Before You Write, Do Your Homework!

- Obtain the school's catalogue
- Confirm that the degree program offered matches your career goals
- Review the courses offered by the school that pertain to your goals
- Get the names of specific faculty members with whom you want to study
- Ask your current teachers if they know any of the faculty members in the proposed graduate program

Style of Letter

- Direct and straightforward manner
- No contrivances or gimmicks
- Place central points early
- Use active, not passive voice
- Do not use words such as "rather," "quite," "somewhat," "fairly," "pretty much"
- Be accurate and precise
- Be positive
 - Emphasize strengths
 - Explain anomalies
- Edit ruthlessly
- Cut out redundancy
- Be organized, orderly, specific and concise
- Use examples where needed
- Keep the statement to one or two typed pages
- Use transitions that tie each paragraph to the next
- Do not assume that the committee will understand everything. Explain course titles and research projects where necessary

How Is It Organized?

OPENING PARAGRAPH

- Begin in a direct manner
- State the program to which you are making application
- Whether you are seeking a master's or doctorate
- In a general sense, why you are applying to the program

SUBSEQUENT PARAGRAPHS

- Your qualifications and background
 - Describe
 - Experiences that have served as a foundation for your future graduate work
 - How your interest in the field developed
 - How you planned academically for your goal
 - Discuss
 - Undergraduate studies in general
 - Your major, and any specialization within the major, in specific terms
- Weave into the letter
 - Any academic achievements or accomplishments
 - Specific learning experiences that demonstrate your motivation and inspiration for continued study and/or research, such as:
 - Independent study courses or research with professors
 - Teaching assistantships
 - Undergraduate research conference presentations
 - Published work
 - Laboratory experiences
 - Research internships
 - Seminar courses
 - Honors thesis
 - Relevant education abroad
 - Independent writing
 - Academic honors and/or very closely related work experience

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: PLANNED ACADEMIC FUTURE

- Explain specifically why you wish to attend their particular program
- Explain specifically how the department's graduate curriculum matches your short and long term academic and career goals
- Show evidence of your investigation of their program, its faculty and their research, and their departmental resources and facilities
- Indicate how your academic and intellectual interests form a match with the research interests of one or more faculty in the program or department

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

- Summarize briefly why you believe you possess the experience and skills to be admitted to their program
- Tell the graduate committee that you are qualified and motivated and that you will be successful in graduate study and research

Many thanks to Professor Lynn Beene from the UNM English Department for allowing us to use these guidelines!