

# Personal Statement / Letter of Intent

## Before you Start:

We encourage you to check each program you are applying to for their specific guidelines and suggestions.

Check carefully for instructions, such as questions or prompts to address. Some instructions can be vague whereas others have prompts and some may have specific questions to address.

Note the page, word or character limit. When in doubt ask the program's admissions.

Take some time to reflect on your reasons for applying and give yourself ample time for the writing process. Plan for a few drafts before your final version

Ensure you have thoroughly researched the program and school, including courses, instructors, their areas of research, program values, and any information on their website such as descriptions and tips.

## Starting to Write:

Brainstorm and bullet point your thoughts. Try a [mind map](#) if you are more visual.

The first paragraph can be the hardest to write – you can leave this for now and come back to it once you know more of your content.

Try not to write to the limit when you are drafting your statement. This can lead to trying to fit it all in a limited space without allowing you to give depth of thought and insights. It's ok to be over the limit when you are in the process of writing out your thoughts and once you have drafted a version or two, you can go back and refine your writing, trimming as needed to adjust to the length.

If you are feeling stuck, book a Writing Assistant appointment on OSCARplus under Academic Skills.

## Finalizing your Statement:

Read through for flow, ensure you have addressed the content, and have provided insightful reflections or details about research interests for letters of intent.

**Tip:** Add the prompt to your document to guide you, and colour code the prompts. Read your document and highlight in the corresponding colour to ensure you have addressed each prompt. This will visually give you a sense of how much emphasis you gave to each and can adjust as needed.

Have someone read it over – a friend, family member, professor or book an appointment with the SSC careers team on [OSCARplus@mcmaster.ca](mailto:OSCARplus@mcmaster.ca).



## Good Applications are:

**Well Researched** - Have a strong understanding of the program of yourself to demonstrate your motivation and preparation

**Insightful** - Description is not enough. Ask yourself questions to get to a level of insight expected.

**Credible** - Your statements are backed up with evidence. Provide examples, evidence, stories.

**Specific** - Include enough details so the readers get a picture of the situation or experience.

**Precise** - Well articulated and efficient with words. Review and fine tune your writing

**Well Written** - It doesn't have to be fancy, just well written, and should be well organized, easy to follow and engaging to read.

**Personal** - Give the committee a glimpse into the person you are and/or your interests motivations

## Note: Using Generative AI – Tips and Cautions

- Writing can be tricky, but avoid the temptation to use AI tools to write your statement for you. AI writing can sound generic and unauthentic – two elements that don't make for a good application!

## Resources:

### Additional Guides and Tips

<https://cloudfront.ualberta.ca/-/media/careercentre/documents/publications/personal-statement-guidebook.pdf>

<http://grad.unm.edu/resources/gs-forms/letter-of-intent.html>

[www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/statement-interest](http://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/statement-interest)

<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/admission-letters/>

### Writing Supports

<https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/tools/tips/#fyiWRITING>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/>

Application support is available through the Student Success Centre – appointments available through [OSCARplus.mcmaster.ca](https://oscarplus.mcmaster.ca)

