

mock statement of purpose guideline

Graduate School Personal Statement

Goal(s):

- This is *not* supposed to be about you holistically, like an undergraduate personal statement. The major purposes are to demonstrate that you **1. understand how to form and pursue a research question/professional goal**, and **2. there is a good fit between your question/goal and the department**. When drafting, don't sweat grammar/syntax/spelling, and know that it may be difficult to share personal things about yourself, especially when others may have told you you were "complaining." I'm here for you to remind you of your great wisdom and preparation!

Mock outline:

- Open with a story/scene that draws the reader in and helps to understand who you are and how your present research interest emerged (e.g. I talked about coming out as trans(*) and advocating for gender-expansive housing options as a student activist in undergrad). Close this paragraph by explicitly stating an *observation/insight/question* that you took from this experience that's guided/guides you. This shouldn't be a random story but, rather, a parable/fable that explains something crucial about you and your work.
- Knowing more about who you are and what guides you, take the reader into your past work that's prepared you for this grad school experience (e.g. (para)professional experiences, schooling, service opportunities, etc.). These experiences should reflect on your *observation/highlight/question*. Close this paragraph with a lingering question emerging from your work (e.g. "Through this work, I learned ____, but I began to notice ____ which led me to wonder ____."). This should be something that keeps you up at night that's currently *missing from this field*.
- Now demonstrate your informed effort to address this puzzle with existing literature (e.g. peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal books, professional conferences, etc.). You want to briefly highlight what other scholars have said and done in attempts to get at your conundrum (Google Scholar and faculty in the field are your friends!) and show you're knowledgeable about the topic. Close the paragraph by making clear what's still missing from current research (this being where you'll aim to direct your talents in the program of your choice).
- Now explain how this program will help you answer these remaining questions: What resources does the department have that appeal to you? What faculty (name 2-3) do you want to work with and how does this relate to you? How is this program a good fit (not the city, field, or school but rather this *specific* department)? In terms of knowledge/expertise, what do you think you can bring to the department/peer students? This section needs to be *sensible* (i.e. realistic, clear demonstration of fit between your questions and the department's resources).
- Now that the reader knows you, your questions, your approaches to those questions, and how you'll approach them in the department, close by sharing what you want to do with the graduate degree. Briefly discuss your goals for after the program and end with something profound that ties back to your opening story. The end!