Statement of Purpose template (master's and PhD)

Plan and draft your statement of purpose one paragraph at a time. Replace each bracketed part with your own words, then delete the guidance boxes before you submit. A complete annotated example follows the PhD section.

Before you start

- **The programme's instructions come first.** Its questions, word limit and format replace every target in this template.
- **Write one version per programme.** The paragraph on why you chose the programme cannot be reused.
- **Read the programme's rules on AI tools** and follow them. Some programmes ask you to confirm that the text is your own.
- **Our advice:** if no limit is given, aim for 800-1,000 words for a master's and 1,000-1,500 words for a PhD, about two pages.

Heading block

[Full name] · [Applicant ID, if the portal gives one]

[Degree and programme name] · [University] · [Intake, e.g. September 2027]

Statement of Purpose

Master's: seven paragraphs

1. Opening · What it does: Names the field and the specific reason you want it · Words: 100-150
2. Academic background · What it does: Shows the courses, grades and projects that prepared you · Words: 150-200
3. Experience · What it does: Gives work, internships or projects, with results · Words: 150-200
4. Why this programme · What it does: Names what only this programme offers you · Words: 150-200
5. Career goals · What it does: States the role, sector and place you aim for · Words: 100-150
6. Why you · What it does: Shows what you bring to the class · Words: 80-120
7. Closing · What it does: Ties the plan together in two or three sentences · Words: 50-80

1. Opening: why this field (100-150 words)

Guidance: Start with a specific moment, problem or question, not with your childhood or a quotation.

Guidance: Say what you want to study, and why now, in the first two sentences.

In [year], while [what you were doing], I found that [the problem you noticed]. That is why I am applying to [programme] to study [specific area].

2. Academic background (150-200 words)

Guidance: Pick two or three courses, projects or results that show you are ready. Give your grade with its scale.

Guidance: If your record has a low grade or a gap, explain it here in one factual sentence, only if it helps the committee read your record.

My degree in [field] at [university] gave me [skill]. In [course or project], I [what you did], and the result was [number or outcome]. I graduated with [GPA and its scale, e.g. 3.6/4.0].

3. Experience and projects (150-200 words)

Guidance: Choose experience that links to the programme. For each item: your role, what you did, the result.

Guidance: A number makes a result real: hours saved, people trained, accuracy gained.

As [role] at [organisation], I [task]. This [result, with a number]. The work showed me that I need [knowledge the programme gives] to [goal].

4. Why this programme and university (150-200 words)

Guidance: Name at least two things only this programme offers: a course, a track, a lab, a professor's work, a placement.

Guidance: Link each one to your goal. Praise of the university's ranking adds nothing.

The [course or track] will teach me [skill], which I need for [goal]. [Professor's name]'s work on [topic] connects with my project on [topic]. The [placement, lab or partner] gives me [what it gives].

5. Career goals (100-150 words)

Guidance: State a role, a sector and a place: for example, a policy role in the energy sector in your country.

Guidance: If a scholarship or employer expects you to return home, say how the degree serves that plan.

After graduating, I plan to work as [role] in [sector] in [country]. Within five years, I aim to [goal]. This degree gives me [what you need for it].

6. Why you (80-120 words)

Guidance: Give one or two qualities the class gains from you, each with evidence: a language, a view from your region, a skill, a group you lead.

I will bring [quality] to the class, as I showed when I [evidence].

7. Closing (50-80 words)

Guidance: Restate your goal and the programme's part in it, in two or three sentences. Add no new facts, and keep any thanks to one short line.

I want to [goal], and [programme] is the step that gets me there because [reason].

PhD: six paragraphs

1. Research question and motivation · What it does: States the question and why it matters · Words: 150-200
2. Background and prior research · What it does: Shows the research you have already done · Words: 200-300
3. Proposed direction and fit · What it does: Links your question to a supervisor, lab or group · Words: 250-350
4. Methods and feasibility · What it does: Shows the project can be done in the time · Words: 150-250
5. Career plan · What it does: States what you will do after the PhD · Words: 100-150
6. Closing · What it does: Restates the question, your readiness and the fit · Words: 50-100

1. Research question and motivation (150-200 words)

Guidance: State one question you want to answer and why it matters, in plain words. One question, not a list of interests.

I want to find out [question]. This matters because [reason, with evidence]. I came to this question through [project or experience].

2. Background and prior research (200-300 words)

Guidance: Describe your thesis, papers or research projects: the question, your method, your result, and what each one taught you about doing research.

In my [thesis or project] on [topic], I used [method] to test [question]. I found [result]. This taught me [research skill], and it left open [the gap your PhD will address].

3. Proposed direction and fit (250-350 words)

Guidance: Name the supervisor or group and the specific work of theirs you would build on. If the programme asks you to contact a supervisor first, say that you have.

I propose to study [direction]. [Supervisor's name]'s work on [topic], especially [paper or project], gives me [method, data or theory]. I contacted [name] on [date], and we discussed [topic].

4. Methods and feasibility (150-250 words)

Guidance: Show that the project fits the programme length: the methods you already know, the data or access you have, and what you still need to learn.

I will use [method] on [data or sample]. I already know [skill]. I will need to learn [skill], which the programme teaches in [course or training].

5. Career plan (100-150 words)

Guidance: Say what you will do after the PhD: an academic post, industry research, policy work. Link it to a country or sector if a sponsor expects you to return.

After the PhD, I plan to [role] at [type of institution] in [country], where [why your research is needed].

6. Closing (50-100 words)

Guidance: Two or three sentences: the question, your readiness, the fit. Add nothing new.

My question is [question]. My work on [topic] has prepared me for it, and [group or supervisor] is the right place to answer it.

Guidance: Some PhD programmes also ask for a separate research proposal. If yours does, keep the statement about you and your fit, and put the detailed plan in the proposal.

A complete example, with notes (fictional)

Read it to see the structure. Do not copy it. Lina Karim, the programme and every detail are invented, and admissions committees can spot a borrowed statement. The example is shortened to about

400 words to show the structure; your programme's word limit comes first, and the targets above suggest 800 to 1,000 words for a master's.

Statement of Purpose, Lina Karim, MSc [Programme] at [University]

1. Opening *(Note: starts with a specific problem, not a life story.)*

In my third year, our city's wastewater plant asked my class to test why one of its filters clogged every summer. We observed a link between summer heat and algae growth, and I realised I wanted to design treatment systems that work in a hot climate, not only study them. That is why I am applying to [Programme].

2. Academic background *(Note: two courses and one result, with the grade scale.)*

My degree in civil engineering at Westmere University gave me a base in fluid mechanics and water chemistry. In my final-year project I compared two sand-filter designs on site data and showed that the cheaper design met the discharge limit on 11 of 12 test days. I graduated with a GPA of 3.6 of 4.0.

3. Experience *(Note: role, action, result, and the gap the degree fills.)*

As a research assistant in the university's environmental lab, I ran weekly water-quality tests for a 10-month study and kept the sampling log for about 400 samples. The work showed me that I need stronger process-modelling skills to move from testing to design.

4. Why this programme *(Note: two things only this programme offers, named from its own pages.)*

[Programme]'s course in [named course] teaches the process modelling I lack, and [Professor]'s work on [topic] connects with my

project on filter performance. The [placement or lab] would let me test designs on a working plant.

5. Career goal *(Note: a role, a sector and a place.)*

After graduating, I plan to work as a process engineer for a water utility in my country, where summer temperatures make treatment harder each year. Within five years I aim to lead the redesign of one treatment line.

6. Why me *(Note: one quality, with evidence.)*

I plan before I test: I wrote the sampling protocol that the next student cohort in our lab now uses.

7. Closing *(Note: restates the goal; adds nothing new.)*

I want to design water treatment that holds up in heat, and [Programme] is the step that gets me there.

Self-check: 10 points before you submit

- [ ] It answers every question the programme asked, in the order it asked them.
- [ ] It is within the word or page limit.
- [ ] The first two sentences name your field and a specific reason.
- [ ] Each claim about you has evidence: a number, a project, a result or a named role.
- [ ] The programme paragraph names at least two things only this programme offers.
- [ ] Your career goal names a role, a sector and a place.

- [ ] Any gap, low grade or change of field is explained in one or two factual sentences.
- [ ] Every programme, university and professor name is correct, with nothing left from another application.
- [ ] You followed the programme's rules on AI tools and copied no sentence from a sample.
- [ ] Someone read it aloud to you, and you rewrote every sentence where they stumbled.

Before and after: three sentences

- I have always been passionate about computer science, ever since I was a child. · After: In my third year, I built a tool that cut our lab's data-cleaning time from two days to three hours. That project is why I want to study machine learning. · Why it works: A specific event replaces a claim every applicant makes.
- Your prestigious university is one of the best in the world. · After: [Professor's name]'s work on [topic] and the [course name] module match the water-policy research I want to do. · Why it works: It names what you will use instead of praising the university.
- I am a hard-working, motivated and dedicated student. · After: I worked 20 hours a week as a teaching assistant and kept a GPA of 3.7/4.0. · Why it works: Evidence shows the quality; three adjectives do not.

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