

How to write SoP/ Personal Statement/Motivation Letter/Letter of Intent/Research Statement

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How to write SoP/ Personal Statements /Motivation Letters /Letter of Intent /Research Statements

How should I write a motivation letter? What a motivation letter should and should not include? How long should a motivation letter be? These are some of the questions I am being asked by many prospective students. Believe me, there is no perfect or absolute template for a motivation letter. How could there be any? After all it is your personal motive(s) that is driving you to apply for a particular program. Anyways, in this post I am going to share how I wrote my motivation letter and it worked for me. To cut to the chase, here are the things that you should consider including in your motivation letter.

The first paragraph should clearly state the program you are applying for and what are your long term career goals. Later in the letter, you are going to write some objectives which will help you achieve these goals. The better you connect your goals with the program, more chances of getting picked up for the award of scholarship. In other words, after reading the letter, the reader should be able to make his/her mind that money spent on you will not go wasted and somehow will help you achieve your goals (a better career/ expanded knowledge base etc.).

Here is an example of an opening paragraph of a motivation letter.

I am applying for the XXXXXX Program at your institution. I see this program as an opportunity for me to adopt XXXXXX as a career. My long term professional goal is to establish a consultancy firm delivering solutions for the decision makers. I have a firm belief that this program will enable me to achieve my goals.

OK! Now it's time to introduce yourself to the reader. Please bear in mind that a motivation letter is not a CV, so don't go into details about your academics. If you are applying for a master's degree then only mentioning about your undergraduate degree would be sufficient. Similarly, in case of a doctoral position, I would prefer mentioning your master degree only. The purpose of this paragraph is to convince the reader that you have the prerequisite background for the advertised position. Here you can brag about your academic achievements for example, your distinction in the class, your outstanding CGPA, or your above average percentages. Should you explain anything about your previous degree or make any clarification regarding the scoring scheme, this is the right place to do so. Here is how I would write such a paragraph for myself.

I earned an MS (Computer Science) Degree from XXXX in 2009. The Master's degree required me to complete 26 credit hours of taught courses and 6 credit hours of thesis work. I had the honor to be the top most student of my class. I earned a CGPA of 3.93/4.0 with a weighted percentage of 91. The Master's degree provided me with an insight into evolving technologies such as semantic web, knowledge representation using ontologies and agile development methodology. I also realized that the diverse nature of modern day's data and its exponentially growing size require new technologies other than traditional database management systems. That is why I choose to work on a technique to transform existing relational database systems into ontology and then synchronizing changes between source schema and output ontology, as my thesis project.

If you notice carefully, the last sentence of the above paragraph was about my master thesis. Yes you got it right! It is time to talk about your project now. A good way is to introduce it in the above paragraph and then explain it a little in the coming one. After introducing your project in the preceding paragraph, explain it a bit in the succeeding one. This especially is a good idea if your graduate or master project is/was somehow related to the program you are applying for. It helps to convince the reader that you have an added advantage. In this paragraph you can also talk about the good outcomes of your project –the awards or publications etc. This paragraph actually gives you an opportunity to brag about your achievements. So, example time!

While working on my thesis project with Dr. XXX, I developed XXXX- a plugin for widely used ontology editor XXX. I also published my work in an international journal and conference. I presented my papers in local conferences during my study and one of my papers won the best student paper award in 8th XXX held at XXXX in 2008.

(Notice that to keep the paragraph short and more readable, I did not provide the journal and conference details. The reader, if interested, can always find this information from my CV) After this, depending upon your individual profile, you may consider including a brief paragraph about your employment record. Bear in mind that the purpose of this paragraph is not to provide your employment history rather to reflect your diverse portfolio. Succinctly mention the skills you acquired during your professional career, for example, mention about team spirit, leadership skills etc. If you are a student coming straight out of the school, you can come up with your involvement in co-curricular activities, volunteer work and achievements in sports etc. Here goes my insight.

After completing my MS degree, I had an opportunity to work as a XXX scientist in a well reputed organization. This job provided me an opportunity to travel to the USA and Australia. These international tours widened my knowledge base and provided me an opportunity to work with renowned experts in this field. These international trainings also enabled me to work in a multicultural environment. During this time, I have been involved in establishing a XXXX facility from scratch. This process has allowed me to develop managerial traits and leadership skills.

The last paragraph should clearly outline your motives to join a particular program. It is the most important paragraph of your motivation letter and you should try to answer the question “why do you want to join this program?” Try to come up with as many reasons as possible. Your curious nature, an innate researcher inside you, your passion for the field, better career prospects, travelling and seeing the world, learning new languages, experiencing cultural diversity are to name a few of the motives. Still can't find a motive to write about, consider what Noel Coward once said, “If you must have motivation, think of

your paycheck on Friday.” Yes! It is perfectly fine to say that this master degree will help you score a good job. But again, the contents of this paragraph are very personal and depend on the individual. Keep in mind that these reasons must support your long term career goals you mentioned in the first paragraph, remembered!

There are four key reasons I want to be part of this doctoral program. First, a joint degree from two universities and travelling for study will widen my exposure and extend my knowledge base. Second, given the fact that exponential growth in size of data and its diverse nature, XXX has become a need of the time and pursuing a career in this domain offers bright career prospects in the future. Third, I have already studied semantics and their translation into models in my MS; therefore, this surely would help me a lot in pursuing this degree. And lastly, I wish to be a part of the team which is striving for innovation and development of a novel technology.

In the end, thank the reader and offer if he/she needs any further information, you are willing to provide it. Once you had the first draft of the letter, run a spelling and grammar check on it. Do not trust solely on the spelling and grammar check from your word processing software. Revise the draft, try to make sentences simpler, more readable and more convincing. Once satisfied with your efforts, I would recommend asking a friend (preferably a native speaker or language expert) for a feedback on your letter. ·

Please do not copy paste motivation letter from the internet, or just don't copy a friend's motivation letter. A letter worked for someone doesn't guarantee an acceptance for you as well. Invest some time in writing a letter for yourself. If you are not motivated enough to write a letter of your own then how could you be motivated to be part of a program. A point to ponder!! ·

Do not send a generic motivation letter to every program you apply. Do some research about the scholarship opportunity, university, project and program and then customize your letter accordingly. ·

Almost every program receives hundreds of applications and evaluators don't have time to read everything written in a letter; therefore, follow the KISS principle (Keep It Simple and Short). A motivation letter is not your CV so refrain from listing all the schools you have been attending and the courses you have taken (that's what transcripts are for).

I would recommend that the letter should not exceed a single A4 size page. So, that is how I wrote my motivation letter, and it worked for me, Good luck with everything and enjoy writing about your motivations.

Other guiding documents by Members in Scholarship network

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Please open the file section of the group, and scroll down as much as you can, Use “Ctrl+F” and type “sop”. You will find these files with the name

Sample SOP_s.zip

Personal Statement

Please open the file section of the group, and scroll down as much as you can, Use “Ctrl+F” and type “personal”. You will find these files with the name

Preparing Personal statements and CV_Ayaz.docx

10 Tips for Writing a Personal Statement for University Applications _ Top Universities.htm

Personal Statements - Motivation Letters - Letter of Intent - Research Statements.rar

Statement of Purpose

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WritingStatementofPurpose.pdf

Cover letter

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Motivation letter

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Motivation letter.docx

Sample Motivation letter.docx

MotivationLetter_Nabeel_modified.pdf

Motivation Letter.doc

[Differences between Personal Statement, Statement of Purpose, Motivation letter, Cover letter. Basic flow, layout of these letters and how to write a strong letter.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAsgkFEQ4dQ)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAsgkFEQ4dQ>

My motivation is tomorrow, just one day at a time, right? -- Rafael Nadal

Regards,

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