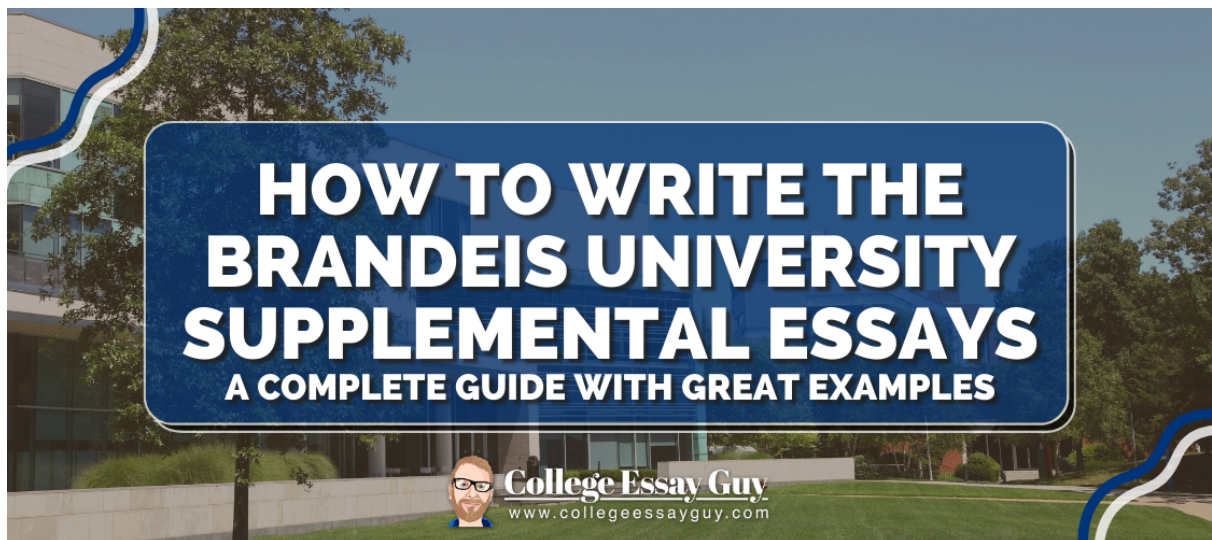


How to Write the Brandeis University Supplemental Essays: Examples + Guide 2022/2023



Brandeis University is a research institution with a long history of producing graduates focused on civil discourse, diversity, and intellectual integrity. It's looking for that same curiosity and spirit in the supplemental essay (two if you're an international student) that Brandeis asks you to write.

Want to get a better sense of what Brandeis is looking for? You'll find an extensive, by-the-numbers look at its offerings, from enrollment and tuition statistics to student life and financial aid information, on its [Common Data Set](#). For deep insights into how this private research university envisions student success (and how it wants to grow and evolve), read [its strategic priorities](#). Reading through this will give you a strong idea of Brandeis' values.

WHAT ARE THE BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS?

PROMPT #1

The Brandeis community is a diverse group of critical thinkers defined by their ability to dive deeper into their learning by questioning, analyzing, evaluating, creating, critiquing and seeking other perspectives. Share an example of how you have used your own critical thinking skills on a specific subject, project, idea or interest. (250 words)

PROMPT #2

For International Students Only: What excites you the most about being an international student at Brandeis University? (250 words max)

HOW TO WRITE EACH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

HOW TO WRITE BRANDEIS SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

The Brandeis community is a diverse group of critical thinkers defined by their ability to dive deeper into their learning by questioning, analyzing, evaluating, creating, critiquing and seeking other perspectives. Share an example of how you have used your own critical thinking skills on a specific subject, project, idea or interest. (250 words)

There are likely ample reasons you're attracted to Brandeis, and one is likely its core mission of wanting to change the world—and it achieves that goal by empowering students to do great things. This prompt gives you the opportunity to show just how you'll be one of these leaders for change in the Brandeis community.

But in answering, don't be misled by the prompt. Brandeis wants more than just critical *thinkers*. They also want students who will take action on what they believe in, both on their own and through collaboration. So in your response, tell them: What topic has caused you to dive down a rabbit hole of information and explore what you know ... and what you might not?

This is a new prompt this year, which means we don't have a Brandeis-specific example to show you. But this essay, written for a similar prompt, would work here too. We'll share below what to consider in crafting your own response.

Example:

Some of my more interesting perspectives were formed in the backseat of my mom's maroon Ford Explorer. My mother had a bounty of knowledge, and during our daily drives-turned-interrogation-sessions, I would unload the many questions inside my head, from how toll roads worked to why we said the Pledge in school.

My drive to understand the inner mechanics of the world has outlived both the car and my time in the backseat. As I've grown older, I found a new way to satisfy my quest for learning new things: arguing.

I have spent many hours with friends arguing over myriad topics, from what colors we should wear for homecoming to competing over who loves AOC more. With each conversation, I walked away with new insights. During a debate over the Green New Deal, for example, I learned the effects of government action on the employment rate.

Thinking back on my times spent exploring new concepts, I remember not just the thrill of learning how airplanes fly, or how the Sanders tax plan could help level income inequality, but laughing over my friend's jokes about government mind control, listening to my mother's cross-country-running stories, and forming close bonds with those around me, punctuated by fond memories of cars and coffee shops.

Those connections have inspired me to pursue a career in social science, specifically: politics. I hope to use my love of debate to develop a more nuanced understanding of global problems, like systemic racism and wealth inequality. (247 words)

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Tips + Analysis

Go deep, not wide. This student clearly shows he's interested in exploring a variety of new perspectives—from toll roads to AOC. But if he were responding to this prompt, we'd warn he's covering too many. Remember the words "an example" and "specific" in the prompt. Instead of briefly touching on a laundry list of interests, home in on *one* topic and dive deep

into how you've questioned, explored, and maybe even changed perspectives in that area.

Offer examples. Even after you find that one topic, it's not enough to share generalities, like the student above does with his 40,000-foot overview using phrases like "I learned" and "I remember." Don't just *tell* what you've learned. *Show* it through stories that are unique to you. Think back to a conversation at the coffee shop, the family reunion gone awry, the high school debate that took an unexpected turn. Each instance could be a great opportunity to use dialogue and the five senses to tell a story that clearly demonstrates how and when you thought differently on a topic.

Connect your major. If you know what you want to be or study, this is the perfect opportunity to show why that field is so fascinating and important to you. With this student's zeal for arguing (or, shall we call it, spirited debate) over public policy, it comes as no surprise that he's interested in pursuing politics. But if you don't have that crystal ball to predict your future and just aren't sure of your direction, that's fine too! Just substitute "major" or "career" with any area of interest that makes you lose all track of time.

Show understanding and growth. Critical thinking also involves admitting when you're wrong—or at least getting that alternate perspectives have merit and are worthy of consideration. This student starts to do that by acknowledging he walked away from discussions with "new insights," but he could've elaborated on what those new insights were and how it changed his perspective moving forward. College is a place to expand your mind and expose yourself to new ideas, so show you're ready and willing to do that at Brandeis.

HOW TO WRITE BRANDEIS SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #2

For International Students Only:

What excites you the most about being an international student at Brandeis University?
(250 words max)

This option shows how important it is for Brandeis to hear directly from international applicants on how they envision their background, culture, and experiences will benefit its campus.

Before you get started writing, consider the two main parts of the prompt:

Being an international student. We mentioned earlier that Brandeis is committed to emboldening students to "change the world." But it also gets that first you need to *understand* the world. What better way for Brandeis to

foster that understanding than through building a diverse student body from all four corners of the earth? Then the pressing questions become: How might the international perspective you bring be more impactful on campus than that of another international student? What will you bring to campus—not just as a student, but as a student with the heritage only you have?

“Enrich the campus community,” which is perhaps *the* standout phrase here. There’s more than a bit of a **“Why us?”** angle to this part of the prompt, in which Brandeis wants to know how you and your unique background, culture, experiences, and goals will contribute to the campus community. This is your chance to be specific about which communities you’ll join, which discussions you’ll contribute to in the classroom, and which perspectives you’ll bring to your involvement on campus.

This is a great example of an essay that, while written for another prompt (hello, **“super essay”!**), could be tweaked to fit this prompt (we say how in the Tips + Analysis below).

Example:

After growing up on diplomacy and a love of politics, I am eager for a college experience that would allow me to decipher the complexities of foreign relation negotiations, while specializing in Middle Eastern politics. Boston University’s International Relations program is exactly the intellectual challenge I’m looking for.

The Foreign Policy and Security Studies track, with a regional focus on Africa and the Middle East, would give me access to an exciting combination of classes, like Public Diplomacy, International Negotiations, and Turko-Persia in the Twentieth Century. I’m especially interested in the Sea and International Relations, exploring the significant role the oceans play, from a source of dispute to a facilitator of international trade. In U.S. in the Middle East, I’d learn more about why America has made Middle East policy a focal point since WW2 and how it’s committed to stabilizing the region.

Outside the classroom, I can’t wait to join the Rotaract Club, which would allow me to build on my devotion to community service by tutoring underserved students and organizing entertainment activities for orphans. I can also use my experience as Head of Finance for the Sahim project to assist with fundraising and managing the club’s finances.

BU not only promises to offer me the International Relations expertise that would help me in my career in foreign affairs, but its interdisciplinary approach, its vibrant

campus life, and community service opportunities would help me achieve my goal of becoming a compassionate and well-rounded diplomat. (246 words)

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Tips + Analysis

Highlight your international perspective. This student is eager to pursue foreign relations, and while we see why he could be a great fit for this academic path, it's not clear how his culture would enrich Brandeis. To add a personal touch, this student might've considered sharing how he's watched his small home country manage delicate negotiations with superpowers. And that gives him unique insights that would enhance classroom discussions on, say, strategies for effectively making trade deals.

Connect with Brandeis' offerings. Take some time to really dig through Brandeis' website to understand how your international perspective would benefit the community you're engaging with. While this student shares how he'll contribute to the Rotoract Club, it's not clear how his cultural background impacts that involvement—and that's what Brandeis is hoping to learn. You have more than 200 student clubs and organizations available to you on campus—what can't you wait to get involved with? For example, perhaps your understanding of the immigration complexities in your country would inspire you to join the Brandeis Student Association for The Right to Immigration Institute and assist with immigration cases. Consider the differences, strengths, and cultural background you're bringing to campus, and share how you plan to make a splash once you arrive.

Share a life experience. In this essay, you're not trying to set yourself apart from *all* the other applicants. Instead, you're trying to stand out from other *international* applicants. So what have you experienced that no one else could've? How has that experience impacted you and prepared you for an international academic experience? This student is an international student, so if he were writing to this prompt, he might've considered expanding on his experience of "growing up on democracy and a love of politics" and sharing specific examples of what that experience meant to him and how it's shaped him.