

Writing the Statement of Purpose and Developing Your CV

For students interested in Social,
Behavioral, and Economic Sciences
(SBE)

Parts of the Graduate Application

- Paper or Electronic Application
 - Personal information
 - Test Scores
 - Academic Information
- Transcripts
- Letters of Recommendation
- **Statement of Purpose**
- Personal Statement (Supplemental)
- **Curriculum Vitae (CV)**
- FASFA
- Fellowship Application
- Supplemental Forms
 - Department or School Specific

Personal (History) Statement

- PERSONal
- It is about you
- Who you are as a PERSON
- What you have accomplished and overcome PERSONALLY
- Cultural background
- Other RELEVANT information about you

Statement of Purpose: Overview

- This is a statement of PURPOSE.
- What is your purpose?
- This is your sales pitch.
- This is your interview.
- This is your academic picture in the dictionary.
- This is NOT a personal statement

SoP: Things to Consider

- Your audience: the admissions committee
- Showcase your intellectual promise
- You must stand out from the crowd
- Don't tell it, show it.
- Use positive language and avoid passive voice.
- Flow: connect the paragraphs and order your points
- Stay focused on your research: past, present, and future.
- Explain in positive terms any blemishes in your academic record.
- Find someone who will read your SoP with a critical lens.

Writing the SoP

- There are Four parts:
 - Introduction
 - Academic Biography
 - Graduate Research Project
 - Why UCLA, UCSB, UCB?

Part I: Introduction

- Write two sentences or so on how (Sociology, History, Anthropology, or Political Science, etc.) first grabbed you, why it is interesting to you.
- Since I am a Martian, I want to study anthropology focusing on Martians.
- Stay away from saying the predictable or cliché.
- Use colorful language and strong vocabulary.
- Let your personality come through in your writing.
- Briefly introduce what it is you want to pursue in graduate school.

Part II: Academic Biography

- What classes have you taken to prepare yourself for graduate school?
- What classes/mentors were particularly influential in shaping your academic pursuit?
- What tutorials, research experience, or field work have you done in the field of your interest?
- What insights and methods did you gain?
- If there was anything unusual in your academic journey--transfers, hiatus, jobs, etc.--explain in positive terms how that came about and what you gained from it.

Part III: Graduate Research Project

- Speak about a specific project you want to pursue in graduate school.
- In some ways everything you've written thus far should lead up to the point you make here.
- Even if you are not sure, it is important that you choose something concrete to speak of.
- The committee needs to see how you think through a specific research project.
- Intellectual clarity and promise--that's what the committee is looking for.

Why UCLA?

- Why did you choose to apply to UCLA?
- With whom would you work and why?
- What do you like about the department?
- What is its distinguishing mark? (Don't waste your time with empty accolades in this section.)
- Ultimately, why would it make a good match for you and your future career goals?

What is a Resume?

- One page for recent graduates
- Proofread! No typographical, spelling, or grammatical errors! (Don't rely on spell-check!)
- Tailor content for each specific job/application
- List information in descending order of importance
- Sell yourself—be selective about what you include, and organize information logically.

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Overview:

Every academic thing you have done and sometimes more.

Building Your CV

- **Length is not an issue.** Most recent grads start with two to four pages.
- **CV formats vary**, but avoid the ones that put dates first. Contemporary CVs arrange entries by relevance.

Example: Under Experience, the job title is most important and comes first, followed by the employer, the location and *then* the date.

- **You can be creative.** Craft headings and subheadings that best suit your entries.
- There are **no complete sentences** in a CV. Start descriptive phrases with action verbs.
- Entries are **chronologically reversed**. That includes education, experience, and publications.
- **Accuracy is crucial**, *but* never volunteer information that may work against you.
- **Name-dropping is a good thing.** You can cite names under Education and Experience. Also, CVs require names and contact information for your referees, not “References available upon request.”
- **If your entry is unclear** (foreign degree, obscure award, etc.) include a brief explanation.

Building Your CV (continued)

- **Personal data** should include *contact information only*. Do not include personal information such as marital status, date of birth, health or religious affiliation.
- A **career objective** is *not* used in academic positions, only for industry or government.
- **Under Education**, include only institutions where you have received degrees (Bachelors and beyond).
- **GPA** is usually not included in the CV, however, academic honors are. If you graduate with honors, mention it under Education or in the Honors and Awards section.
- **Under Experience**, it is common to have multiple subheadings. They should be arranged in the same priority as the job description. You can expand a category by using Teaching and Related Experience. Then follow with other kinds of experience (e.g., research, industry).
- Conversely, if something is **out of the ordinary** but will work in your best interest, include it even if it seems unorthodox.

Good Luck!

Created by Mark Kamimura-Jiménez, July 2006