

Writing Research and Teaching Statements

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The Purpose of Research Statements

A research statement gives the reader a concise overview of the motivations, methods, and plans for your proposed research

Research statements are written for:

- **Faculty job applications** – Most tenure-track faculty jobs require a research statement
- **Graduate fellowship applications** – Grad fellowship applications, e.g., NSF, DOE, NDSEG, require research statements
- **Postdoctoral fellowship applications** – Some postdoctoral fellowships (e.g., NRC) require a research statement
- **Proposals** – Proposal submissions are often preceded by “white papers” summarizing the proposal research plan

Importance of Research Statements

Research statements advertise your research plan:

This statement is generally one of the first things a hiring committee will read to decide whether to consider you further

The quality of a research statement can determine if your proposal or fellowship application is reviewed

Program managers often first review a 1- or 2-page “white paper” summary of your proposed research to decide whether to consider the proposal for review

Writing a research statement can help you sharpen your research plan

A research statement forces you to identify the key motivations for your research, your special skills and methods for accomplishing the research, the timeline of your proposed research, and the potential outcomes of your research

General Content of a Research Statement

A research statement should answer these questions:

1. What research do you propose to do? (What?)
2. Why is it important to do this research? (Why?)
3. Why should you conduct this research? (Who and Why you?)
4. How do you plan to accomplish your research goals? (How?)
5. How will you know if the research is successful? (How?)
6. How feasible is the research plan? (How?)
7. What will be the benefits to your disciplinary community, or society at large, if the research is successful? (Why?)

In short, the research statement contains the entire plan of your research project in a shortened format!

The Research Statement Can Discuss Specific Issues

Some specific issues your statement should address:

1. Your funding history and potential
2. Your specific requirements for equipment, space, and other resources
3. Potential collaborations inside and outside the institution
4. How your research contributes to your field and society
5. How you'll distinguish yourself from competitors in the field

Things to Avoid in Research Statements

1. Overly ambitious proposals, over hyping the work
2. Lack of specificity as to what you plan to do
3. Lack of a clear direction, writing isn't clear and concise
4. Absence of a big-picture focus, no compelling "story"
5. Lack of clarity on how you will couple into and interact with the rest of the department or group
6. Overly technical and jargon-filled statement that is inaccessible to non-experts among the audience/committee
7. Lack of consideration of potential funding opportunities
8. Typographical and grammatical errors
9. Absence of a back up plan

Other issues to consider:

1. Your research statement should be 1-2 pages, 3 at most
2. Use informative section headings and subheadings to break up statement into clearly defined topics
3. Use an easily readable font and font size
4. Make margins a reasonable size
5. Use diagrams, figures, and tables generously to convey complex information
6. Should be written in the first person
7. Write as clearly and concisely as possible (e.g., avoid long sentences, long paragraphs, etc.)
8. Your research plan should cover the next 3 - 5 years

Good Resources for Research Statements

Science Guide to Writing a Research Statement:

http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2002_07_26/nodoi.4611149009600202486

Cornell University Guide to Writing Research Statements:

<https://gradschool.cornell.edu/career-and-professional-development/pathways-to-success/prepare-for-your-career/take-action/research-statement/>

UCSF Writing Research and Teaching Statement Samples:

<https://career.ucsf.edu/phds/academic-careers/academic-samples#Samples>

Making the Right Moves:

<https://www.hhmi.org/sites/default/files/Educational%20Materials/Lab%20Management/Making%20the%20Right%20Moves/moves2.pdf>

Tomorrow's Professor: preparing for Academic Careers in Science and

Engineering: <https://www.amazon.com/Tomorrows-Professor-Preparing-Academic-Engineering/dp/0780311361>

The Purpose of Teaching Statements

A teaching statement is intended to convey your personal experiences in and philosophy about teaching. This statement will allow the committee to evaluate your teaching experience, objectives, and methods.

Teaching statements are generally:

- 1-3 pages long
- Written in the first-person

General Content of a Teaching Statement

A teaching statement should answer these questions:

1. Why do you want to teach?
2. What are your objectives as a teacher?
3. How do you plan to achieve your objectives?
4. How will you evaluate your teaching effectiveness?
5. What methods do you use to motivate learning?

The Teaching Statement Can Discuss Specific Issues

Some specific issues your statement should address:

1. Your teaching background
2. Specific teaching strategies you've employed to help students learn
3. Specific examples of how you've helped students learn in a classroom environment

Things to Avoid in Teaching Statements

Your teaching statement can be weakened by:

1. Vague teaching goals
2. Lack of specificity as to what you plan to do
3. Lack of a good examples of past teaching experiences
4. Overly technical and jargon-filled statement
5. Inadequate awareness of the teaching philosophy and opportunities in the department, and how you can couple into those opportunities
6. Typographical and grammatical errors

Good Resources for Teaching Statements

Iowa State University Guide to Writing a Teaching Statement:

<https://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/document-your-teaching/writing-a-teaching-philosophy-statement/>

Princeton University Guide to Writing a Teaching Statement:

<https://mcgraw.princeton.edu/node/1491>

Vanderbilt University Guide to Writing a Teaching Statement:

https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-statements/#what_is

UCSF Writing Research and Teaching Statement Samples:

<https://career.ucsf.edu/phds/academic-careers/academic-samples#Samples>