

Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose is a short essay introducing the applicant and his or her interests, goals, and reasons for pursuing graduate study in history. Applicants may wish to share a draft of their statement with the individuals writing their letters of recommendation. While every statement, like every prospective student, will be different, applicants should devote special attention to the following items:

- **Academic/Professional Background:** Please give your academic credentials, with degrees, dates, and relevant employment experience. You do not need to list every job you have had, only those that bear directly on your desire to enter graduate school.
- **Motivations and Aims:** Explain what motivates you to do graduate work in history and what your goals are, both within the graduate program and after the completion of your degree.
- **Existing Expertise and Accomplishments in History:** Discuss any areas of expertise you may already have in your proposed area of interest. If you have experience doing research, please describe the project and your work on it. If you have any special talents or skills, such as a foreign language, please describe them.
- **Proposed Course of Study:** Please identify planned major field and minor fields of study.
Likely Faculty Advisor(s): Please specify faculty members with whom you are interested in working on your major fields. Applicants are invited to contact possible faculty advisors prior to application to discuss their interests and planned study.
- **Possible Thesis/Dissertation Topic(s):** While the department does not expect all applicants to have identified precise thesis or dissertation topics, you may wish to include some discussion of possible topics or areas of inquiry.
- **Other Relevant Experiences or Personal Qualities:** Discuss any experiences or personal attributes that may illuminate your commitment to the study of history and to the successful completion of the graduate program.

Format: Your statement of purpose should be limited to no more than 750 words (between 2 and 3 pages).

For further information on writing the statement of purpose, applicants may wish to consult the following website:

[University of California at Berkley Career Center](#)

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are a very important part of the application. The purpose of the letter is to evaluate the applicant's potential for success as a graduate student; thus, the best letter writers are faculty members with whom the applicant has studied. Mature or returning students may choose seek letters from employers, ministers, community leaders, or other such persons who are in a position to assess the applicant's capacities and skills. Applicants may wish to share their statement of purpose with their recommenders. As there are no forms for the letter of recommendation, letters should be on letterhead. Applicants should ask recommenders to address applicable portions of the following questions in their letters, giving concrete examples wherever possible.

NOTE: Please submit letters of recommendation via the [on-line application](#) process

- Background: How long have you known the applicant and in what capacity?
- Preparation for Graduate-Level Study in History: What is the applicant's background and preparation in historical studies? Does he or she have any experience in historical research? Does she or he have any specialized skills or studies, such as a foreign language, that might be an asset to his or her pursuit of advanced study in History? What are the applicant's interests in advanced study in history? Has the applicant's academic record been affected by special circumstances such as work, social or academic background?
- Critical Thinking Skills: What kind of a learner is the applicant? What is your assessment of the applicant's analytic skills? Does the applicant know how to interpret both primary and secondary source material and to use them in a historical argument? Does the applicant show evidence of creativity?
- Communication Skills: Is the applicant an effective writer? Is the applicant's written work clear, well-organized and forceful? Does the applicant's written work show an ability to organize his or her ideas, shape them into arguments, and support those arguments with evidence? Is the applicant articulate in classroom discussion or public speaking?
- Potential for Success in Graduate Study: What is your prediction of the applicant's probable performance in graduate school? To what extent is the applicant persistent, efficient, motivated, and committed to graduate study? Is the applicant able to work independently? How does this applicant rate with other candidates you have evaluated for graduate study? Would you choose the applicant for graduate study under your guidance?

Adapted from <http://career.berkeley.edu/Letter/LetterGuidelines.stm>