

UChicagoGRAD: Research Statements

Among the many documents being requested in application to research and teaching positions is the research statement, alternatively referred to as a statement of research or scholarly interests.

What, exactly, is this statement and what should it do? How is it different from the description of research interests that is included in the cover letter? How does one write such a statement? In this guide, we at UChicagoGRAD share some initial useful tips to get you started.

When is it Typically Requested?

- For tenure track positions at research universities, almost always
- For tenure track positions at SLACs, sometimes; more likely to ask for a “Research and Teaching Statement.”
- For postdoctoral fellowships and appointments, almost always; but as a “Research Proposal” (see reverse for the difference).



Formatting

- 1” margins all around
- 11-12pt font
- Typically, 1-3 pages single spaced; if no length requirement is noted, UChicagoGRAD recommends 2 pages.
- No letterhead—just your name and “Research Statement,” centered at top of page.
- Include your name and page number in the header or footer on subsequent pages, and perhaps your email/ phone number.

How Can it Strengthen My Application?

A well-written research statement should, most of all, convey a sense of focus in your research and scholarship and demonstrate your independence. In addition, it can:

- Establish your subject matter and methodological expertise.
- Position your scholarship within your field, distinguishing it from that of those with whom it is in conversation.
- Project your future productivity and the potential impact of the body of work you will produce.
- Inspire considerations of your contribution to a specific department or institution.

Career Development

To Schedule an Appointment and consult web-based resources go to gradcareers.uchicago.edu

Teaching

The Chicago Center for Teaching offers a range of resources. Check them out at teaching.uchicago.edu.

What Are the Components of a Research Statement?

- **Introduction:** Summarize the thrust of your work and its potential impact.
- **Current research** (dissertation): state core argument, your approach, methodologies; this can include a concise overview of a first book-length project and related publications, leading into a discussion of what comes next.
- **Clear, strong, language** in your descriptions (i.e., articulate what your works does, not what it *tries* to do, *hopes* to do, or *intends* to do).
- **Funding and support** you have received from past and future work.
- **Other work:** completed and future projects; “narrative arc,” “character development.” Present the through-line that brings logical trajectory to your work, even as you move through *distinct projects*.
- **Significance** of the body of work you have completed and are embarking upon.

Articulating your research in your statement versus your cover letter:

- The research statement expands on what is included in the cover letter.
- Documents should read side-by-side with consistency and lucidity.
- Discussion of the dissertation—or “book-length project” for some disciplines—is consistent with cover letter description but should not recycle full sentences.
- The ratio of space devoted to future versus past work is greater in the research statement than the cover letter.

The research statement versus the research proposal:

- A research proposal typically is requested in application to postdoctoral positions.
- The proposal should lay out a set of research goals over the course of the postdoctoral appointment, suggesting how your time will be used and what outcomes (publications) you expect to produce.
- These goals and plans should be specific and detailed, and should be consistent with the goals of the larger program of which they are a part.
- In a research proposal, much more emphasis should be placed on future work rather than past accomplishments.

CHECKLIST:

- Complements other materials.
- Demonstrates developmental arc through past, present, and future.
- Is specific and detailed, including progress toward plans for publication.