Writing the Research Statement

Helping you navigate your graduate and postdoctoral career
research
[plural]
1 serious study discover new facts
research into the student
Agenda:

- When might I need one?
- What does it do?
- How should it be written?
- How is it different from other application documents?
When Might I Need One?

- 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 in context of a “Research Proposal”
The Ask

“description of current research”

“scholarly agenda”

“a description of their research interests and the relation of those interests to teaching excellence”
Questions?
What Does It Do?
CONVEY A SENSE OF FOCUS IN YOUR WORK
Independence

Demonstrate your independence as a scholar
Establish Your Expertise

HELLO
my name is
EXPERT

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Position Your Work
Future Productivity, Impact
Questions?
How Is It Written?

HOW DO YOU MAKE ONE OF THESE THINGS, ANYWAY?
Form & Format

- First-person, but with your research as the main character
- 1, 2, or 3 pages, single spaced
- Name, “Research Statement,” centered at top
- Last name, page #s in footer
- 1” margins all around
- 11-12pt font (~Times New Roman)
Structure & Content

- Introduction: Summarize your work and its potential impact
- Current research (dissertation): state core argument, your approach, methodologies
- Other work: completed and future projects; “narrative arc,” “character development”
- Overall significance
Complementarity

One of these things is not like the other....
Versus the Cover Letter

- Expands on what’s in letter, with more detail about methods and approach
- Greater focus on the future than the letter, balanced with current work
- Make an effort not to recycle full sentences
- Cite your publications
Versus Research Proposal

“3-5 page research proposal”

“a research statement of the project to be undertaken during the fellowship period”

“...outline completed research (incl. dissertation); work in progress; research to be conducted as Mellon Fellow; explanation of how relates to theme...; description of professional goals & plans for publication...”

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Checklist

- Complements other materials
- Demonstrates developmental arc through past, present, and future
- Is specific and detailed, including progress toward plans for publication
- Inspires considerations of your contribution to the department and institution
Thank you!

Questions?

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For appointments: Gradcareers.uchicago.edu

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