

Guidelines for a Statement of Purpose (SOP)/Personal Statement

Statement of Purpose (SOP) is a written document that a student submits to the selected University as a part of his application. Since the applicant does not get to interact with the university directly till the time he/she is granted admission, a SOP represents the applicant and elaborates the reasons of applying to a particular university for a specific course. Your academic grades will obviously catch the admissions tutor's eye but the personal statement will convince them of your motivation, potential and ability for further studies.

The SOP is your chance to talk directly to the admissions committee; to make you stand out from among a multitude of similarly qualified candidates. In short, SOP is the entire personality of the candidate, expressed in a few words. It is used as a yardstick to assess the competence of a forthcoming student in terms of independence and critical thinking, analytical skills, interests, desire and aspirations.

These are usually as long as an A4 size page. While writing an SOP, the following key points should be included –

- About yourself – education, points that speak of your potential as student including your interest in the field you have chosen and how you wish to implement it in your future career.
- What academic skills do you have? You can mention your current subjects, interests in particular subjects, your current and expected performance.
- Reasons and intent to select a country.
- The reasons for your interest in the particular subject of study or course?
- Reasons and intention behind selecting a particular university.
- What personal skills do you have? What qualities do you possess that you think would give you an extra edge above other candidates – this includes inbuilt qualities as well as skill-sets which are acquired over a period of time through past experiences, internships, etc.
- Mention all your past accomplishments i.e. – educational, extra-curricular, social contributions, sports, etc.
- What is your career aim?
- What do you intend to do after the completion of the course?



Important Tips

- The introduction should be short
 - Keep your language simple. Avoid using flowery language, proverbs or quotations.
 - Avoid all fire-related metaphors (sparked, ignited, etc.)
 - A sense of quiet confidence is the key. No modesty and no arrogance.
 - Try to make it flow. The first and last sentences of each paragraph can help link it up.
 - Extra-curriculars aren't the main thing. Write about your subject.
 - Always say exactly what you mean.
 - Be original. The key lies in the word “personal”. Avoid clichéd statements and quotations and, where possible, don't shower your statement with superlatives, which can sound artificial.
 - Don't be tempted to copy and paste your statement. There are plenty of books and websites offering advice and even templates for your statement but while these might help you structure your thoughts, you run the risk of plagiarism which is a serious offence. Most of the universities have mechanisms to detect copied matter.
 - Do not repeat. Be specific. Most of the times you will be asked to limit your SOP or personal statement to 500 words or 4000 characters.
 - Do not exaggerate or lie. Your counselor at 'Univariety' will guide you regarding which strengths to highlight.
 - Finally, be careful of spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes.
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