

Common Academic Application Documents

Resource for Doctoral Students

Below you can find information about the most common application documents for academic positions. Depending on the role you are applying for, you might be required to submit all or some of the following documents. Keep in mind that academic application packages are often lengthy.

Academic CV

A Curriculum Vitae or CV is a comprehensive document illustrating your educational background, teaching and research achievements, professional experience, and other academic and non-academic accomplishments. The structure of your CV and the information you present should be tailored based on your experience and the type of role and institution you are after. You can find recommended CV templates on the [CEU Career Knowledge Hub](#).

Letter of Motivation / Cover Letter // Statement of Purpose / Personal Statement

Both the letter of motivation and the statement of purpose can be thought of as an introduction or guide to the rest of the documents in the application package. The aim is to provide a compelling narrative about why you are a good candidate for the position and for the organization and explain how your doctorate and additional experiences have successfully prepared you for the next step.

However, there is a subtle difference between a letter of motivation and a statement of purpose.

The letter of motivation (also known as personal statement) is usually a page long and focuses on what drives you personally in your research, with an emphasis on the source of your commitment to your research project and enthusiasm to overcome challenges and achieve results. The emphasis is on your relevant experiences (be they social, economic, cultural or of another sort) and the skills that you would build on in the specific institution / department / role.

The statement of purpose, on the other hand, is usually a document of up to two pages. It focuses more on what you are aiming for, with an emphasis on your academic career goals in the near future (2-5 years). It should include information that allows committee members to evaluate your interest and aptitude for the specific field of the post-doctorate, and/or the specific institution or program. Emphasize relevant skills and experiences, such as the ability to use specific research methods, teaching experience, academic service, and participation in projects. You should also include outcomes such as publications and awards.

Please note that you will not be asked to submit a letter of motivation AND a statement of purpose in the same application.

Sometimes, employers do not have a clear understanding of the differences and may even use the terms interchangeably. An approach is to create a document that blends both personal motivation and academic fit, with examples of achievements and skills that support both concepts.

Research Proposal / Project Proposal

If the application involves proposing your own research project to be completed during a specific timeframe, you will be asked to submit a research proposal (also known as a project proposal). This document is commonly required, for example, for post-doctoral positions. Your proposal should lay out a coherent and feasible plan including your research questions, arguments, methodology, deliverables, how you plan to disseminate your research findings, and timelines. The proposal must be tailored to the specific institution and position. When writing your proposal, assume that it will be reviewed by both specialists in your field and non-specialists.

Research Plan / Work Plan

Usually a page long, this document specifies the objectives you will meet and how you plan to meet them and is often included in the research proposal. While a project proposal aims at convincing the institution about the necessity of your research, a research plan describes the steps towards making it happen, usually in a graphic way: a table or chart presenting objectives, activities, responsibilities, often budget in case of application for fellowships. (As the research plan is a critical element in understanding the feasibility of your project, consider including it in the research proposal even if it is not requested explicitly in the call.)

Research Statement / Statement of Research Interest / Research Philosophy Statement

The research statement presents your “academic identity”, and therefore, is not necessarily tailored to the position or the organization. It is requested mostly in relation to applications for faculty positions, and it describes your past, present, and potential accomplishments as a researcher, touching upon points including: the methods you use, funding records and potential, resources, collaborations, results and how they contribute to your field. This is a “technical” document but bear in mind that it will likely be reviewed by a multidisciplinary audience, including selection committee members from outside your area of specialization.

In cases when both a letter of motivation and a research statement are requested in the same call, the statement usually expands on and complements the letter of motivation rather than simply repeating its contents in a different format.

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

This free-format, one- or two-page long document presents your teaching and learning values and goals, together with evidence of your teaching effectiveness. You should have in mind students' educational outcomes and would usually include a list of courses, information about your methods for teaching and assessing, previous teaching evaluations and, if the format allows it, samples of course syllabi or links to video recordings of classes you have taught.

Sample syllabus/syllabi

If requested as a standalone document or as a component of a "teaching portfolio" (and not included in the Teaching Philosophy), the sample syllabus is a one-, maximum two-page document that demonstrates your approach to teaching classes. Consider including the title, description of the course, learning objectives, expected level of audience, learning outcomes, grading, required reading, and a week-by-week breakdown of the course. If possible, design a syllabus that would not overlap with, but rather complement courses already taught at the institution you are applying to (requires thorough research of the curricula)

Statement of Diversity

Academic employers are increasingly inviting candidates to present evidence of their experience of engaging populations from underrepresented or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to explain their values related to diversity and to describe how they would contribute to the institution's efforts. The Statement of Diversity is an essay presenting learnings from your own life story or from your work with students who encounter challenges while pursuing their educational goals. It also includes your methods and ideas to support enhancement of diversity equity and inclusion on campus.

Representative work (published article, dissertation chapter, book chapter)

As academic positions usually include a significant amount of writing and, often, a requirement to publish, you are expected to demonstrate how you organize and express your thoughts by providing samples of your work. If not indicated otherwise, submit a piece on an issue that matches the position or program for which you are applying. The length is usually stated in the call, otherwise, as a general rule, it should not exceed four-five pages. It might be helpful to create a portfolio of writing samples, to select from and adapt when creating an application.

Job market paper (JMP) for Economics and certain business school fields

Since very few graduates in Economics or Business have publications as soon as they secure their degree, the JMP is requested by the hiring committees in case of junior academic positions. This consists of a piece of original research, often a chapter in the dissertation paper, not yet published but with potential to become a journal article

providing answers to well-defined questions in the field. The JMP demonstrates the candidate's skills, knowledge, and potential to become a good researcher.

List of Publications

Arguably the most important way for applicants to demonstrate academic achievements, the list of publications can be included in the CV or can be a separate document, depending on the requirements. It should include works you have had published or are about to publish, such as: books, academic articles, research papers, reviews in high-ranking journals, conferences papers. The list should be in reverse chronological order and should be written in a consistent citation style (this is often field specific). Do not include non-academic articles (like blogs, etc.) or your thesis if it has not been published yet (add it under the Education section instead, in your CV).

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are meant to complement the rest of the application information, revealing details about the impact of your work, the relationships you build with peers and supervisors, the value you bring to the field and to the group, and your potential as a good fit for the hiring institution / department. Letters of recommendation typically come from your supervisor, committee members from your dissertation defense, and/or people you collaborated with in your research projects. The most persuasive letters are tailored to a specific job and contain words of praise from a well-known professor or expert in your field with whom you have worked as a supervisee or assistant. Make sure you take time to nurture the relationship with faculty well before you ask them to write you a reference for an academic application. Before approaching them, think about what information they should emphasize and provide information that can help them in writing the letter. At the very least, you should plan, once they accept, to provide them with your Academic CV and some bullet points listing academic accomplishments you would like them to highlight and some information about the program itself and how you would be a good fit. Ideally, your recommendation letters should be written specifically for a particular application, but you may wish to have generic letters available, as well, for use on short notice.

List of Degree Certificates/Diploma/Transcripts

Be prepared to submit your transcripts and diplomas as part of your application package. The academic transcripts (also referred to as an academic record) offer the employing institution legitimate information about your academic history, including details of the credits and grading scales (often different from country to country).

Additional resources:

[CEU Center for Academic Writing: Writing a Statement of Purpose](#)

[CEU Center for Academic Writing: Research Proposals](#)

[The Professor Is In – collection of articles about Teaching and Research Statements](#)