



# Letter of Intent for Graduate Studies

## Overview

Applying for Graduate Studies is a big step to take in your academic career, and it is important to express your ideas and goals in an enticing, clear way so that you stand out as an exceptional candidate. Writing the “Letter of Intent” or “Statement of Purpose” is your chance to detail your background, objectives, and interests to the program(s) of your choice. These tips for success may help you develop a strong application:

**Follow the guidelines.** Tailor your application letter to the program specifically, and pay attention to the areas they expect you to cover (and the desired word/page count). Typically, letters will look for you to highlight relevant experiences with a clear focus on your goals for Graduate Studies and the future.

**Take time to research the program you are applying for.** Why is this program the right one for you? What faculty members are you interested in working with, and what courses attract you? Contacting members of the program and current students is a great way to learn more about the program so that you can express what makes you a great addition to this academic community.

**Be personal, honest, and captivating.** Provide specific examples of experiences that relate to your proposed work. What has challenged you? Don't stretch the truth but instead focus on your strengths and acknowledge the challenges that have helped you grow as a student and person.

**Connect your proposed research interests to your potential professional pursuits.** How will your research translate into valuable, applicable knowledge for your desired professional goals? If relevant, you might broaden this to mention the potential impacts for individuals and communities around you.

**Have someone look over your letter, and ask for feedback.** Prepare your letter well in advance of the application deadline so that you have time to show it to people you trust to give you good feedback and who are familiar with your work, like professors and teaching assistants. Their insight will be valuable for not only checking for minor errors but for helping you develop a strong idea and clearly emphasizing your suitability for the program.

## How We Can Help

Having someone look over your letter can make a difference between a good application and an exceptional one. In Writing Support, we can help you structure your letter to best focus on your goals and experiences, help you express yourself clearly, and indicate areas for improvement. The [Ryerson Career Centre](#) also has a great list of resources [www.ryerson.ca/career](http://www.ryerson.ca/career)

## General Structure

It is most important to pay attention to the guidelines and questions specific to the Letter of Intent you are required to write for each specific program. However, it may be useful to follow a general guideline to help you structure your letter:

To begin, indicate the program you are applying for. Briefly introduce yourself and the Undergraduate program you have completed. If you have been out of school and working, describe your background and past: talk about what you have learned or experienced that has led you to consider Graduate Studies. Move from the past to the present by describing what you are currently working on or interested in. The focus of your letter should be on what you want to research or learn in Grad school, instead of focusing on the past. In detail, describe your intended focus or proposed project. Describe what your proposed research will focus on, how you will study it, what you hope to learn, and what the contribution will be. These ideas should be detailed and specific. Your proposal may include a thesis or research design, or focus on the theories or concepts you will explore and apply to specific cases. Relate your proposed research to the program: Describe why this program is the best place to pursue your research or interests. Talk about the courses and faculty members you are interested in and where you think your Graduate Degree could take you in the future. To wrap up, briefly summarize and restate your goals and purpose. Connect your past experiences, your present interests, and future goals. Restate what the program and faculty has to offer you and how you will contribute to the academic community.

## Remember

While your Undergraduate studies may have been about learning from a wide variety of sources and developing your skills, Graduate Studies is about honing in on your key research interests and producing your own unique ideas. Be detailed about your intended areas of study or research focus, but don't feel like you need to be committed to its long-term. Often, when we enter Graduate Studies our ideas change and develop, thanks to the invigorating academic atmosphere, and many programs expect your ideas to change and grow. As long as you develop a strong idea you hope to pursue, don't feel like you will be restricted by it when you actually start the program.