

Advice on Submitting the Letter of Interest

Writing a compelling letter of interest for a graduate degree program requires careful thought and attention to detail.

Here are some tips to help you create an effective letter that showcases your passion, qualifications, and fit for the program:

Research the Program: Start by thoroughly researching the graduate degree program you're interested in. Understand its unique features, faculty expertise, research opportunities, and overall mission. This knowledge will help you tailor your letter to demonstrate a genuine interest in the program. Our School's vision, mission, and set of values can be found here: <https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/publicadmin/>

Also make sure you are applying to a program that the UVic School of Public Administration offers. Sometimes we receive what seems like a template letter of interest with someone applying to a program we do not offer.

Introduce Yourself: Begin your letter by introducing yourself and stating the degree program you're applying for. Mention how you learned about the program and why you're drawn to it.

Highlight Your Motivation: Clearly express your motivation for pursuing the specific graduate degree. Explain why you're passionate about the field and provide examples of experiences or events that ignited your interest. Use anecdotes to make your motivation more compelling.

Showcase Fit: Emphasize how the program aligns with your academic and career goals. Describe how the program's curriculum, faculty expertise, and resources will help you achieve your aspirations. Be specific about aspects of the program that particularly excite you.

Discuss Relevant Background: Describe your academic and professional background in relation to the program. Highlight relevant coursework, projects, research, internships, or work experiences that have prepared you for success in the graduate program.

Demonstrate Research: Mention any faculty members or research areas that align with your interests. Discuss specific projects or research you admire and explain how you'd like to contribute to or collaborate on similar initiatives. You may also wish to identify and include an exemplary document where you were the sole author.

Unique Contributions: Highlight what you bring to the program that makes you stand out. Whether it's a unique perspective, skills, or experiences, explain how your presence will enrich the academic community.

Address Weaknesses: If there are any potential weaknesses in your application, such as gaps in your academic history, low grades in specific courses, or career changes, address them briefly and positively. Focus on what you've learned from these experiences and how they've contributed to your growth.

Future Goals: Share your long-term aspirations and how the graduate degree will help you achieve them. Discuss potential research topics, career paths, and how the program will contribute to your personal and professional development.

Conclude Strongly: Summarize your enthusiasm for the program and reiterate your commitment to contributing positively to the academic community. Express gratitude for the opportunity to apply and the time the admissions committee is investing in reviewing your application.

Be Personal: Your letter substitutes for an interview. In effect, the readers have asked you to tell stories, mention details, expand on facts. Mention things you might not have put into the rest of the application—your ethnic background or political interests, even, if they're relevant to your academic interests. Don't be afraid to mention problems or weaknesses if you can show how you overcame them and what you learned from the experience. Use I rather than evasive phrases like "this writer" or "was experienced by me." A stylistic tip: to avoid monotony, start some sentences with a subordinate clause such as "While I scrubbed floors" or "Because of my difficulties"—then go on to I did or I learned

Be Coherent: You might want to write from an outline or a diagram of main points. Check the topic sentences of each paragraph in your finished piece to see if they make a logical sequence.

Be Interpretive: You need to make an impression concisely, so don't use your letter just to repeat the facts set out in other parts of the application. Provide explicit answers for the question that arises in the mind of any reader looking at a hundred or more similar documents: "So what?" Use nouns and adjectives that name qualities (outgoing, curiosity, confident) and verbs that show action (coordinated, investigated, tried). Find the exact right words to suit the evidence you are offering.

Proofread and Edit: Review your letter for grammar, spelling, and formatting errors. Ensure your writing is clear, concise, and professional. Consider having someone else proofread your letter as well.

Follow Application Guidelines: Adhere to any specific guidelines provided by the program, including word limits and submission instructions.

Submit on Time and Make Sure Application is Complete: Ensure you submit your letter of interest by the application deadline. Late submissions might not receive the same level of consideration. Check to make sure your referees have submitted a letter of reference and make sure any other application documents are submitted by the deadline.

Remember that your letter of interest is an opportunity to showcase your passion, qualifications, and fit for the graduate program. Tailoring your letter to the specific program and demonstrating a deep understanding of its offerings will significantly enhance your chances of being noticed by the admissions committee.

References and Resources:

IGEN Partner Organizations. Igenetwork. (2023). "Better Letters: Equitable Practices for Writing, Reading, and Soliciting Letters of Recommendation. <https://igenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Better%20Letters%20Equitable%20Practices.pdf>

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University of British Columbia. Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. "Statement of Interest." <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/statement-interest>

University of Waterloo. Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs. "Writing your personal statement."
<https://uwaterloo.ca/graduate-studies-postdoctoral-affairs/future-students/applying-graduate-school/writing-your-personal-statement>