

RESEARCH STATEMENT

Research statements vary quite a bit from one discipline to another. Your advisor and other faculty members in your department are important resources in this area. The length of a research statement varies across fields; typically, they will range from one to five pages. BEAM has a packet of examples of research statements from successful candidates in a range of fields.

Most research statements address four primary areas: the context and significance of your work, the educational and research foundation you bring to your work, your current research, and your future research plans. Some are organized chronologically, from past to future; others are organized by discrete projects. The research statement does not have the level of detail of a grant application.

This is a forward-looking document. Your research statement should use the story of your previous work to make an argument about your future plans. Your past experiences set the stage for your long-term research agenda.

When you are writing about your research plans for the future, you may describe both your short-term research goals as well as broader ideas for long-term goals. These descriptions might include plans for funding or for future collaborations. Ensure that your research plans are in line with what the institution to which you are applying can offer in terms of support (e.g., space, equipment, funds, student assistants) and that institution's mission and priorities.

Keep in mind that a hiring committee will almost certainly include faculty members

who are not specialists in your precise subfield. Help them quickly grasp what you study and why it matters.

Always take some time to step back and look at your research statement in the context of the other materials you are sending. You want these materials to work together to provide a rich and coherent understanding of who you are and how you are a fit for a particular institution, department, and position.

You can discuss your research statement with a career coach at BEAM or BioSci Careers. You can get feedback from a writing consultant at the Hume Center for Writing and Speaking or the School of Engineering's Technical Communication Program.

Focusing Your Research Statement: Questions to Consider

When writing research statements for postdoctoral and faculty job applications, it is important to pay close attention to your audience and the context of the "conversation" in which your statement is engaging with its readers. Research statements are more than a description of your research: in reading your statements, your readers will consider whether your research topic, your qualifications, and the significance of the work match the mission and interests of the institution and fulfill the expectations of the position. Consider these questions:

1. Why is there a need for your research? Why should readers care about your work?
2. What is your research about? How do you conduct your research?
3. How does your research support your continuing intellectual development as a scholar or researcher? What publications have you written and which are planned?
4. How will your research contribute new knowledge to the discipline or more broadly to the field?
5. Did you provide a clear "story" of your research or scholarly interest that connects the past and present to future research goals?
6. Are you minimizing the use of jargon? Review the language you are using in your statement so that it is understandable to non-specialist audiences.
7. Have you shaped the narrative in your research statement based on the priorities of the institution?

Adapted from the Stanford University Hume Center for Writing and Speaking's "Writing Research Statements for Graduate Student Fellowship and Grant Proposals."