



# ACADEMIC CAREERS: Research Statements

## Goals and purpose

Many postdoctoral and faculty job postings, require a research statement as part of the application materials. An effective research statement allows faculty to envision your research productivity and contributions over the next several years. Expectations for research statements vary across discipline, so it is important to consult with several faculty members in your field. Departments want to learn more about you:

- > Academic focus and interests
- > Dedication to research (demonstrated by recent and/or forthcoming publications)
- > Compatibility with departmental, school, and/or university research efforts
- > Potential to earn grant money
- > Ability to operate as a professional scholar, independent of your advisor
- > Writing ability

## Content

Research statements for current grad students and recent graduates usually discuss the dissertation and/or other major projects from graduate school. Postdocs will have more research projects to describe.

- > If you have done several projects, convey the connection among them
- > Place your work in a broader context or framework – the big picture
- > Discuss how you became interested in your topic and why it continues to interest you
- > Answer the “so what?” question. How does your research contribute to the field? Why does your research matter? Why is it important?
- > Briefly describe any significant recognition your research has received - publications, presentations, grants, awards, etc.
- > If you discuss projects that you have worked on with a team, be sure to articulate your contribution to the projects
- > Acknowledge the work of other scholars in your field, when appropriate

Beyond current and past projects, strong research statements also address future research plans with some degree of specificity. Depending on your field you might discuss 2-3 feasible research ideas that interest you. Additional content might include:

- > What are your short-term research goals (2-5 years)?
- > What are your longer term research goals (5+ years)?
- > Explain how your goals build on (but are not necessarily direct extensions of) your recent work
- > Describe your ideas about potential funding sources, collaborative partners, facilities, etc.
- > Consider detailing how you will involve students (undergraduate and/or graduate) in your research and how your research relates to your teaching
- > Indicate how your research goals align with departmental goals



## Style and format

Your research plan should be well-considered, realistic and practical. What is practical at a major research university may not be practical at a small liberal arts college. Include enough detail to show depth of knowledge without going overboard with minutiae. If you include data, make sure that it is clear, easy to read, and cited appropriately.

- > 1-3 pages (although longer statements are sometimes appropriate)
- > Single-spaced or 1.5 spaced
- > Concise paragraphs
- > Short bulleted lists may be appropriate for your field
- > Clear subject headings
- > Free from grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors

## Getting started

Contact your home department to determine the norms for research statements in your field. Brainstorm some ideas for content and a preliminary outline. Find sample research statements using a search engine or websites of professional organizations to assess different styles and to determine what works best. Consider customizing / tailoring your research statement for different job opportunities. What information is known about the potential university that might help you customize your materials?

When you have written a full draft, have at least one person proofread your research statement (peer, research team member, faculty member, career counselor, etc.).

## Writing samples

Some fields may request a sample of your scholarly writing in the job posting. Check with faculty members in your department about how many samples to send if an announcement doesn't specify length.

Examples of samples include: re-prints of published articles, copies of book chapters you've authored, re-prints of articles in press, and completed chapters of your dissertation.



## Sample research statements

### Science

- > <http://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/graduate-students/academic-career-preparation/research-statement> (Ecology & Zoology)
- > [http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/Research\\_PhD\\_Biostatistics2007.pdf](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/Research_PhD_Biostatistics2007.pdf) (Biostats)
- > <http://noble.gs.washington.edu/~wnoble/cv/research.pdf> (Genomics)
- > <http://web.physics.ucsb.edu/~reager/REagerResearchStatement.pdf> (Physics)

### Engineering, Math, Tech

- > [http://www.cs.cornell.edu/~ssuri/About\\_Me\\_files/SidSuriRS.pdf](http://www.cs.cornell.edu/~ssuri/About_Me_files/SidSuriRS.pdf) (Computer Science)
- > <http://math.stanford.edu/~nrodriguez/ResearchStatementV3PC.pdf> (Math)
- > <http://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/graduate-students/academic-career-preparation/research-statement> (Engineering)

### Humanities, Social Sciences, Art

- > [http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/Research\\_Linguisticsfaculty2010.pdf](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/Research_Linguisticsfaculty2010.pdf) (Linguistics)
- > <http://brucewhitehouse.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/whitehouse-research-statement-2007.pdf> (Anthropology)
- > [http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/Valles%20%20Research02.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Valles%20%20Research02.pdf) (Public Health)
- > [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/annika\\_m\\_mueller/files/research\\_statement\\_annika\\_mueller.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/annika_m_mueller/files/research_statement_annika_mueller.pdf) (Economics)
- > <http://artscool.cfa.cmu.edu/~johnson/nutshell/creative-research-statement.pdf> (Art)

## Additional Resources

- > University of California at Berkeley - <http://career.berkeley.edu/PhDs/PhDAcademic.stm>
- > University of Pennsylvania - <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/resources/>
- > The Chronicle of Higher Education - <http://chronicle.com>
- > Kelsky, K. (2015). *The professor is in: The essential guide to turning your PhD into a job*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- > Vick, J. M., Furlong, J. S., & Lurie, R. (2016). *The academic job search handbook* (5th ed). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.