






How to Write a Successful Statement of Intent

Generally speaking, a statement of intent is a document that describes your academic and personal history, your interest in a program or field that you are pursuing, and your future goals. It is an admissions committee's opportunity to learn about you, your experiences and what is motivating you to apply to their program. It should also provide information that will assure the admissions committee you will succeed and contribute positively to the campus community during your time there.




Areas to Focus On

When a committee of faculty members reviews Master of Planning applications to select our incoming class of students (and the future generation of planners), we are hoping to learn the following about you, stated as clearly as possible:

-  What is your academic background and how have your previous studies prepared you to exercise the type of thinking planning requires?
-  What makes a Master of Planning the right next step for your studies? How will it help you to pursue your future academic or career goals? What would a career in planning look like to you?
-  What is your personal and professional background, and how does it motivate you to pursue a career in planning? Keep in mind that the School of Planning's mission values the inclusion of diverse perspectives and aims to develop and promote planning practices that contribute to more inclusive places. We also aim to train future planning practitioners who will contribute to the creation of equitable and sustainable communities.
-  Why are you a good fit for Dalhousie University's Master of Planning program?
-  Why is Dalhousie University's Master of Planning program a good fit for you?

Some Tips

We review hundreds of applications every year, and we have seen many excellent statements of interest that helped us to envision how a prospective student might fit into our school. We have also seen many examples of what not to do. Please note the following tips:

-  **Be sure to mention experiences outside of your studies or work if they are important aspects of why you are applying.** Academic and professional experiences are of interest, but we also value other forms of involvement with communities that are organizing for spaces that align with our School's mission. For example, do you have any volunteer experience? Have you been engaged in community activism? Do these experiences motivate you to be a planner?
-  **Tell us if you have had a hardship or extenuating circumstance that has compromised a part of your application.** This does not apply to every applicant, but if hardships or circumstances out of your control have, for example, resulted in a period of significantly lowered GPA or a prolonged period of absence from your undergraduate program, please explain. This will help us to better understand your ability to participate in our program today and give us an idea of resources you may need if you were to join our community. Don't leave any gaps in your study or work history unexplained. Tell us how you have overcome these circumstances and are ready to take on the challenge of studying at a graduate level study.
-  **Explain how the skills learned in the Master of Planning program are necessary to help you carry out your career goals.** Planners can pursue a wide variety of careers with the skills learned in the Master of Planning program. Graduates of the Master of Planning program work in many different places and sectors; not all are municipal planners. Some work in non-profit organizations, as well as private planning and urban design firms. Others may start their own consulting agency, or work in other planning related governmental organizations, such as public health or social services. Tell us concretely how your interest may align with the career path you envision, and how your learning experience in the Master of Planning program will get you there.

- ❖ **Identify faculty members that you would like to work with and areas of interest that you would like to focus on.** As we consider your application, we want to ensure that your planning interests are a good fit for our program so that you will be successful. You should review the profiles of faculty members on our website and the work of research centres affiliated with the School of Planning (like DalTrac and Planning for Equity, Accessibility and Community Health [PEACH]) so that you can accurately reference which topics you may be interested in studying and which faculty members may be able to support these interests.
- ❖ **Do some research about the program and where we are located.** Some statements of intent we read tend to be overly generic, making it difficult for us to understand why the applicant wants to study at Dalhousie University's School of Planning. Do your research and explore information about the program so that you can make a clear connection between your interests and the School of Planning. Read about what kinds of local research the faculty members are engaged in and connect your interests to the contexts of Halifax and Nova Scotia, which is where many of your research projects will be based.
- ❖ **Read up about planning.** We do not expect that applicants will have a thorough knowledge of all that planning encompasses. However, your application should indicate to us that you have an understanding of the field and the types of activities and responsibilities it includes. Note that planning is distinct from allied fields, such as engineering and architecture.
- ❖ **Check and re-check for errors.** An error-free statement of intent shows us not only your enthusiasm to study with us, but the quality of your statement also indicates a few other skills, such as meticulousness, organization skills, and clear communication skills. A sloppy statement of interest can even make you lose the chance of admission. Read and re-read not just your statement of interest but also the whole application package to put your best foot forward.