

How to express interest in working with a SRES professor

SRES professors are always looking for strong trainees to join our research teams, so you should not feel nervous about contacting a professor. What you should do, however, is take some time to write a good letter and attach the details we will need to assess it. We treat our trainees as junior colleagues, and co-author with them often, but we also choose them very carefully.

Here are some tips to make sure your email does not get overlooked:

- Don't start with "hey", which is too familiar, or a generic greeting like "Dear professor" that would aid lazy batch emailers. Dr. Surname is always safe.
- Attach a c.v. and a set of transcripts; these do not have to be 'official', but enough for the professor to assess your background and GPA.
- Mention the kind of methods that you are attracted to, in broad strokes: we all have our strengths and weaknesses, and can probably help you find a better fit if we don't feel qualified to supervise what you want to use. We want you to find a good fit as much as you do.
- Be yourself. If a connection is eventually made, a relationship based on trust will make everything go easier.
- Make it clear that you have read some of the professor's work (beyond the titles) and use that knowledge to indicate where overlaps in interests might lie. It could be in the methods, or substance, or something more surprising, but making that link to the professor's scholarship is a great cue that you've done your homework.
- If you want to go the extra mile, you could look at the end of one of the professor's recent papers where they would usually indicate what kind of work needs to happen next, and position yourself as the right person to do that work. That is not to say that professors are only interested in work that follows directly from their past research; all SRES professors are interdisciplinary and open to new ideas.
- Finally, if you are emailing more than one professor in SRES, it is a good idea to be transparent about this. We receive lots of emails every day from students who email indiscriminately all professors in a department or faculty. We frankly tend to ignore those emails when a quick shout between offices helps us discover this approach. Say something like "I see alignment with X and Y so have emailed you both to enquire about opportunities". Those two people might even discuss your candidacy and make a plan, so it helps you in the long run.

The most important thing is to make it clear that the email you are writing is carefully considered and customized.

We look forward to hearing from you.