

MPP Application Overview and Personal Statement Workshop

UCLA Master of Public Policy Program

UCLA Luskin Public Policy

Application Requirements

- Resume/CV
- Unofficial transcripts
- Statement of purpose (800-1000 words)
- Personal history statement (up to 500 words)
- Three letters of recommendation
  - At least 1 should be academic
- English proficiency scores
  - IELTS or TOEFFL
  - Required for International students
- GRE scores
  - Optional for domestic applicants
  - Required for international applicants

Quantitative Preparation

PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM SPECIFIC APPLICATION

Instructions for applicants:

Please review each of the below academic categories and compare them to the courses you have taken at the university/collegiate level, or at the high school Advanced Placement level. Tally the total number of courses that you have taken for each category. For a class to count for a particular category, the title of the course should contain one of the listed subcategories. If you feel you took a class that's very similar to the subcategories provided, please include it.

Advanced Mathematics-
Subcategories: Calculus, Linear Algebra, Differential Equations, Analysis, AP Calculus

Statistics-
Subcategories: Statistics, Probability, AP Statistics, Causal Inference, Machine Learning

Economics-
Subcategories: Economics, Econometrics, Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Game Theory, AP Economics

Computer Science-
Subcategories: Computer Science, Programming, Data Science, Machine Learning, AP Computer Science

Research Methods-
Subcategories: Research Methods

Quantitative Preparation (Contd.)



Details of Quantitative Preparation Courses

For each course you counted in the section above, provide the details below for that course.

Course Category 1

Course Number 1

Course Title 1

Institution Name 1

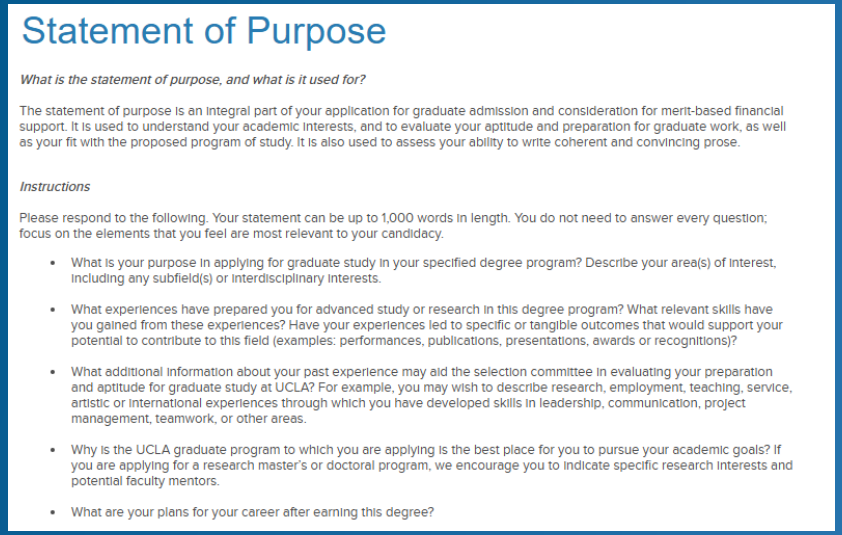
Term and Year Completed 1

Grade Earned 1

AP Exam Score 1

Course Units 1

The Statement of Purpose



Statement of Purpose

What is the statement of purpose, and what is it used for?

The statement of purpose is an integral part of your application for graduate admission and consideration for merit-based financial support. It is used to understand your academic interests, and to evaluate your aptitude and preparation for graduate work, as well as your fit with the proposed program of study. It is also used to assess your ability to write coherent and convincing prose.

Instructions

Please respond to the following. Your statement can be up to 1,000 words in length. You do not need to answer every question; focus on the elements that you feel are most relevant to your candidacy.

- What is your purpose in applying for graduate study in your specified degree program? Describe your area(s) of interest, including any subfield(s) or interdisciplinary interests.
- What experiences have prepared you for advanced study or research in this degree program? What relevant skills have you gained from these experiences? Have your experiences led to specific or tangible outcomes that would support your potential to contribute to this field (examples: performances, publications, presentations, awards or recognitions)?
- What additional information about your past experience may aid the selection committee in evaluating your preparation and aptitude for graduate study at UCLA? For example, you may wish to describe research, employment, teaching, service, artistic or international experiences through which you have developed skills in leadership, communication, project management, teamwork, or other areas.
- Why is the UCLA graduate program to which you are applying is the best place for you to pursue your academic goals? If you are applying for a research master's or doctoral program, we encourage you to indicate specific research interests and potential faculty mentors.
- What are your plans for your career after earning this degree?

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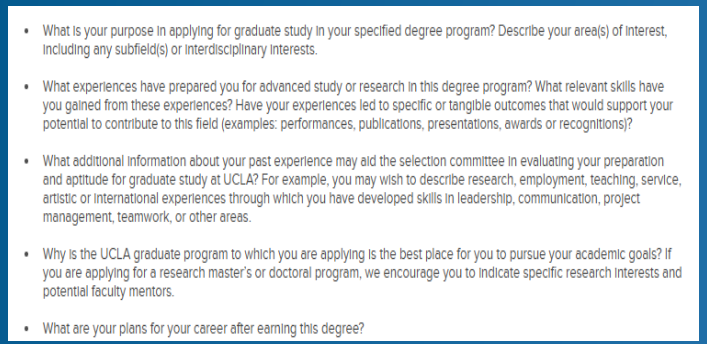
The Statement of Purpose: What to include?



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- **Why an MPP?** Explain your reasons for pursuing graduate study and your policy interests.
- **Your preparation:** Describe relevant experiences, skills, and accomplishments.
- **Your strengths:** Share additional experiences that demonstrate your readiness for graduate study.
- **Why UCLA?** Connect the MPP program to your academic interests and goals.
- **Your career goals:** Explain what you hope to do after earning your degree.

Up to 1,000 words. You do not need to answer every question—focus on what is most relevant to your candidacy.

It’s all about you: Your Interest & Preparation

Your Statement of Purpose connects why you want to study public policy with the experiences and skills that have prepared you for graduate study.

Start by thinking through these questions:

- What policy issues or communities do you care about, and why?
- Why do you want to pursue an MPP?
- Which academic, work, or community experiences shaped your interests?
- What did you do, what skills did you develop, and what did you learn?
- What outcomes or contributions can you point to?

Your examples don’t need to involve a formal leadership role—focus on your actions, learning, and contributions.

Statement of Purpose: Connect Your Experience to Your Goals

- **Build on your strengths**: Explain how your experiences demonstrate readiness for graduate study.
- **Explain why now:** What makes this the right time to pursue an MPP?
- **Make the UCLA connection:** Identify courses, training, or applied opportunities that support your interests.
- **Look ahead:** Describe your career goals and the communities or policy issues you hope to serve.
- **Connect the pieces:** How will the UCLA MPP help you move from your experience to your goals?

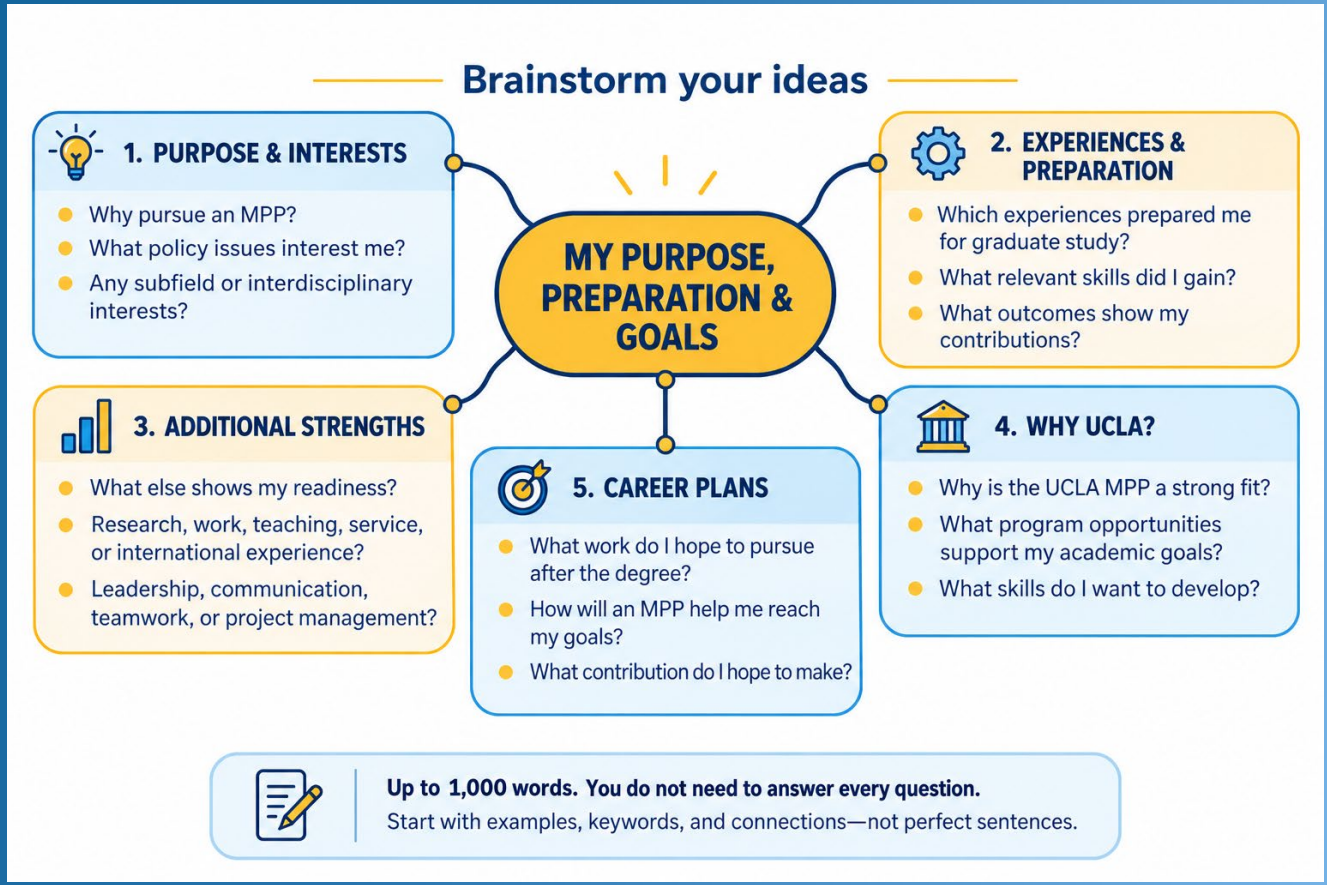
Be specific about what you hope to learn and how you plan to use it.

Statement of Purpose: Tips for a Strong Essay

- Connect your experiences to policy: Explain how they shaped your interests and goals.
- Go beyond your résumé: Show what you learned and why it matters.
- Use specific examples: Support your claims with actions, skills, and outcomes.
- Keep the focus on you: If discussing research or a policy issue, explain your role or connection.
- Be professional and authentic: Use clear language and your own voice.
- Tailor your statement to UCLA: Explain how the MPP program supports your goals.

Brainstorm

Choose one or two areas and jot down examples, keywords, or connections. You don't need complete sentences



Brainstorm: From Teaching to Education Policy

Applicant: A middle school teacher with five years of classroom experience who began through Teach For America.

- Purpose & interests: Classroom experience sparked an interest in how school funding and resource decisions affect students. Wants to help shape education policy.
- Experiences & preparation: Taught middle school, adapted lessons to different learning needs, and used student performance data to guide instruction.
- Additional strengths: Collaborated with families and colleagues; developed leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills.
- Why UCLA? Wants to build skills in policy analysis, budgeting, and program evaluation to connect classroom insights with broader policy decisions.
- Career plans: Work in a school district, education agency, or policy organization to improve resources and opportunities for students.

Connecting idea: "Teaching showed me how policy decisions affect my students every day. I now want the tools to help shape those decisions."

The Personal Statement

The Personal Statement is an opportunity for you to provide additional information that may aid the selection committee in evaluating your preparation and aptitude for graduate study at UCLA. The personal statement will also be used to consider candidates for the Eugene Cota-Robles Award and the Graduate Opportunity Program.

Instructions to respond to one of more of the following prompts are provided in the application and include a 500 words limit (approximately 1-page, single spaced, using 1-inch margins and 12-point font):

- Are there educational, personal, cultural, economic, or social experiences, not described in your Statement of Purpose, that have shaped your academic journey? If so, how? Have any of these experiences provided unique perspective(s) that you would contribute to your program, field or profession?
- Describe challenge(s) or barriers that you have faced in your pursuit of higher education. What motivated you to persist, and how did you overcome them?
- What leadership experiences, community outreach, service initiatives, or research projects have you participated in or plan to pursue that aim to positively impact others of the broader community?
- Describe ways in which your perspectives, experiences, or aspirations have aligned with UCLA's Principles of Community.

Please read and follow the Guidance on using AI Responsibly in Your Essays before submitting your application.

It’s All About Your Journey & Perspective

Your Personal Statement helps us understand the experiences that shaped your academic journey and the perspectives you would bring.

- What experiences shaped your values and educational path?
- How have your background or circumstances influenced your perspective?
- If you faced barriers, what helped you persist?
- What would you like the committee to understand about your journey?

Choose experiences you feel comfortable sharing.
Hardship is not required.

Personal History Statement : Connect Your Experiences to Your Contributions

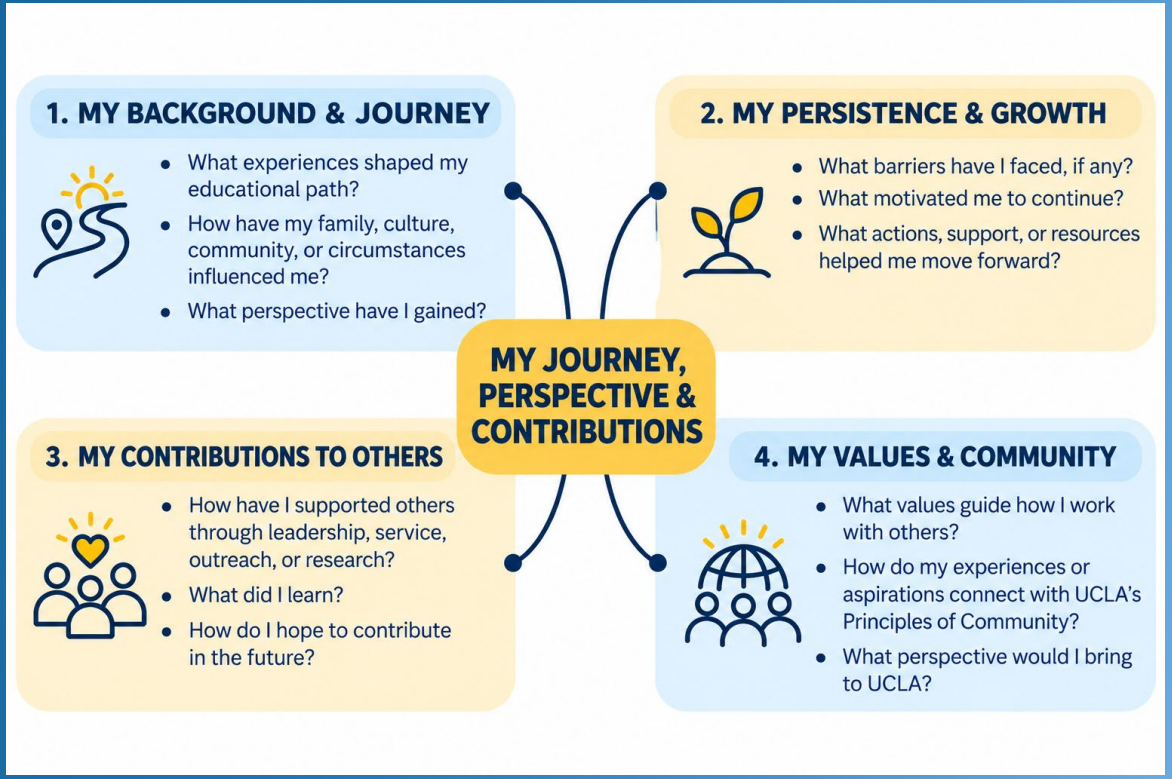
- Choose meaningful examples: Focus on one or two experiences.
- Explain their significance: How did they shape your choices, values, or growth?
- Show your contributions: Describe leadership, service, outreach, or ways you supported others.
- Look ahead: How would your perspective contribute to UCLA and your broader community?
- Connect with community values: Explain relevant connections to UCLA's Principles of Community.

Personal Statement: Tips for a Strong Essay

- Add something new: Complement your SOP with additional context or perspective.
- Be specific: Support your reflections with examples.
- Keep a clear focus: Build around a central theme.
- Use your own voice: First person is appropriate.
- Share thoughtfully: You decide how much personal information to disclose.
- Follow the prompt: Respond to one or more questions within 500 words.

Personal History Statement

Brainstorm



Example Brainstorm: Personal Statement

Applicant: A first-generation college graduate from a low-income background who has taught middle school in title I schools for five years.

Background & journey: Grew up low-income and became a first-generation college graduate.

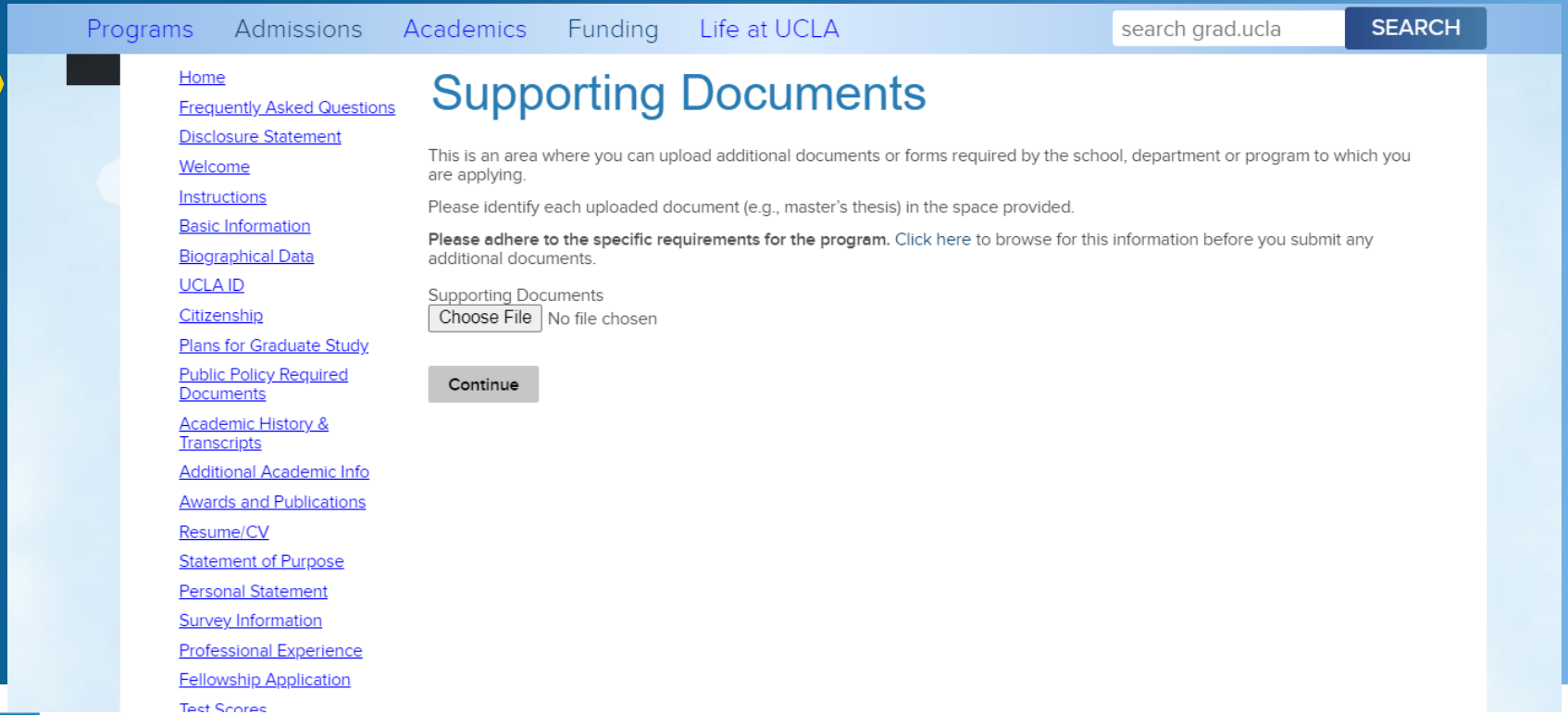
Persistence & growth: Navigating college shaped her understanding of the support students need.

Contributions: Supports students in the classroom and wants to expand educational access.

Values & community: Brings a commitment to equity and belonging, informed by her experiences as a student and teacher.

The SOP explains her move from teaching into policy. The personal statement explores how her background shaped her values and commitment to students.

Supporting Documents



Essay Best Practices

Essay Best Practice

- Give each essay a clear purpose: SOP = preparation and goals; Personal Statement = journey and perspective.
- Show, then reflect: Explain what happened, what you did, and why it matters.
- Choose depth over quantity: Develop a few meaningful examples.
- Organize your ideas: Give each paragraph a clear focus and connect it to the next.
- Revise and seek feedback: Read aloud and ask a trusted reader to check clarity.
- Check before submitting: Follow the prompts, word limits, and UCLA's guidance on responsible AI use.

Your essays should sound like you and accurately represent your experiences.

Tips to Get Started

- Research the program of your interest and its mission
- Address the correct program
- Do NOT be obvious about recycling your statement
- Research sample essays
- Not an autobiography or resume review.
- Be concise
- Be mature and authentic

Tips to Get Started

- Create an outline
- Draft several times
- Read back to yourself out loud. (Record yourself!)
- Be meticulous and thorough with your editing.
- Be exceptionally kind to yourself.



Application Deadlines



October 1, 2026: Application Opens

December 1, 2026: Application Deadline for Funding Consideration

April 15, 2027: Rolling Admission Deadline*

*rolling admission deadline may close early if program has reached capacity

Contact Us

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https://luskin.ucla.edu

Connect with us on social media!



Q & A