



GRADUATE PROGRAMS

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-FLINT

Personal Statement vs. Statement of Purpose

Use this guide to understand the key differences between a personal statement and a statement of purpose, and plan how to approach each one effectively.

Comparison Chart

Aspect	Personal Statement	Statement of Purpose
Focus	Who you are, what shaped you	What you want to do and how you'll do it
Tone	Reflective, narrative, personal	Professional, focused, academic
Purpose	Share your story and identity	Demonstrate your readiness and fit
Structure	Looser, story-driven	Structured, goal-oriented
Voice	Emotionally honest, personal insights	Clear, confident, and specific
Content	Life experiences, values, turning points	Academic background, career goals, program fit

Planning Your Essays

Use the prompts below to help brainstorm for each essay type.

Personal Statement Prompts

- ☐ What life experiences led you to your field of interest?
- ☐ What challenges have you faced and how have they shaped your goals?
- ☐ What values or passions motivate your academic journey?
- ☐ What personal story best reflects who you are and where you're headed?

Statement of Purpose Prompts

- ☐ What are your specific academic and professional goals?
- ☐ What relevant experiences have prepared you for graduate study?
- ☐ Why is this specific program the right fit for you?
- ☐ What do you plan to contribute to the program?