Ariana Nexus. | Academy

TEMPLATES · STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The statement of purpose

A template, three annotated examples, and what a graduate committee is actually scoring.

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For master's, PhD and scholarship applications.

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AN·AC·2026·02 · Edition 1 · 2026

Complimentary for Ariana Nexus Academy students

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ARIANA NEXUS ACADEMY · DOCUMENT AN·AC·2026·02

The statement of purpose, and how to write one that survives the second reader

A graduate admissions committee reads your statement twice: once in ninety seconds to decide whether to keep reading, and once slowly, looking for reasons to say no. This document is built for both readings.

What a statement of purpose is

It is an argument that you are ready to do a specific piece of work in a specific place, supported by evidence. It is not an autobiography, not a letter of gratitude, and not an account of how much you love your field. Committees receive hundreds of statements that love the field. They admit the ones that can name what they will work on.

A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE IS	A PERSONAL ESSAY IS
For graduate study: master's, PhD, research programs, most scholarships	For undergraduate admission: Common App, Coalition, many U.S. colleges
500 to 1,000 words, usually 1 to 2 pages	650 words, one piece
Evidence, method, fit, plan	Voice, reflection, one moment carried well
Names professors, courses, labs, datasets	Names almost nothing outside your own life
Written in the register of a colleague	Written in the register of a person

If you are applying for a bachelor's degree, you need document AN·AC·2026·03, not this one.

What the reader is scoring

WHAT THEY ASK THEMSELVES	WHAT ANSWERS IT
Can this person do graduate-level work?	A research project, a thesis, a dataset, a technical problem you solved — described with method, not adjectives.

WHAT THEY ASK THEMSELVES	WHAT ANSWERS IT
Do they know what they are asking for?	The right vocabulary for the subfield, and one or two named debates or methods inside it.
Why us and not anywhere else?	Two named professors, a lab, a centre, a course sequence — and a reason, not flattery.
Will they finish?	Evidence of persistence through something difficult, stated plainly and without drama.
What happens after?	A plan that is specific and plausible, and that makes the funding worth spending.

The architecture

Five movements. Keep them in this order. The proportions matter more than the word count.

MOVEMENT	SHARE	WHAT GOES IN IT
1 · The problem	10%	Open on the problem you want to work on, not on your childhood. One concrete opening sentence that could only have been written by you.
2 · The evidence	35%	Two or three pieces of work you have actually done, described with method, scale and result. This is the section that admits you.
3 · The fit	25%	Why this department. Two named people, what they work on, and the honest overlap with your evidence.
4 · The plan	20%	What you would work on in the first year, and what question you want to answer by the end.
5 · After	10%	What you do with the degree. For a funded scholarship this is scored heavily.

> THE OPENING SENTENCE
>
> Never open with a quotation, a dictionary definition, or "Ever since I was a child." Committees at Cornell, Toronto and Hacettepe all report the same three openings, hundreds of times a cycle.
>
> Open with the problem, in your own words, at a scale you have touched. "In the district where I collected data, forty-one of the sixty women who delivered at home said they had planned to deliver at the clinic." That sentence belongs to one person and no other.

ANNOTATED EXAMPLE ONE

MSc Public Health

Türkiye Bursları · Hacettepe University · 780 words

Gold notes in the right column explain what each paragraph is doing.

In the district where I collected data last spring, forty-one of the sixty women who had delivered at home told me they had intended to deliver at the clinic. Cost was not the reason. Distance was not the reason for most of them. The reason, again and again, was that nobody at home would travel with them, and a woman who arrives alone is not admitted with dignity.

Opens on the finding, not the self. This sentence could not have been written by anyone else in the applicant pool.

I am applying to the MSc in Public Health at Hacettepe University to study how companionship and escort norms shape facility delivery in Afghan and Afghan-refugee populations, and to build the survey instruments that can measure it.

States the exact subfield and the exact contribution. Two sentences, no adjectives.

I trained in public health at Kabul University of Medical Sciences, graduating fourth in a class of ninety-six. My final-year project used the 2022–23 national household survey to compare institutional delivery across eight provinces; I learned Stata for it,

Evidence, with method and scale: a rank, a dataset, software, a sample size, a real problem found and fixed. Note "I learned Stata for it" — capability shown by action.

Turns the weakness into the reason for applying. Then fit: two named people, what they actually do, and why it matches. No flattery.

The plan is narrow enough to be checkable and large enough to be a thesis. Naming the untranslated

and I learned that a national dataset can tell you that a gap exists and almost nothing about why. After graduating I worked for eighteen months as a data assistant at a provincial health directorate, cleaning monthly returns from twenty-four facilities. I built the province's first consolidated maternal-death register — a hundred and six records, reconciled by hand against facility logbooks, because three facilities had been reporting the same deaths twice.

That register is why I now want to be trained properly in survey methodology rather than in data cleaning. Professor [Name]'s work on health-service access among displaced populations in Ankara is the closest thing I have found to the question I am carrying, and Professor [Name]'s group on questionnaire design in low-literacy settings would teach me the skill I could not teach myself: how to ask a question that does not lead the answer.

In my first year I would want to work on the Ankara Afghan cohort, translating and cognitively testing the antenatal-care module into Dari and Pashto — a translation nobody has validated. By the thesis I want to have measured whether escort availability predicts facility delivery independently of distance and cost, in a population where both are also constrained.

I intend to return to Afghan health work, whether from inside the country or from the region, and to do it with instruments that were built for the people being asked.

instrument shows she has read the literature.

One sentence on after. Honest about the constraint without arguing politics.

ANNOTATED EXAMPLE TWO

MS Computer Science

United States · 640 words · applying while the entry route is uncertain

The first version of my Kankor practice application had one bug that I could not find for eleven days: on slow connections, a student's answer was scored against the previous question. Fourteen hundred students had used it by then. Fixing it taught me more about state management than the two courses I had taken.

I am applying to the MS in Computer Science at [University] to work on systems that stay correct under bad networks — the condition most of the world's users are actually in, and the one most of our teaching quietly assumes away.

I completed two years of computer science at Kabul Polytechnic University with a 3.5 average before my studies were interrupted. Since then I have worked as a junior web developer, shipped four client sites, and cut the load time of our largest one from 6.2 to 1.9 seconds by removing three libraries we did not need. I finished

A bug, a number of users, and a lesson. This is a technical anecdote, which is what a CS committee reads fastest.

The research interest named in one line, with a claim about the field that shows judgement.

Interrupted study stated plainly, then filled: measurable engineering work, self-study with named courses, teaching. "I did not understand recursion as well as I thought" is the sentence a committee trusts.

Fit: a named professor, a named group, and an honest admission that his own work is a crude version of theirs.

The paragraph most Afghan applicants leave out. Naming the constraint yourself is stronger than letting the

CS50x and forty percent of MIT 6.006 through OpenCourseWare, and I taught two ten-week Python courses, free, to thirty-eight students in Dari — teaching is where I discovered that I did not understand recursion as well as I thought.

Professor [Name]'s work on delay-tolerant synchronization and the [Lab] group's recent papers on offline-first client design are the reason I am applying to [University] specifically. My practice application is a crude version of the problem that group formalizes.

I am aware that entry to the United States is currently suspended for Afghan passport holders. I am applying because admission and entry are separate decisions, because deferral and online enrollment exist, and because I would rather hold an offer when the policy changes than start the work then.

committee wonder. Three sentences. No argument, no politics.

ANNOTATED EXAMPLE THREE

PhD application

Where the statement is really a research proposal in disguise.

Between 2021 and 2024 the number of Afghan households reporting a member abroad rose in every survey that asked, and remittance income became the largest single line in many household budgets. What none of these surveys can tell us is what the money is doing to the household that receives it — whether it substitutes for female labour, or finances girls' informal schooling, or both in different houses on the same street.

I propose to study the intra-household allocation of remittance income in Afghan and Afghan-diaspora households, using a mixed design: a panel of 400 households in two cities, paired with 40 life-history interviews conducted in Dari and Pashto by female enumerators.

My master's thesis at [University] used the [Survey] to show that remittance-receiving households report higher girls' enrolment in informal education but not in formal schooling — a result that

A PhD statement opens on a gap in the literature, not on the writer. Two sentences of context, one sentence naming the gap precisely.

The proposal itself: design, sample, languages, and who collects the data. Committees read this paragraph first when they return to your file.

Prior work, its result, and — critically — what it could not explain. A PhD is bought with a good unanswered question.

Fit expressed as capability transfer: what they have that you need. Never "your prestigious department".

A four-year timeline. Specific, plausible, and ending in something that outlives the degree.

held after controlling for wealth and district, and that I could not explain with the data I had. That failure is the origin of this proposal.

Professor [Name]'s panel work on household bargaining, and Dr [Name]'s methodological writing on interviewing in low-trust settings, are the two capabilities this design needs and that I do not yet have.

Years one and two: instrument design, translation, cognitive testing, and the first panel wave. Year three: the qualitative wave and the first paper. Year four: the second panel wave, the dissertation and, I hope, a public dataset in Dari and Pashto that other Afghan researchers can use without asking anyone's permission.

SECTION THREE

The skeleton

Type over the prompts. Delete every prompt line before you send it.

Statement of Purpose — [Your name] — [Program, University]

PARAGRAPH 1 — THE PROBLEM (60–90 WORDS)

[One concrete sentence about the problem, from something you have seen, measured or built. No quotation. No "ever since I was a child." Then one sentence naming the exact subfield you want to work in.]

PARAGRAPH 2–3 — THE EVIDENCE (250–350 WORDS)

[Piece of work one: what you did, the method, the scale, the result, and what it taught you that you did not expect. Piece of work two: the same. If your studies were interrupted, say so in one clause and fill the time with what you did instead.]

PARAGRAPH 4 — THE FIT (150–220 WORDS)

[Two named professors and what they actually work on — read one paper by each. One named course, lab, centre or dataset. One honest sentence on the overlap between their work and your evidence.]

PARAGRAPH 5 — THE PLAN (120–180 WORDS)

[What you would work on in year one. What question you want answered by the end. One methodological detail that proves you have thought about how, not only what.]

PARAGRAPH 6 — AFTER (40–70 WORDS)

[What you will do with the degree, and where. If you are applying for funding, this paragraph is scored — make the money worth spending. If your entry route is constrained, name it here in two sentences, factually.]

Adjusting it for each funder

FUNDER	WHAT THEY WEIGHT	WHAT TO CHANGE
Türkiye Bursları	Motivation, Türkiye-specific reasons, contribution after	Add a paragraph on why Türkiye and not elsewhere; name Turkish institutions and, if you have it, your Turkish level.
DAAD	Academic fit and development relevance	Tie the plan to a development outcome; German programs want the methodology explicit.
DAAD Hilde Domin	Risk to your right to study, and academic merit	You are nominated by a German institution first. Write the statement so it serves both the risk assessment and the academic case.
Erasmus Mundus	Mobility rationale across the consortium	Explain why each university in the consortium is needed for your question.
MEXT / GKS	Study plan document, research fit with a named supervisor	Written as a formal research plan; contact the supervisor before you submit.

THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 2026

From 26 March 2026 the UK refuses Student visa applications made from outside the UK by Afghan nationals, and Chevening has closed its Afghanistan scholarship. The government says the measure will be reviewed after 18 months.

Two Chevening fellowships remain open to Afghan citizens — the South Asia Journalism Fellowship and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Fellowship. Afghans already in the UK, and dual nationals travelling on another passport, are not affected.

The eight failures we correct most often

- Loving the field instead of naming a problem inside it.
- A fit paragraph that could be pasted into any other application. If the university name can be swapped without breaking a sentence, the paragraph is not doing any work.
- Adjectives standing in for evidence: passionate, hardworking, dedicated. Cut every one and see what is left.
- Explaining Afghanistan to the reader for 200 words. One clause is enough; they are admitting you, not the country.
- Apologising for an interrupted degree or a gap. State it and move.
- A plan so broad it cannot be judged — or so narrow that no supervisor there could take it.
- Quoting a professor's paper title without showing you read past the abstract.
- Sending the same statement to eight universities with the names changed. Committees compare notes more than students think.

Before you send

- ☐ It is under the word limit, and the limit is the one on their page, not the one I assumed.
- ☐ Two professors are named and I have read at least one paper by each.
- ☐ Every paragraph contains at least one thing only I could have written.
- ☐ There are no adjectives about myself left in the document.
- ☐ The first sentence would make a tired reader at 6 p.m. continue to the second.
- ☐ A person outside my field read it and could say what I want to work on.
- ☐ The file is a PDF named Family_Given_SOP_University_2027.pdf.
- ☐ No claim in it is unsupported by my CV, my transcript or my references.

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