

Guidelines on How to Write a Statement of Purpose/ Study Plan

Background:

As part of your application for the Faculty of Arts Exchange Programme or the HKU Worldwide Exchange Programme (HKUWW) Study Abroad scholarship, you have to provide a 'Statement of Purpose' (Arts) or 'Study Plan' (HKUWW). These are short essays which, on the Hong Kong side, are drawn on as supporting material in the selection process and, on the side of your potential host university, used to assess your motivation and study objectives, but also your command of English.

The 'Statement of Purpose/ Study Plan' is a specific genre and different from the academic essay you are familiar with. Hence it is important that you follow the below guidelines closely, to produce a piece of writing that will award you a study place and scholarship.

1) Faculty of Arts Statement of Purpose

- 800 to 1,000 words in length: this gives you enough room to expand on individual points, but without babbling.
- Needs to include the following points:
 - a) your reasons for wanting to study at your preferred host institution;
 - b) how this institution will help you achieve your study goals;
 - c) how the knowledge and experience gained at your preferred host institution will impact and influence your plans for the future upon your return to HK; and
 - d) a brief description of any extra-curricular activities of which you are/ have been in charge.

2) HKU Worldwide Study Plan

- No restrictions on length. However, experience tells us that essays of around 1,000 words in length are among the best.
- Should include the following points:
 - a) your reasons for wanting to go on exchange;
 - b) some thoughts on how you think you will contribute to both the exchange programme and to HKU upon your return;
 - c) suggestions for courses you plan to take at your host institution; and
 - d) any related aspects that you think will strengthen your application.
- Additional guidelines on how to write a Study Plan are provided on the Office of International Student Exchange's website:
<http://www3.hku.hk/oise>.

You see that the Arts and HKUWW programmes demand similar things in their respective short essays, but please pay attention to their slightly different emphases and foci. In other words, you might have to tweak the essay you wrote for the one programme if you intend to also apply for the other exchange programme.



Here are some do's and don'ts which apply to BOTH the Statement of Purpose AND Study Plan essays:

Do:

- ✓ Be enthusiastic but without using cliché (e.g. don't say 'English literature is my life', but be more specific).
- ✓ Adopt a confident tone but without singing your own praises in a vulgar way (e.g. don't say 'The University of Kassel should be glad to have me as an exchange student', but reflect on some of your achievements).
- ✓ Be realistic and plausible regarding your choices, achievements and plans (e.g. don't say 'Studying at the University of Kent will help me become a Legco member upon graduation', but be more specific and explain how and why, if you think it will).
- ✓ Show your Statement of Purpose/ Study Plan to a friend, family member or any person you trust, and ask for their opinion and comments.
- ✓ Make sure that your essay is written in good, grammatical English. No typos, no grammatical mistakes or outrageous stylistic infelicities, please! Ask for a sample or model. The Arts Faculty has some successful Statements on file, as does the Office of International Student Exchange, which they are happy to share with you.

Don't

- ✗ Exceed the suggested length of around 1,000 words, unless you have a very good reason to do so.
- ✗ Ask your HKU teachers or tutors to work on this statement for you. Most teachers will be happy to discuss your application and choice of host universities with you, but don't expect anybody to copyedit your Statement of Purpose for you.
- ✗ Treat this Statement of Purpose/ Study Plan lightly. It is the one extended piece of writing that the selection committees at HKU and at your host institution will receive from you, and it will, together with your GPA, decide whether you are chosen for the programme or not. In other words, DO NOT write it at the last minute, that is on the day of the deadline, but please invest some time and thought.

And finally:

- Please do a bit of research and check whether individual host institutions provide further, and perhaps more specific, information on how to write a Statement of Purpose/ Study Plan. You will usually find this information on the host university's website under web rubrics like 'International Students' or 'Exchange Students'.
- Please do a bit of research and check whether individual host institutions require additional documents from you, like a writing sample, to assess your academic writing skills. Here, it is usually a good idea to submit an essay/ a revised essay that got at least a 'B' grade at HKU, rather than write something new which none of your teachers has assessed.

Happy Writing and Good Luck!