PhD Admission Research Statement

At the end of the doctoral program, successful PhD students make an important contribution to knowledge in the form of a doctoral dissertation. The role of the PhD program is to guide students as they work to become independent researchers able to make such contributions and to continue contributing to the field of LIS over the course of their career. The application process is designed to identify individuals with this potential.

Members of the Doctoral Studies Committee review all applications to the PhD program. Many factors are taken into consideration in the decision process, including the Research Statement that all applicants submit. The purpose of the Research Statement is to give applicants a chance to present a research problem or question that interests them and to propose how it might be investigated at the School. The Committee also uses the Research Statement to help it assess how well an applicant's interests coincide with those of the faculty and are likely to be accommodated within the School, to that end applicants should identify iSchool faculty members who have similar research interests in the research statement.

Below are some guidelines that will help you construct your own Research Statement.

Writing Your Research Statement

The Research Statement is different from the Applicant Statement submitted with Part 2 of the general application. In the Applicant Statement you discuss your academic background, work experience, and personal insights that led you to decide to pursue a PhD. The Research Statement is designed to give you the opportunity of exploring a problem, question or issue that interests you, and that you might like to pursue in your doctoral work. Of course, we realize that your interests are likely to change once you are in the doctoral program, but you should discuss a problem that is of sufficient importance to be considered suitable for doctoral level work.

As you discuss the problem, question or issue, clearly describe it and why it is of interest to you. Why is it important? Why do you think it has not been addressed sufficiently beforehand? Why should others be interested in it? How might you go about investigating it in order to come up with results that would further our understanding of it? Which iSchool faculty are working in research areas that resonate with your interests? In evaluating your Research Statement, the committee will look for how well you have conceptualized the question or problem and explained its implications. They will also consider the appropriateness, rigor, and creativity associated with how you propose to go about finding answers or solutions. The Research Statement should be no more than two single-spaced typed pages in length (approximately 800 words).