

Course book goals:

- *To develop creative writing skills*
- *To teach how to write well-structured and unique motivation letters*
- *To creatively approach every paragraph of your letter*
- *To be able to create your positive impression on the admission committee*
- *To effectively use specially designed vocabulary of key words*
- *Enjoy the writing process of self-presentation*

During the course, you would:

- *Gain valuable knowledge about what is a motivation letter and why it is an important document*
- *Develop your vision how to craft your unique and engaging motivation letter*
- *Get familiarized with the structure of the motivation letter and receive practical guidance to develop your own letter*
- *Learn effective tools and strategies to develop each paragraph of your letter*
- *Study effective and unique motivation letter vocabulary, specially developed to enhance and strengthen your letter*
- *Study and analyze successful motivation letters and receive valuable feedback to each of them*

CONTENTS

Section 1: Research is Essential!	6
• <i>What is a motivation letter and why does it matter?</i>	
• <i>Common formats and structures of a motivation letter</i>	
• <i>A general overview of the key paragraphs of an ideal motivation letter with sample answers</i>	
• <i>A brief test</i>	
Section 2: Developing a Motivation Letter Map	17
• <i>Internal and external audit</i>	
• <i>Key questions to consider to develop the first paragraph of a motivation letter with sample answers and detailed explanations</i>	
• <i>An achievement List and its role in forming the second paragraph of a motivation letter</i>	
<i>How do you use the Ability list and make your letter more convincing?</i>	
• <i>Paragraph three - Ethics and your personal values</i>	
• <i>Paragraph four: How do you justify your selection of a university and academic program?</i>	
• <i>Paragraph five: Postgraduate Plans</i>	
• <i>Matching activity</i>	
Section 3: Case Study	42
• <i>A detailed analysis of three successful motivation letters with challenging tasks and valuable comments</i>	
Section 4: Words Matter	50
• <i>A special glossary of 155 keywords with annotations and relevant examples</i>	
• <i>Top 7 most common mistakes in writing a motivation letter</i>	
• <i>10 practical recommendations and tips to consider before, while and after writing your motivation letter</i>	
Section 5: Practice makes Perfect	88
• <i>4 examples of successful motivation letters with detailed analysis</i>	
• <i>A checklist for developing your motivation letter</i>	

Section 1:

Research is Essential!

- **What is a motivation letter and what role does it play in the admission process?**

How often do you sell yourself?

Are you surprised or confused now?!

This is how I usually begin my master classes with my students at schools, lyceums or universities. In most cases, they are confused and do not know how to respond. It takes them a while to actually understand the meaning of my question and respond.

The majority of us, I believe, sell ourselves at least thrice in our lifetime. You might be wondering what these three occasions are and in what sense we sell ourselves. Let me explain: First, during a job interview, your task is to sell yourself to the employer as a potential and appropriate candidate. To achieve this goal, you do your best by all means possible. Second is the interesting case of finding a suitable wife or husband. As you date, if you truly like your partner, you will find a way to charm and win her/him over. Finally, the third situation occurs in an academic setting. While applying to a prestigious foreign or local university, you are supposed to advertise yourself by pinpointing your advantages and unique personality traits and, thus, distinguish yourself from the crowd and convince the admission committee that you are a good fit to the university.

What is a motivation letter and how do we write it? I am often asked this question. I always say that a motivation letter is an opportunity for you to sell yourself to the admission committee of the university you are applying to. It is important to know that most universities abroad receive, on average, thousands of strong applications along with unique motivation letters to read. Usually, most of these candidates have exemplary academic credentials and scores in international examinations such as SAT, GRE, GMAT, TOEFL or IELTS. But how do they choose between two candidates if they both have outstanding academic backgrounds? In this scenario, it is your motivation letter and the recommendation letters that become crucial. They play an important role in influencing the admission committee's decision.

As you might have already expected, the motivation letter could be the most important element of any successful application. Why? Because it offers a window for admission committees to be acquainted with the applicant's personality and skills better. It helps them make the right

choice. The motivation letter is also your strongest weapon in the struggle to secure a sponsorship, scholarship or any other financial support for your studies.



«If you are going to write a winning motivation letter, you cannot do it in two or three hours. It is harder than it seems. Therefore, it requires a lot of time and energy to create a well-structured and unique letter.»

So, what does the admission committee actually look for in your letter? Basically, they want to know more about your personality characteristics; academic as well as extracurricular activities; the reasons for choosing a particular course and university; how your values relate to your chosen university; your postgraduate plans (if applicable); and your life's mission or passion. You should keep in your mind that this document is your best chance to not only to highlight and demonstrate your skills, view of life, determination and ambitions, but also to compensate for your application's weaknesses (e.g., low grades) and pave your path for the admission committee to approve your application notwithstanding its shortcomings.



Remember that through your application, including your motivation letter, the admission committee seeks to find more about your ambitions, honesty, creativity, passion, personal values, self-confidence, sense of humor, initiative and leadership potential.

• Common formats and structures of motivation letter

On the internet, you can find many sample motivation letters with various formats and useful comments. During my master classes and webinars, students often ask me if they can use those samples to write their own motivation letters. My answer is simple and clear: You should only read them to have a better understanding of the possible ways of writing motivation letters and what the popular formats are. But never ever, I emphasize, copy any sentence or segment from them, as it is highly likely that your application will be dismissed on the grounds of plagiarism. Do not forget that honesty is an unmatched quality, that an admission committee is not going to admit an applicant whose honesty is questionable.

In my extensive personal experience in writing motivation letters, I have come across different formats and models of motivation letters and thoroughly examined their effectiveness before I developed my own way of creating genuine and successful motivation letters. In the process, I

have come to realize certain crucial points that an effective motivation letter should have:

- *A 4–5 paragraph structure*
- *Each paragraph should have a specific mission/message*
- *Paragraphs are not fixed and are interchangeable depending on the purpose of the letter*

The above flexible format is more effective and successful than the classical 3-paragraphed format (introduction, main body and conclusion). This does not mean that my proposed format is the only right one and that if you develop your motivation letter differently it would fail. Of course not! Frankly speaking, one of the reasons I enjoy writing and teaching how to write unique motivation letters is the fact that one has the freedom of writing in different styles and using various approaches. The only limitation is the word count, which is usually clearly specified in the requirement of the letter. I should say that, in some situations, both formats can be used effectively. For instance, a classic motivation letter is ideal if you are writing a common application essay for an undergraduate degree program in the USA. However, if you want to develop a truly unique and engaging motivation letter, you should follow the 4–5 paragraphed approach and build your story.



A common application essay is a compulsory essay required by most USA universities' admission for undergraduate programs. More details can be found:
<https://www.commonapp.org/apply/essay-prompts>

• A general overview of the key paragraphs of the winning motivation letter with samples

Since you now have a general idea about a motivation letter and its significance, I would like to invite you to the analysis of the 4–5 paragraphed motivation letter, which I believe can convey and communicate the most important features of your personal and professional background to the admission committee and, thus, increase your chances of realizing your academic dream.



Your motivation letter should be structured as an easy-to-follow story. Thus, it is a good idea to divide your letter into smaller parts to make it more comprehensive and easier to read. Your writing style should be clear and simple.

So, let's begin our journey.

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH: THE HOOK

Since the admission committee reads hundreds of engaging letters from all over the world, it is important to catch the reader's attention right from the first sentence in your letter. By keeping him/her invested in your story, you stand a better chance of getting admitted to your desired university. In the introduction, a candidate can write about anything that demonstrates his/her creative mind, personal beliefs and values or life vision. The candidate can even begin his/her first paragraph by explaining his/her motivation to pursue a certain academic course or degree. What I want to pinpoint is that the letter's beginning might be about anything you deem interesting, eye-catching or thought-provoking, but within the logical and thematic framework of the letter as a whole.

Basically, the introduction should invoke certain questions in the reader's mind, so that he/she is intrigued to keep reading. Hence, I highly recommend my students to spend enough time and energy to establish the beginning of their letters in a way that makes them stand out among other competitive candidates.

In the second section of my book, we will study how to construct such a paragraph. But, for now, let's look at several captivating introductory paragraphs to get a clear idea about 'the hook'.

Powerful introductions:

1. Discovering your calling in life, which you are deeply passionate about, is something we should all strive for. After all, life is too short to be spent working in a field that does not really interest you. Unfortunately, a lot of people, the majority perhaps, find themselves in such a difficulty. I thus consider myself to be among the lucky ones.

2. Dostoyevsky once wrote that "Beauty will save the world", but for me it was curiosity that turned out to be a life saver. At the age of 15, my life had a challenging incident.

THE SECOND PARAGRAPH: ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

This paragraph, or a set of short paragraphs, is essential to present your intellectual potential to undertake academic study in various fields. Your relevant (preferably) professional experience will be a convincing factor to indicate your practical knowledge in the field of your interest.



One of the ways to show your professional expertise is to highlight or discuss certain local, national or regional challenges related to the field of your interest, thus demonstrating your competence and knowledge of the current state of affairs in your surrounding environment.

Some students might wonder what to write if they do not have any professional experience. Usually, this is the case among undergraduate applicants who have recently finished school. In this situation, I recommend that they focus on their academic achievements (school Olympiads, scientific conferences or competitions, volunteering and project participation) and school leadership (captainship of the school team in sports or any project, membership of the School Pupil's Union and contribution to the school community). Such information, if delivered competently, would enhance your letter and shed a better light on your personality, academic credentials and vision.



By describing your achievements, talents and interests, you would be able to demonstrate your academic potential and unique personality traits. This paragraph will showcase your experience, knowledge and capacity to succeed not only inside the classroom but also outside it, in the academic and social communities to which you belong.

Now, let's turn to several sample paragraphs from successful motivation letters and see how they work:

1. To learn more and become a competitive specialist, I did my best not to miss any opportunity to grow both personally and professionally. As such, I took part in different scientific conferences such as the Youth and Science Conference at Satbayev University and the Scientific Conference at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, receiving 3rd and 2nd places respectively for my projects. To practice my social skills and better understand the United Nations, I purposely participated in Model United Nations at KIMEP University, and was nominated as the Best Delegate Winner of 2018.

2. Bearing in mind the importance of EQ and for gaining valuable practical experience, from my first year at the University, I started writing different articles for various websites such as www.7kun.kz and www.medianet.kz, and also worked as a radio journalist. Another rewarding experience that I had was at the Republican TV channel “Khabar”, where I learned the secrets of TV broadcasting and better understood how to prepare and present materials ‘on air’ for both pre-recorded and live items.

THE THIRD PARAGRAPH: SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: PERSONAL VALUES AND LIFE VISION

This part of the motivation letter will help the admission committee get to know you better and discover your view of life, core beliefs and how they evolved over time. It is one of the most important sections of the letter because it is supposed to demonstrate your unique personality traits that underpin your present actions and inform your future aspirations. Thus, take your time to brainstorm and develop this passage in the best way possible.

Moreover, this paragraph is strongly interconnected with your academic and professional background in many ways. You have to first undergo certain challenges in your life from which you can learn from and develop your life vision. Such challenges might occur in academic, professional or personal settings. Therefore, accordingly, you can combine the 2nd and the 3rd paragraphs of your letter into a solid, informative one. Depending on your content and the flow of your letter, you would understand whether to combine or develop them separately.

Let's read several successful examples to see how this particular paragraph can be written.

Sample paragraphs:

1. So, not only has football developed my athletic skills, but also through following Aston Villa as a fan, it has expanded my networking, editing, and research skills as well as giving me a work-ethic to live by. But football is always more than just being a fan or physical exercise, the lessons I have learned from this particular sport have shaped my personality in many ways and inspired me to overcome diverse challenges.

2. Social involvement has certainly played an essential role in my life. Consequently, I have never missed an opportunity to take part in initiatives to help others and contribute to my community. In this light, I would like to mention “English in an Orphanage School for 3 months”, “English for Children from low income families” and Social Entrepreneurship Project “Wings to Fly” – free English courses for children from disabled families in 2018 and 2019. Through these educational projects, I have been able to share my knowledge and gain invaluable experience. Frankly speaking, by teaching foreign languages and interacting with financially and physically disadvantaged children, I have learned to be more patient, meticulous and sensitive to the needs of others. Consequently, my life vision, giving back to society is the right thing to do, has been formed.

THE FOURTH PARAGRAPH – JUSTIFICATION OF UNIVERSITY CHOICE AND PREFERRED PROGRAM OF STUDY

Since you have chosen an academic course at a specific university out of the many other majors offered by various other universities, it is necessary to convince the admission committee that you made a conscious decision regarding the subject and the institution of choice. Otherwise, it would be truly challenging for you to get admitted.

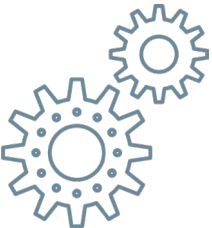


It is critical to convince the admission committee that your university choice and major preference are reasonable, logical and well thought-out.


In this part of your letter, you have to demonstrate that you have done your homework and that you know exactly what you want from your formal study at the respective university in your country or abroad. Here, you should explain why you want to take up a specific major and why you want to undertake a particular course. Additionally, you have to provide evidence that the concerned program corresponds with your ambitions, personal values and future professional objectives.

Below, we can read some successful samples to have a better idea about this paragraph.

Sample paragraphs:



1. I chose visual computing because I am a humanist and a techie who is passionate about using art and technology to promote human values. The fact that this field is largely male-dominated is an extra feature that motivates me to excel in it. In the future, I will seek to transfer my knowledge to other women. Also, I am a big fan of the game industry. I wanted—obviously with no capability—to create my own game since I was 11 years old. I even made sketches for what my game will be like.



2. I believe that Hertie School is the perfect place to pursue my postgraduate studies in order to advance my career and be part of the change that I want to see in the world. First, the School is a pioneer in interdisciplinary and practice-oriented teaching. The fact that, in a few years, it has transformed from Hertie School of Governance to Hertie School within Berlin's University of Governance is a marker of this institution's stunning success and impact. Second, at the School, I expect to gain practical insights into public policy development and expand my knowledge of the humanitarian sector. The latter can significantly benefit from the school's new Centre for Fundamental Rights and the expertise of the Centre's directors, Prof. Basak Çali and Prof. Cathryn Costello.

1. My mid-term professional goal is to establish my own private educational course which would be designed to teach the first aid in emergency of different age categories of population in Kazakhstan. In fact, my ultimate goal is to launch several Hospice Care Centers. A case in point is that in Almaty, the capital city of Kazakhstan, despite the increasing demand for palliative care, there is only one Hospice Care Center for cancer patients. The scarcity of these centers means that we end up with inexperienced hospice staff. That, in turn, leads to many related problems, beginning from management strategy, medical equipment to shortages of medicine.

2. Eventually, I hope to create a cluster of professional educators in Uzbekistan. While this is a long-term goal, I consider the creation of a Research and Development Center to be the culmination of my career, where I could improve local curricula not just in foreign language but across subjects in Central Asia. This may be ambitious, but I believe that it is possible with enough passion and support.

FINAL PARAGRAPH: POSTGRADUATE PLANS.

The final part of the letter is especially important for applicants applying to pursue their Master's degree abroad. The applicant has to explain his/her short-term and long-term professional objectives and how obtaining the degree abroad would contribute to achieving his/her professional and personal goals. In some cases, undergraduate applicants are also required to include this information in their motivation letters. Thus, I recommend you to carefully read the instructions before proceeding with writing your letter.

Below, we can read some successful samples to have a better glimpse of the final paragraph for your letter.

Sample paragraphs:

To conclude, this is not the only way for structuring your letter. What I mean is that you can separate or combine some paragraphs depending on the situation and the requirements of a certain program or university. What is really important is to include the previously highlighted information as much as possible to have a solid and unique motivation letter.

• Brief test to check your understanding of the information in the section

To complete the first part of our book and summarise the material, I invite you to take the following mini-test on the structure and role of the motivation letter.

1. The motivation letter is a wonderful opportunity to self-present yourself and stand out from the pool of potential candidates during the admission process.

True False

2. The motivation letter helps the admission committee check your emotional intelligence and personal values.

True False

3. The motivation letter is the only document that demonstrates your soft skills.

True False

4. To write a strong motivation letter, the applicant must have an advanced level of English.

True False

5. It is not a good idea to show your letter to someone else to read and give you feedback.

True False

6. It is not enough to mention your participation in any given project or competition but to explain how that particular encounter shaped your development.

True False

7. Using the most complex academic vocabulary in your motivation letter would improve your chances of getting accepted to a foreign university.

True False

8. The motivation letter is a compulsory document required by every university abroad.

True False

9. There is a fixed universal template to write a motivation letter.

True False

10. Writing a motivation letter is not time-consuming if you have a strong command of English.

True False

Check your answers on page 105

Section 2:

Stages of writing a strong motivation letter