

Developing a Winning Research Statement

Checklist

Checklist for Science Content

- Is the proposed research sufficiently important? (“This work must be done!”)
- Is it sufficiently novel?
- Is it sufficiently different from the candidate’s past work? Advisor’s work?
- Is it too ambitious? Too broad? Ambitious enough? Too narrow?
- Is it customized for the position? Can it realistically be carried out in the department/school?
- Is it detailed enough to be convincing? (Yet not boring?)
- Does it convince the reader that the work is fundable?
- Does it convince the reader that the candidate can complete the work? Are backup approaches mentioned?

Checklist for Layout and Structure

- Is the statement too long? (1-3, perhaps 4 pages)
- Does it follow a clear, logical outline or roadmap?
- Is it divided into short sections focused on major themes, with explicit headings? Plenty of white space between sections?
- Are lists bullet-pointed?
- Are sentences easy to read?
- Is there good flow between and within paragraphs?
- Are data presented in a format that is easy to review?
- Are graphs/pictures used to maximum advantage?
- Is the “attitude” right? (i.e., not overly hyped language? Others credited? Focused on contributions to field, rather than personal experiences or skills?)