



APPLICATION STATEMENT FEEDBACK PROGRAM

Editor Training

Brought to you by the ASFP Editor Group

Friday, October 20, 2023

Today's schedule

10am-11am PT (1-2pm ET)

- General training session (you are here now!) [muted & no chat]

11-11:30am PT (2-2:30pm ET)

- General Q&A [conversation & chat enabled!]
 - Stay put in this Zoom room
- Clinical supplement training [conversation & chat enabled!]
 - New Zoom room so it can also be recorded & shared!
 - Link is in chat for those who have not registered yet.
 - *Meeting ID:* 889 3116 6838
 - *Passcode:* 189907

*** All Zoom sessions today will be recorded ***

Today's plan

- ❑ What'd you sign up to do, exactly? (What is ASFP!?)
- ❑ *Expectations* for ASFP editors and applicants
- ❑ Editing
- ❑ Support during “edit-a-thon”
- ❑ Feedback review
- ❑ What do we know about ASFP applicants?
- ❑ Next steps
- ❑ Q&A or Clinical supplement

What is ASFP?

Our goal is provide fast, constructive feedback and editing support for the application statements of underrepresented psychology (and related) PhD applicants.

Intended for people whose applications are...

- for **Psychology PhD programs this year** (not PsyD, not MAs, not Counseling...).
- within **categories for which we can provide editing support** (i.e. Clinical, Social, Cognitive, and Developmental).
- for programs based in the **USA**.

How ASFP works

1. Applicants submit their statements (in whatever form they are in)
 - **October 23-26, Monday-Thursday**
2. We rank applicants by priority with respect to our focus and randomly select *within* applicants with priority.
3. We match applicants to **two editors**, at least one of whom is a faculty member
 - We offer applicants the option to get feedback from two non-faculty editors (i.e., graduate students or post-docs) if no faculty are available.
4. Editors receive *anonymized* statements & the “**edit-a-thon**” begins.
 - **Sat. October 28, 7am PT (10am ET)** until **Wed. November 1, 6pm PT (9pm ET)**.
5. Applicants receive an email with two *anonymous* pieces of feedback.
 - **Friday November 3 by 9pm PT (12am ET)**

Who we're focused on

Applicants self-report whether they...

- Identify as **underrepresented in psychology** with respect to one or more of their identities
- Have **limited access** to mentors informed about the PhD application process

...which we use to prioritize applicants.

*Depending on the number of statements submitted and editor capacity, it is possible that editors may review statements from applicants who do not self-report as one or both of the above.

Who is doing this?

YOU the Editors! (244 people: 46 faculty, 33 post docs, 165 PhD students from 90 institutions)

Adelphi University, Arizona State University, Baldwin Wallace University, Bates College, Boston College, Boston University, Brown University, Carnegie Mellon University, Case Western Reserve University, Claremont Graduate University, Cleveland State University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Delaware State University, Duke University, Emory University, Florida International University, Florida State, Francis Marion University, George Washington University, Georgia Southern University, Harvard University, Indiana University, Kent State University, Louisiana State University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Midwestern University, New York University, Northwestern University, Occidental College, Ohio University, Oregon Health and Science University, Pennsylvania State University, Princeton University, Purdue University, Randolph-Macon College, Rosalind Franklin University, Rutgers University, San Diego State University, Smith College, Stanford University, State University of New York, Albany, Stony Brook University, Temple University, Texas Tech University, The Ohio State University, The University of Toledo, Tufts University, University of Denver, University of Arizona, University of California, Los Angeles, University of California, Merced, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Irvine, University of California, San Diego, University of California, Santa Barbara, University of California, Santa Cruz, University of Colorado, University of Delaware, University of Denver, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Houston, University of Illinois, Springfield, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, University of Iowa, University of Kansas, University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, University of Maryland, College Park, University of Minnesota, University of Nevada, University of New Mexico, University of North Carolina, University of North Dakota, University of Notre Dame, University of Pittsburgh, University of Rochester, University of South Carolina, University of South Florida, University of Southern California, University of Texas at Austin, University of Texas at El Paso, University of Toledo, University of Utah, University of Washington, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Yale University

With the potential capacity to give > **1,200 pieces of feedback**

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You should expect to see...

1) **Variability** across statements

Completeness, length, quality of writing, quantity and quality of experience...

2) **Questions and comments** from applicants

*Applicants are encouraged to include questions or comments about their statements (e.g. parts of their statement they are unsure about). Roughly **70%** of applicants do this each year!*

What can applicants expect from YOU?

Feedback that is...

- **high-level** (not copy-editing)
- **supportive** (letting applicants know what IS working)
- **constructive** (*how* applicants can improve their statement)
- **thorough** (enough feedback to guide applicants' next steps)
- **anonymous** (avoid identifying information in your feedback)

What can applicants expect from YOU?

Flexibility

- **Meet each applicant where they are** (variability in statements means variability in your feedback). Remember **why** you're here and **who** you're here for!

Rubric

- Editors are required to use **the ASFP rubric** (covered in more detail later on today and in the editing workshop)

Answers to their questions and concerns

- Editors will **address applicants' specific questions and concerns** about their statements

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What are you editing?

The application/personal statement

- **One** component of the PhD application in which they write about:
 - Interest in psychology
 - Why they are pursuing graduate school
 - Previous experience
 - Why they are choosing this specific program
 - Who they would want to work with and why they are a good match
- Usually about 2-3 pages, or 750-1500 words
- So what makes an effective personal statement?

Effective statement structure

1. Who are they?

- a. Introduction of **self, interests, & motivations** for grad school application

2. What have they done?

- a. Concrete, personal detail and narrative throughout
- b. Establishes how **experiences** have shaped *interests and motivations*, and thus how they relate to *this application* and *future goals*

3. What do they want to do?

- a. Discussion of **future academic interests and goals**
- b. Demonstrate **alignment** with the school, program, and potential **PI**

Effective statement content

An application statement is an *argument* that one is **ready for a PhD** and **an ideal fit** for a specific program/PI.

Demonstrating readiness

- **Capacity:** Mentions relevant abilities and skills, addresses shortcomings in their application
- **Interests:** Emphasizes which ideas/questions they want to pursue
- **Motivation:** Communicates why they care about the questions at hand, deeply want to pursue them, and that they are making an informed decision about completing a PhD

Demonstrating fit

- **Understands program/PI:** Mentions specifics about the program (e.g. strengths) and research of PI
- **Synergy with program/PI:** Articulates how future goals match the program focus, how their interests align with PI, and the value they add to that PI's lab

Effective statement writing

- Each section is **organized**, either chronologically or by theme
- Uses specific **examples & details** to support overall narrative
 - *Show don't tell*: Use prior experience to *demonstrate* (not *state*) readiness, relevant skills, and personal attributes
- **Clearly written**: avoids jargon and vague language
- **Engaging and genuine** narrative voice
 - Gives a sense of the “person behind the statement”
 - Avoids clichés or colloquialisms that may reduce clarity

What are some common pitfalls? 1/2

- The content “misses the mark” of a personal statement’s goals
 - Missing key components discussed previously
 - Too much focus on less relevant extracurricular activities
 - Superficial name-dropping
 - Doesn’t mention why they’re applying to *this* program/PI
 - Biased language or excessive personal disclosure
- Weaknesses in structure or writing
 - Lacks organization and flow - feels disjointed
 - Vague or generic, lacks personal detail, seems cliché
 - Reads like a CV - a list of activities without a narrative flow, elaboration, or connection to personal interests & motivation

What are some common pitfalls? 2/2

- Statement is too general
 - Doesn't mention the specific school, mentor, or area of research they are interested in.
 - Repeats quotes from the PI's website, without mentioning how it relates to them, their values, or their goals.
- Doesn't leave room for growth
 - Too specific/concrete about interests or techniques
 - Aim for: **Committed** to the **big picture**, **flexible** in the **details** (but *has* details)

What you're doing: High-level feedback

How? Using our handy rubric!! We'll discuss that shortly.

What you're *not* doing: Copy-editing

Unclear whether this sentence is serving a purpose. It seems redundant with the second one.

~~Within the vast field of psychology, it has become increasingly clear that there is a rise of psychiatric diseases,~~

~~specifically depression and addiction.~~ I am interested in the field study of cognitive development, and the results of this

What type of cognitive development? It is a very broad term.

cognition, that lead to depression and addiction. My main interests include cognitive psychology- specifically the effects of

Not sure what cognition you're talking about at this point and it is not clear what "results" from cognition. Might want to rewrite this sentence.

You don't mention depression anywhere else in this paragraph...

Cognitive psychology or cognitive development? Pick one and try to be consistent with your terminology throughout

addiction and decision making on the brain. ~~After~~ Studying addiction in my undergraduate program at University, it

opened up a field of curiosity for me regarding the specific areas in the brain that are affected by addiction, and

You're starting to get more specific by talking about decision-making, but what kind of decision-making do

you mean? Risk? Decision-making? You're decision-making? Or are you talking about decision-making?

the changes that addiction have on the brain's functioning. I had the opportunity to study addiction first hand, with women

This could be rewritten to say something like "Studying addiction during undergrad led me to wonder about the brain is involved in and influenced by addiction"

who were recently released from prison. I was able to talk with them, and counsel with them about their experiences

with addiction. I had the opportunity to study addiction first hand, with women

Providing high-level feedback in ~30 mins

1. Read their questions/notes and statement (15 mins)
2. Identify feedback you want to give using the google form rubric (5 mins)
 - Focus on sections or aspects of the statement outlined in the rubric
 - Identify areas of strength and 2-3 areas of improvement
3. Write feedback using the **VIS** mnemonic and submit the form (10 mins)
 - **Validate, Identify, and Suggest**

Giving feedback using the **VIS** mnemonic

1. **Validate** what they're doing well. We learn not only from corrective feedback but also by being told when something is working, so *point out good writing and content* when you see it. Validation also helps us accept corrective feedback.
2. **Identify** a gap between the goals of that section/component and what they've written. Use direct but supportive language to *help them see that gap* so they can learn how to address it.
3. **Suggest** concrete, constructive options for how to better accomplish the goals of that section/component. Guide them towards *specific improvements* they can make, again using a supportive tone.

The Rubric

- Description of the ASFP editor process
- Requires “**INITIAL COMMENTS**” from the editor
- Identifies and defines the purpose of 6 major features of an application statement
 - **STATEMENT INTRODUCTION**
 - **ORGANIZATION**
 - **CONTENT: READINESS & SKILLS**
 - **CONTENT: FIT**
 - **VOICE AND STYLE**
 - **LANGUAGE, CLARITY, & WRITING TECHNIQUE**
- Includes an “**ADDITIONAL NOTES**” space for comments that don’t fit the above rubric

The Editor Response Examples document provides examples of individualized introductions/summaries.

You are not expected to (and *should not*) provide feedback on every dimension. Instead, identify 2-3 areas of focus. For length: *provide a substantial paragraph (5-6 sentences) of feedback in each part.*

Attend the optional Workshop for hands-on practice using the rubric (more details later)!

What if there's more to say?

There almost certainly is. You could probably edit for hours! But you shouldn't. **Your job is to provide robust VIS-style feedback both in the 'initial comments' section and in 2-3 sections of the rubric.** And that's it!

Remember...

- There are 2 editors/statement.
- ASFP editors are not intended to serve as the *only* editors.
- Statements will vary in need.
- If in doubt or short on time, **focus on the big picture** to maximize the impact of your informed input on the statement.

*Insider tip: **save the text of your feedback** for each statement in case similar things arise across statements!*

Submitting feedback

Use the rubric in [Google forms](#)

Suggestions for editing logistics:

- Read a few statements before providing feedback to get a sense for range.
- Keep a log of which statements you've submitted.
- Use "Editor Resources" for inspiration and guidance, **especially for sensitive topics.**
- Limit your time on each statement.
- Save your feedback for each submission in a word document to save common responses.
- Don't identify yourself.
- Leave any un-addressed entries **blank.**

EDITOR RESOURCES

- Example Responses
- Example Completed Rubrics
- This presentation

Common (and valid!) concerns

- Editing statements will **take hours**.
- I'll **miss something** important, or give bad feedback.
- I'll get a statement that really needs help and **won't know how to start**.
- **I won't know the research area** well enough to assess fit.
- **I'm not supposed to fix** grammar and sentence structure errors?!
- I'll notice bigger issues with the student's application (e.g., not enough experience) and **I won't know how to proceed**.

You don't need (and can't!) cover every part of the statement. You are not The Only Editor.

Take advantage of any one of the Editor Support options! *(up next)*

Rely on the rubric & the ASFP response examples to focus your efforts.

ASFP 2023 EDITOR RESPONSE EXAMPLES

BROAD FEEDBACK FOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE

You have prepared a nice starting point for your statement. In revising it, I'd suggest further considering the goals of a statement for an application to graduate school and ensuring that it addresses the following points:

1. Discuss your career and educational goals.
2. Clearly communicate your scientific interests and areas of desired inquiry.
3. Describe specific experiences that have informed your interests and goals.
4. Demonstrate key scientific skills like critical and analytical thinking, clear scientific writing and editing, and an ability to provide a balanced reflection on your education and work experience. This is achieved by using concrete examples that produce a thoughtful narrative showing how past experiences demonstrate your readiness to apply these skills in graduate school.
5. Provide insight into who you are. Use concrete examples to describe specific experiences that demonstrate that you would be a good fit for specific graduate programs.

OVERCONFIDENT/OVERSTATED

You describe a number of impressive achievements and experiences in your statement. However, it is important to balance these achievements with consideration of opportunities for growth. Graduate school is about learning and growing. I think this statement could be improved by addressing language that may be read as overconfident/overstated and reflecting on (and articulating) important opportunities for growth.

LACKING EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY

You have described a number of impressive accomplishments in this statement! Of particular note, you seem to be building independence as a researcher which is very positive and critical at this stage. However, research is often a collaborative process that depends on successful communication between and acknowledgement of team members. I think your application could be improved with reflection on your collaborative endeavors and communication of your promise as a collaborative scholar. For example, you could *[INSERT OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS COLLABORATION]*.

INSENSITIVE LANGUAGE

This statement includes some problematic and harmful language. For example, *[INSERT LANGUAGE]*. Further developing sensitivity in discussion of topics such as *[INSERT TOPIC]*, will improve your application but also your efficacy as a colleague, collaborator, prospective educator, and mentor.

I think the tone of your messaging could be improved in places to better communicate your commitment to equity that you describe eloquently elsewhere in your application. For example, *[INSERT PHRASE]* could be harmful - you might consider reworking or deleting.

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Support during the edit-a-thon

- We are here to support you during the edit-a-thon!
 - Office hours
 - Zoom coworking
 - Editor team members available via email (editor-support@asfp.io)
 - Technical issue support available via email (report-issue@asfp.io)

Office Hours

- **Purpose:** Answer *any* questions you may have!
- Every day of the edit-a-thon, there will be a two-hour office hours session in the morning and in the afternoon.
 - The schedule will be sent out before the edit-a-thon begins.
- Examples of things to come to office hours for:
 - You are having trouble with your submission/technical problems getting in your feedback.
 - You have a question about how to respond to a certain statement.
 - You aren't sure the best way to word a specific kind of feedback.

Zoom coworking

- **Purpose:** Build community and work alongside other editors!
- Editing feels like a sprint - but in a good way. You know you are working in parallel with roughly 240 others in a short time window to get feedback to hundreds of applicants.
 - Feedback from a past editor: “[What was] MOST helpful was connecting with another editor over the process of editing statements... [It] was big in giving that feeling of community.”
- There will be a Core Team member present, but coworking is not primarily for questions.

Editor and technical teams on-call

- **Purpose:** more intensive 1-on-1 support than office hours allows.
 - E.g. If you get your first statement and feel very unprepared to provide feedback.
- For **editing support** email editor-support@asfp.io - every day, a team member is on-call to support you, answer your Qs, and meet with you on Zoom to edit with you or discuss a more in-depth challenge you've discovered in the statement.
 - Reason: some editors have felt nervous doing their first statement or had a very difficult statement and weren't sure how to respond.
- For **technical support** email report-issue@asfp.io - if your forms/documents are not working for some reason, email us here and we will address it.
- Please be patient! We may be helping other Editors.

Summary

I have a question, a problem, or need a quick consult



Office hours,
join zoom link

I want to edit alongside other editors!



Zoom coworking,
join zoom link

I am really confused and need more intensive help with a full statement



Email ASFP for
the on-call team
member

Editor Support Availability

- All support sources will be offered **Saturday October 28 to Tuesday October 31**
- Wednesday (Nov. 1; last day of the edit-a-thon) there will be **no office hours or zoom coworking**.
 - Someone will be checking the ASFP email & social media accounts if you have an emergency.

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Feedback review

The Core Feedback Review Group and a small subset of returning editors (Feedback Reviewers) will **review all editor feedback** for...

- 1) Basic copy-editing (e.g. misspellings)
- 2) Formatting
- 3) Common feedback issues

*BUT you should **NEVER** count on feedback reviewers catching something!!*

*Assume all feedback you write **goes straight to the applicant.***

Feedback review

Why?

Feedback review is done **in support of the editor**. The main goal is to ensure that *what* editors wanted to communicate, and the *way* in which they wanted to communicate it, is coming across clearly!

The vast majority of the time, feedback will need no significant review, and we will simply pass your feedback along directly to the applicant.

Anonymity

Editors and applicants remain **anonymous** during feedback review unless the ASFP Feedback Review Group needs to contact the editor.

Process for following-up on feedback

When feedback is flagged for follow-up by a reviewer:

- 1) The editor may be...
 - contacted by a member of the ASFP Core Team.
 - asked to revise the feedback.
- 2) A different editor may be asked to provide feedback for the statement.

Giving constructive and supportive feedback on personal statements is sometimes hard. We're here to **help you stick the landing**.

Timing of feedback review

The edit-a-thon ends November 1 at 6pm PT (9pm ET) and feedback is returned to applicants on November 3...

There will be a lot (>1200 pieces) of feedback to review!

How can you help ASFP return feedback to applicants on time?

- *So glad you asked.* Help us get a head start on feedback review by:
 - **Submitting your feedback in the first three days** of the edit-a-thon (Sat. - Mon., October 28-30).
 - Doing your best to follow the training here to ensure your feedback is **high-level, supportive, constructive, thorough, and anonymous.**
 - **Last year 1 in 3 pieces of editor feedback** were flagged for review - let's aim to cut that down!

8 Common feedback issues

1. **Feedback is too short** - leave initial comments + feedback on 2-3 rubric areas. If 2 rubric areas, aim for substantial paragraphs (5-6 sentences each). If giving a 3rd area of feedback, it can be shorter (3-4 sentences). *See examples of too short v good length.*
2. **Not being constructive or supportive** - identifying problems is not enough. Suggest solutions to problems *and* identify successes & strengths. VIS!
3. **Assuming things about applicants** - applicants could be anyone and could have any background. Don't assume unless explicitly told.
4. **One-sided advice** - resist overprescribing. If there are multiple reasonable perspectives on an issue (e.g. number of faculty members to list), give feedback that acknowledges the possibility of alternative routes.
5. **Identifying yourself** - while it's OK to share your position or background to contextualize your feedback (e.g., identify as a postdoc; as someone who does computational work, etc.), do not offer info that could identify you!
6. **Overly generic feedback** - ensure feedback is tailored to *this* statement and applicant.
7. **Copy-pasting too much of the applicant's statement** - If you want to refer to a part of the applicant's statement, paste in just a sentence. Large sections cause technical errors.
8. **Feedback that is dismissive or overly critical** - believe in and support your applicants! It can be important to think about how *the applicant* will receive your comments.

Navigating Self-Disclosure

You will likely review statements that disclose details about an applicant's background, experiences, identities, and/or mental health.

*This can feel hard to navigate effectively, sensitively,
and appropriately as an editor!*

We're here to help you support applicants and provide comments & edits around these issues. We provide **guidance** and **example language** in the **Editor Resources folder** if you have concerns about a student's self-disclosure.

Navigating Self-Disclosure, cont'd

Principles to guide your responses:

- Our goal is to **support applicants in getting interviews**. This means helping them craft a focused and strong argument where they make informed decisions about self-disclosure.
- It's imperative that our feedback **embrace applicants' intentional disclosure of social identities** (e.g., race, gender identity, SES).
 - *The **only time** in 3 years and 732 applicants that an applicant has reported feeling hurt by ASFP feedback happened when an editor suggested not disclosing a social identity because it could lead to rejection. So let's avoid that!!*
- However, even though discussions of personal or familial mental health experiences can be used to motivate one's grad school applications, *some faculty/programs have (un)written rules that they do not admit applicants who disclose psychopathology*, even though there's very active scholarship on the benefits of lived experience in being a psychologist!! **Whether or not we agree with this stance, it's wise to let students know about these 'rules'** so they can make an **informed choice**.

Navigating Self-Disclosure

Portion of an example response:

I notice that in your application, you mentioned your personal lived experiences with mental health issues. I (and ASFP!) believe that this perspective is important and valued. Entire books have been written devoted to mental health in those who pursue graduate training in psychology, and [recent research](#) highlights that psychological scientists commonly experience mental health difficulties.

That said, we want to take this opportunity to highlight that there can be pros and cons to sharing these kinds of experiences in a personal statement for graduate programs in psychology. In addition to the above 'pros,' discussing your personal experiences with mental health difficulties may help you to genuinely convey how you became interested in the field of psychology and may help you express specific values and interests. However ...

Use ASFP-provided example responses (in the *Editor Resource Folder*) to handle these (sensitive) situations effectively!

Remember to **adapt** these examples, not just copy-paste without tailoring.

Contact us if you'd like help!

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What do we know about the ASFP applicants?

We expect **500-1000 of them**.

They will be **diverse**. In 2022...

- 73% identified as a **racial or ethnic minority**
- 41% identified as **first-generation college students**
- 40% identified as **minoritized sexual orientation and/or gender diverse**
- 35% identified as **low-income**
- 33% identified as having **limited access to informed mentorship**
- 14% identified as **disabled/differently abled**
- 15% identified as **immigrants**

They will **come from all over!**

- *Almost all US states*
- *International (39% in 2022)*

Their **degree of preparation will vary**; they may not have all had access to research experiences, mentorship, or informed guidance...

They're really looking forward to your feedback, and are appreciative of the time & energy you're investing in them.

Previous ASFP applicants wanted you to know...

*"Imposter syndrome is real when applying to grad school. **Positive feedback goes a long way.**"*

*"...Every voice matters, and **both students and faculty should not underestimate their power to help aspiring students** through this program."*

*"This was **life changing** for someone like me who didn't have access or much knowledge... **you can truly help** someone who wouldn't otherwise have the support."*

*"It's incredibly helpful to those of us with no mentor. **Yours was the only feedback I received from a psychology faculty member.**"*

*"Some of us **come from places with no mentor whatsoever**, so your generosity is extremely valuable."*

*"Be as **positive** as possible while providing **constructive criticism.**"*

"I am absolutely filled with gratitude for the gift of your time and energy... I understand that you all have many competing demands on your time... so I am grateful for your heart for a more diverse and equitable application process."

- ASFP 2020 Participant

"ASFP is a program that might change students' lives."

- ASFP 2021 Participant

"It's so unusual to find a resource that is completely free and confidential, and knowing that someone is there to help you for nothing in return is so uplifting when you're doing this on your own."

- ASFP 2022 Participant

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Next Steps

Before editing begins

Recommended **Editing Workshop Friday, October 27, 10-11am PT (1-2pm ET)**

- Hands-on practice with editing real example ASFP applicant statements.
- Registration is required!
- **Will not be recorded** and only those who attend the workshop will have access to example ASFP statements [everyone will have access to example editor responses].

Editing **resources**

- Look out for an email from team@asfp.io with a link to the resources (*Zoom recording, slides, response examples, rubrics, etc*)

Next Steps

During the edit-a-thon...

By **Saturday, October 28 at 7am PT (10am ET)**, you'll **receive the statements assigned to you**.

- Look out for a personal **email from team@asfp.io** with links to forms for each of your matched applicants.
 - *Email or DM us on Twitter if you have questions!*

By **Wednesday, November 1 at 6pm PT (9pm ET)**, you must have **submitted your feedback** for all statements assigned to you.

THANK YOU!

Questions?

team@asfp.io | <https://www.asfp.io>



@asfp_phd



@asfp.io



asfp-phd

Zoom Guidelines

For the *general training session*, all attendees will be **muted** and the **chat feature will be unavailable**.

For the *Q&A and Clinical Supplement*, attendees can ask questions by **unmuting themselves** or **using the chat feature**.

Example: High-level feedback

“Within the vast field of psychology, it has become increasingly clear that there is a rise of psychiatric diseases, specifically depression and addiction. I am interested in the field of Cognitive Development, and the results of this cognition, that lead to depression and addiction. My main interests include cognitive psychology- specifically the effects of addiction and decision making on the brain. After studying addiction in my undergraduate program at University, it opened up a field of curiosity for me regarding the specific areas in the brain that are affected by addiction, and the changes that addiction have on the brain’s functioning. I had the opportunity to study addiction first hand, with women who were recently released from prison. I was able to talk with them, and counsel with them about thier experiences with addiction, and helped them cope with their new world outside of prison. I also took a class in my undergraduate called “Drugs, Behavior, and the Brain,” where we focused on understanding the behavioral effects of drugs, addiction, and treatment on the human brain the basic physiology behind the processes. This class motivated me to gain a deeper understanding of drug use and addiction that extends beyond the undergraduate level.”

Example: High-level feedback

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Goal: identify interests and establish experiences

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Very general

Could be more active

Reorganize to be chronological

Example: High-level feedback

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Suggestion 1: You have some quality experiences in the domain of addiction, but the descriptions are vague and not clearly connected to a specific interest you intend to pursue in graduate school. You may focus on better contextualizing experience in reference to your goals as a scientist.

Example: High-level feedback

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Suggestion 2: The first-hand experience working with women suffering from addiction is great - make that more active and intentional (“I sought out the role as a counselor”), and make it clear what your role was.

What you're doing: High-level feedback

How?

1. Break the statement into sections
2. Identify the applicant's goal in each section
3. Identify 1-3 areas for improvement
4. Feedback
 - Give concrete suggestions for accomplishing goals better
 - What should they be doing, but are not (i.e. what's missing?)
 - Validate good writing and content when you see it

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Effective statement content

- An application statement is an **argument** that one is **ready for a PhD** and **an ideal fit** for a specific program/PI
- Demonstrating readiness (i.e., **capacity, skills, interests, and motivation**)
 - Mentions relevant abilities and skills
 - Emphasizes interests in ideas/questions
 - Shows they are making an informed decision
 - Communicates why they care & want to do this.
 - Addresses shortcomings in their application
- Demonstrating fit (i.e., **understanding of** and **synergy with** the program/PI)
 - Mentions specifics about the program that they are interested in
 - Future goals match the program focus
 - Conveys that they understand the strengths of the program
 - Conveys that they understand the research of the PI
 - Articulates how interests align with PI, the value they add to that PI's lab

Communicating constructive feedback

An example:

“.....Following my internship, I designed an experiment that evaluated how ADHD disclosure biased college students’ perception of their peers. Participants were randomly assigned to complete a cooperative game with a hypothetical peer who either did or did not disclose having ADHD. I found that peers who disclosed having ADHD were evaluated significantly less favorably than peers who did not disclose having ADHD. I presented this work at the 2013 Midwestern Psychological Association conference. Additionally, I designed several other studies examining perception of minority or disadvantaged groups.”

Feedback:

“You note several additional studies were designed but don’t provide any detail. This could be an area to expand and provide additional concrete evidence of your specific research interests and experiences.”

Communicating constructive feedback

Concern:

“Near the end of my undergraduate education, I became increasingly interested in racial prejudice. During my senior year, a series of racial slurs were written on various campus monuments, leading many minority students to report intense feelings of ostracism. Although this was very unsettling, the researcher inside me found this intriguing. Specifically, I wanted to better understand the mechanisms underlying this overt racism and how further incidents might be prevented.”

Feedback:

“I appreciate your sharing about recent instances of discrimination at your home institution. I think the tone of your messaging could be improved to better communicate your commitment to equity. For example, describing instances of racism as “intriguing” could be harmful - you might consider reworking or deleting.”