

Writing An Academic Biography

Purpose: An academic biography gives the essentials of your academic career. Biographies are often requested when you submit to a conference or journal, or for posting on department or personal websites. It should be tailored to the context in which it will be read (publication, conference, website, etc.).

General Guidelines:

- **Basic information:** Include who you are, what you do, where you've worked and studied, and why you're worth noticing.
- **Think about your professional branding:** Your bio essentially works as your personal advertisement. You want to present yourself concisely and professionally so that other professionals can easily find and connect with you. To make it easy for other scholars to find you and your research, consider the current "hot topics" in your discipline and how your work connects to them. Or, think about the key terms used by academics with research similar to yours. For example, if your research focuses on recent changes in ritual music performed by women of minority groups in South Asia, then your key terms might include: gender, globalization, modernity, ethnic minority, indigeneity, performance, ritual, and embodied epistemology. Include these words in your bio.
- **Context, audience, purpose:** Where are you submitting this bio? Who is going to read it? What does your reader need to know about you? For example, if you're submitting a bio as part of a fellowship application, the reviewers will be reading it and you'll want to highlight your expertise and experience. If you're submitting a bio for your department website, then prospective graduate students, colleagues within your discipline, and the undergraduate students in your T.A. sections will be reading it. In each case, consider your audience to determine what aspects of your career and research to highlight.
- **Organization:** There are several ways to organize your bio:
 - Broad to narrow: State your general research topics then your specific projects.
 - Narrow to broad: Talk about your specific research projects and then how they relate to your discipline.
 - Timeline: Show how your academic trajectory, your interests, and your work have developed over time.
 - Thematic: Have a sentence or two on each of the following: where you currently work or what you currently do; your research topics, and the theory and methodology you use; grants or awards, teaching accomplishments, publications or creative work, and professional services (i.e. serving as a journal editor or on a professional board/council).
- **First person or third person?** In general, third person is more professional than first.
- **Review and revise regularly:** Receive a prestigious grant or fellowship? Get published? Finish your masters or Ph.D. program? Like any other professional document, your bio should be updated regularly to reflect your most recent work.

Biography Content:

Short bio: Usually 35-50 words and used for conferences or social media sites. It should include:

- Your name
- Your position
- Your department
- Your institution
- Your research interests

Mid-Length bio: Usually 100-150 words and used on a department's website. In addition to the above information, you can add:

- Degrees held
- A brief sentence about your dissertation/ masters thesis
- Recent or ongoing scholarly projects
- Publications
- Notable awards and honors for research, teaching, and/or any creative projects you've completed (if relevant).

Longer bio: Usually 150 to 400 words, can be broken into more than one paragraph, and used for your professional website, department website, or scholarly publications. In addition to the above, you can add:

- How your research interests are situated in a larger field of study
- Non-academic interests or hobbies
- Information about your background (especially if relevant to your research interests)

Further Resources:

- How to Write a Professional Bio: <http://www.profkrg.com/how-to-write-a-professional-bio>
- Writing a Professional Biography: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/kearnscenter/Blogs/Biography.html>
- Narrating Your Professional Life: <http://www.gradhacker.org/2011/09/23/narrating-your-professional-life-writing-the-academic-bio/>
- The Professor is In: <http://theprofessorisin.com/about-the-professor-2/>