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## Applying to the Exchange Program

When applying for the exchange program, what is termed the “essay” portion of the application is actually a letter of intent or statement of purpose to help your prospective host institution determine whether you are a student they would be interested in having at their institution. As such, you need to address your host institution as the primary audience for this letter; the selection committee at Emily Carr may also review this letter, but they do not expect this letter to be addressed to them.

### PURPOSE

This letter serves as an introduction to your prospective host school: they won’t get the chance to meet you in person, so this letter (combined with your portfolio) is all they will know about you. Make sure, then, that you write your letter in your own voice: you should aim to be professional and clear in your writing, but you needn’t try to sound overly sophisticated. In fact, you want to make sure that your message is as accessible as it can be, and your natural voice is probably the best way to do that.

Your primary aim in this short letter is to present yourself and your work in such a way that the host institution can see clearly why you would be a good fit for their program as well as what you might contribute to their school. To that end, you need to be very selective and specific about what you write about your work. You want to demonstrate that you have thoroughly researched your prospective host institution and have carefully considered what you will gain from studying there. Avoid clichés such as “Art is my life” or “Design defines who I am.” Most art and design students feel this way, so you’re not really communicating anything new or setting your application apart when you use generic phrases like these. Also avoid general statements such as “I want to study abroad because I feel it will expose me to new ideas.” Again, most applicants feel that way. What is it, in particular, about this school or program that makes you want to study there?

### STRUCTURE

You have been asked to structure your letter in 3 or 4 paragraphs. Your first paragraph – About Me – should be very brief: identify yourself, explain who you are, where and what you study, and what your major interests are. You don’t need to give a lot of detail about when you first became interested in art or design or media: just keep it simple and direct.

Your second paragraph – About My Work – is where you really have the chance to demonstrate the nature of your practice. Describe not only what you make, but why you make it and how. You could describe your materials, your process, your subject matter, or all of the above. You could explain what your work does and how it may operate on the viewer. You may also want to talk about issues that you explore in your work, but if you do, make sure you explain how and why you explore these issues: the statement, “My work deals with issues of gender and identity,”

does not communicate much unless you provide details about how and why. If you use specialized terminology be sure you are using it for a reason and that your prospective audience will understand your meaning; if you can use a simple word in place of an overly complicated one, you will make your reader's work much easier.

In your third paragraph, outline what you know about the host institution and why it interests you specifically. For this, you need to do some research. Find out as much as you can about the school and the programs offered. How do you see yourself fitting in? This is not the place to mention that your aunt's cousin lives in the same city or that you think Paris is a great place to live. These kinds of details make it seem like you want to be tourist, not a student. To be most effective, you need to be specific about the school and the program and what you think they can offer you as a developing artist. Perhaps they will provide access to new materials and methodologies. Perhaps they have a philosophical or theoretical orientation to their program that closely aligns with your own. Perhaps they have particular instructors working in your field that you would like to work with.

In your final paragraph, you will outline your plan of study at the host school and explain how it will enrich your practice. Why do you think you would benefit from study at this institution? How will it affect your work as an artist? A sentence like, "Travelling to a new country will help me develop as an artist," is pretty much a given for all students. How in particular do you see your studies at this institution changing your practice? Why do you think this change will occur?

## **NOTE**

If your host institution conducts classes in a language other than English, you need to explain how you will manage this aspect of the curriculum. If you are fluent in the language of instruction, write your letter in that language (and then provide an English translation for the Emily Carr selection committee).