

A positionality statement is a reflective narrative in which a researcher or educator explicitly discloses their social, cultural, and professional identities, values, and lived experiences—and how these may influence their perspectives, assumptions, and approaches in research, teaching, or professional practice.

It is grounded in the idea that no one is entirely “neutral” or “objective” because our worldviews are shaped by our personal history and social location.

Why It’s Important

Positionality statements are significant for several reasons:

a) Transparency in Research

- They make explicit the lens through which knowledge is produced, helping readers critically evaluate the research context and potential biases.

b) Ethical Practice

- By naming power dynamics (e.g., between a researcher and study participants), positionality statements promote accountability and respectful engagement.

c) Reflexivity and Self-Awareness

- They encourage researchers or educators to reflect on their own assumptions and positional power, reducing the risk of unconsciously reproducing bias.

d) Building Trust

- For marginalized or historically excluded communities, transparency about positionality can demonstrate respect and support more equitable collaborations.

e) Alignment with EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility)

- In educational contexts, they model inclusive and reflective practice, showing students that knowledge is situated rather than purely objective.

Positionality Statement Template

1. Introduction: Who You Are

Purpose: Establish who you are in a broad, contextual sense.

- Prompts:
 - What social and cultural identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, language, class, ability) shape you?
 - Where did you grow up? How has your geographic or community background influenced you?
 - Are there defining experiences (e.g., rural upbringing, immigration, first-generation student) that matter here?

Example:

I am a [identity markers you choose to share], who grew up in [geographic or community context]. My early experiences in [rural/urban/other environment] shaped how I see [topic or field].

2. Educational and Professional Background

Purpose: Show how your academic training intersects with your personal context.

- Prompts:
 - What is your discipline and training?
 - How does your field's dominant worldview shape your approach?
 - How do your personal experiences add to or challenge this lens?

Example:

My training in [discipline] has provided me with a [methodological or conceptual] framework, but my lived experiences—particularly [formative experience]—often push me to integrate [alternative perspectives or interdisciplinary approaches].

3. Formative Values and Worldview

Purpose: Highlight how your upbringing, community, or personal history influence your values.

- Prompts:
 - What values did you inherit from your family, community, or early environment (e.g., work ethic, stewardship, collaboration)?
 - How have these values evolved?
 - How do they inform your approach to research or teaching?

Example:

Growing up in [context] taught me [specific values, e.g., sustainability, leadership, interconnectedness], and these values continue to inform how I approach [research/teaching/mentorship].

4. Relationship to Topic or Community

Purpose: Make visible how you are positioned relative to the subject matter or people you work with.

- Prompts:
 - Do you have personal or professional ties to your topic or participants?
 - Have you learned from specific communities or knowledge systems (e.g., Indigenous teachings)?

Example:

My understanding of [topic] has been profoundly shaped by [community or knowledge source], whose perspectives have deepened my appreciation for [concept, e.g., sustainability, knowledge-sharing].

5. Reflexivity and Ongoing Commitment

Purpose: Acknowledge positionality as a living practice.

- Prompts:
 - How do you stay aware of your biases and assumptions?

- What practices (e.g., collaboration, seeking feedback, community engagement) help you remain accountable?

Example:

I see positionality as an evolving process. I continue to reflect on my assumptions, engage with diverse perspectives, and adapt my practices to ensure that my work is inclusive, equitable, and grounded in mutual respect.