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Specimen Report Suite

How to Read & Use This System

This specimen package presents a real, anonymized PhD applicant case, reconstructed through the **Scholaria™ Pathway system** - a structured, multi-document framework designed to transform raw profiles into funded PhD outcomes.

By viewing this document, you agree that this report will not be pilfered or used for your own or any commercial purpose. Please note that the documents in this suite has elements that could be prepared because the subject applicant shows a decent level of readiness for Ph.D. applications. Your documents may or may not carry those details depending on how research-ready your profile comes across at this time. In the event, your preparedness is still under the required basic level and you need a few months to build it up, we will come back and analyze your profile after some time with no charge.

Each report you see here is not standalone. It is part of an **integrated decision system**. Together, these documents move an applicant through four critical stages:

Diagnosis → Positioning → Direction → Execution



What This Package Contains

This specimen includes four core reports, each serving a distinct strategic function:

1. Profile Gap Report - Diagnostic Layer

Establishes the applicant's current standing relative to funded PhD benchmarks. It identifies structural gaps, signal weaknesses, and readiness timelines. As seen in the opening report, even strong candidates may be **under-signaled in academic systems despite strong real-world experience**.

2. Academic & Research Positioning Report - Interpretation Layer

Reconstructs the profile from a faculty decision perspective. It answers the most critical question: **“How will a faculty member interpret this candidate?”**

This document converts experience into **research identity**, moving the applicant from:

- practitioner → researcher
- broad interest → defined problem

3. Research Direction Map - Strategic Layer

Defines where the candidate should compete within the global research ecosystem. It is not a list of interests - it is a **probability map**.

As demonstrated in the specimen, strong positioning emerges only when:

- high-alignment domains are prioritized
- misaligned or “attractive but wrong” areas are actively avoided

4. Target University Portfolio - Decision Layer

Transforms research direction into a **probability-engineered application portfolio**.

This is where strategy becomes real:

- universities are selected based on alignment, funding, and competitiveness
- applications are distributed across risk categories
- outcomes are designed, not left to chance

5. Detailed Application Checklist - Execution Layer

The final system that ensures nothing breaks during execution.

This is not a checklist - it is an **application command center**, ensuring:

- document coherence
- faculty alignment
- deadline control
- error-free submissions

As emphasized in the specimen, even strong applicants fail without structured execution systems .

How to Use These Reports

This package is meant to be read **sequentially - not selectively**.

Step 1 - Accept the Diagnosis

Start with the Profile Gap Report.

Do not skim. This defines your **true starting point**.

Step 2 - Internalize Your Positioning

The Academic & Research Positioning Report is the most critical document.

It defines:

- your research identity
- your narrative
- your intellectual direction

If this is unclear, everything else collapses.

Step 3 - Lock Your Direction

Use the Research Direction Map to:

- eliminate noise
- focus on high-probability domains
- define your PhD-level research trajectory

Step 4 - Execute Through the Portfolio

The University Portfolio converts strategy into action.

This is where:

- decisions become concrete
- applications become targeted
- probability becomes engineered

Step 5 - Control Execution Ruthlessly

Use the Checklist as your operational system.

No application should be submitted outside this framework.

Final Strategic Insight

Most applicants try to improve their profile.

This system does something fundamentally different:

It improves how the profile is understood, positioned, and evaluated.

Because at the PhD level:

- Profiles are often comparable
- Outcomes are not

And the difference is driven by:

Clarity. Alignment. Execution.

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REAL SPECIMEN

Profile Gap Report

Contents

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- 3. Benchmark Profile - Funded PhD Admit (Behavioral Design) 3
- 4. Gap Analysis Table 3
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Profile Gap Report

Candidate: [REDACTED]

Field: Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) / Behavioral & Persuasive Design

Objective: Funded PhD Admission

Document Type: Strategic Diagnostic Report

1. Purpose of This Report

This report evaluates the candidate's academic, research, and professional profile relative to the profile typically observed among successful funded PhD admits in **Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), Behavioral Science, and Persuasive Technology systems**.

The objective is to:

- Identify gaps limiting funded PhD admission probability
- Classify gaps by severity and impact
- Provide a structured improvement and positioning strategy
- Define readiness timeline for PhD applications

This document should be used as a strategic planning tool - not merely as an evaluation report – in conjunction with the other Scholaria™ reports on Academic & Research Positioning, and Research Direction Map.

2. Candidate Snapshot

Academic Background

- [B.Tech](#) - Mechanical Engineering - RGPV
 - M.Des - Transportation Design - UPES
 - PhD Research Exposure - Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (Department of Design, DIVINE Lab; ~1.5 years)
-

Research Focus

- Persuasive technologies and behavioral design
 - Cross-cultural human-computer interaction
 - Cognitive triggers, motivation, and habit formation
 - Ethical AI-driven nudging and behavioral systems
-

Research & Industry Integration

- Behavioral research at IIT Delhi (ethnographic + cognitive modeling)
- Lead UX Researcher at Bosch (global behavioral systems)
- Cross-cultural research (India + Europe)
- Built persuasion taxonomies and behavioral frameworks



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Profile Gap Report

Professional Experience

- Head of Department (Design / UX) - Chandigarh University
- Lead UX Researcher - Bosch Global Software
- Founder - Creative Stoica (global mentoring platform)
- Industry exposure: Bosch, GM, 3M, Honeywell

Publications

- **No formal academic publications** (critical signal gap)

Overall Profile Classification:

Industry-Dominant Behavioral Design Researcher with Emerging Academic Identity

3. Benchmark Profile - Funded PhD Admit (Behavioral Design)

You must compare your profile with the funded PhD admits in HCI / Behavioral Science programs (U.S., Europe), which typically have:

Area	Typical Funded Admit Profile
Academic Degree	Strong MS/MDes with research orientation
Research Experience	Lab-based + structured research output
Publications	Strong advantage (often expected in top programs)
Methods	Quantitative + qualitative rigor
Research Direction	Clearly defined and narrow
Faculty Alignment	Critical
Theoretical Framing	Very important
SOP	Research problem-driven
LOR	From academic researchers
Industry Experience	Advantage (if translated to research)

4. Gap Analysis Table

Area	Current Level	Required Level	Gap	Severity	Action
Academic Degree	Strong	Strong	None	Low	Maintain
Research Exposure	Strong (applied)	Strong (academic)	Moderate	High	Reframe as research
Publications	None	Moderate-Strong	Large	Very High	Critical gap



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2601

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Profile Gap Report

Research Method Rigor	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	High	Formalize methods
Theoretical Framing	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	High	Strengthen HCI theory base
Research Positioning	Broad	Sharp	Large	Very High	Define core problem
Faculty Alignment	Not structured	Strong	Large	Very High	Build mapping
SOP Positioning	Unknown	Strong	Moderate	High	Research-driven SOP needed
University Targeting	Unknown	Strategic	Large	Very High	Portfolio strategy needed
Academic LOR Strength	Moderate (industry-heavy)	Strong academic	Moderate	High	Secure academic referees

5. Gap Severity Summary

IMP: Read your Scholaria™ reports on Academic & Research Positioning and Research Direction Map for specific insights tailored to your profile.

High Priority Gaps*

These gaps most directly affect funded PhD admission probability.

1. Faculty alignment strategy
2. University portfolio selection strategy
3. Research positioning clarity (currently too broad)
4. Absence of academic publications
5. Conversion of industry work into research language
6. Theoretical grounding in HCI / behavioral science

Medium Priority Gaps

1. Research methodology formalization
2. SOP research narrative (problem-driven vs experience-driven)
3. Academic recommendation strength
4. Clear research trajectory definition



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Profile Gap Report

Low Priority Gaps

1. Professional experience (very strong)
2. Leadership and mentoring
3. Cross-cultural exposure
4. Industry impact

Conclusion

The candidate is **exceptionally strong in industry, leadership, and applied behavioral research**, but **under-signaled in academic research systems**.

6. Strategic Improvement Plan

IMP: Read your Scholaria™ reports on Academic & Research Positioning and Research Direction Map for specific insights tailored to your profile.

Immediate Actions (0-3 months)

- Define **core research problem** (not broad HCI interest)
- Convert industry work into **research narratives (papers, frameworks)**
- Begin **faculty research mapping (HCI + behavioral labs)**
- Identify **2-3 potential academic referees**
- Build **research CV (academic format, not industry CV)**

Medium-Term Actions (3-6 months)

- Develop **working paper / preprint (critical for top programs)**
- Build **research-focused SOP framework**
- Create **faculty-aligned research statement**
- Construct **university portfolio (tiered)**
- Initiate **faculty outreach**

Application Timeline Strategy

Application Cycle	Readiness
Apply immediately	Moderate-Low probability
Apply after 6 months positioning	High probability
Apply after 1 year with publication	Very High probability



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2601

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Profile Gap Report

7. Final Gap Assessment Summary

Overall Competitiveness: Strong (non-traditional)

Positioning Readiness: Moderate

Execution Readiness: Low

Funded PhD Probability (If Applied Today): Low-Moderate

Funded PhD Probability (After Positioning Strategy): High

8. Final Strategic Insight

This candidate's success will not depend on adding more experience.

It will depend on:

- Converting **industry impact** → **academic signal**
 - Defining a **sharp research problem in HCI / persuasion systems**
 - Building **faculty-aligned positioning**
 - Demonstrating **research credibility (papers / frameworks / theory grounding)**
-

The Real Truth

Right now, you are seen as:

A highly accomplished industry design leader

You need to be seen as:

A researcher of human behavior in computational systems

Alignment, positioning, projection and translation will determine outcomes - not scores, capability or absolute merit.

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REAL SPECIMEN

Academic & Research Positioning Report

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Academic & Research Positioning Report

Candidate: [REDACTED]

Field: Human–Computer Interaction (HCI) / Behavioral & Persuasive Design

Objective: Funded PhD Admission

Document Type: Strategic Positioning & Interpretation Report

1. Purpose of This Report

This document interprets the candidate’s academic and research background from a **faculty decision perspective** and reconstructs it into a **defensible research positioning** aligned with funded PhD selection systems.

The objective is not to describe the candidate. The objective is to **position the candidate for selection**.

This report answers:

- How will faculty interpret this profile?
 - What is the candidate’s actual research identity?
 - Where does the candidate fit within current research ecosystems?
 - How should t
-

2. How will the Faculty Read this Profile?

Faculty do not evaluate profiles holistically. They scan for signals that reduce uncertainty.

Observed Signals from Profile

- Strong exposure to behavioral design and persuasive technologies
 - Cross-cultural UX research (India + Europe)
 - Industry-scale impact (Bosch systems, large-scale deployments)
 - Experience with ethnographic and qualitative research methods
 - Leadership in UX research and academic teaching
 - Deep engagement with human behavior, cognition, and interaction systems
 - Lack of formal academic publications (negative signal)
 - Strong industry identity, weaker academic identity
-

Immediate Faculty Interpretation

“This candidate has deep applied experience in behavioral design and HCI, but it is unclear whether they operate as a structured academic researcher with a defined research problem.”



Academic & Research Positioning Report

3. Academic Background Interpretation

Structural Strengths

- Exposure to research environment at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi
- Strong interdisciplinary grounding (engineering + design + behavior)
- Experience in ethnographic, cognitive, and UX research
- Real-world validation of behavioral systems across global contexts
- Teaching and academic leadership experience

Structural Limitations

- No completed PhD or sustained academic research output
- No formal publications in HCI / behavioral science venues
- Academic trajectory appears **interrupted and non-linear**
- Work is framed as **design practice**, not **research inquiry**
- Limited explicit connection to **theoretical frameworks in HCI / cognitive science**

Interpretation Summary

The candidate is:

A highly experienced behavioral design practitioner with research exposure - but not yet positioned as an academic researcher with a clearly defined research agenda.

4. Research Identity Analysis

Current Research Identity (Unstructured)

- Persuasive design systems
 - Behavioral pattern mapping
 - Cross-cultural UX adaptation
 - Cognitive triggers and habit formation
 - Ethical nudging and behavior change
-



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2602

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Academic & Research Positioning Report

Issue

This is **domain-rich but structurally diffuse**.

It is:

- Multi-directional
- Experience-driven
- Not anchored to a **single research problem**

Critical Problem

This is **topic-based + philosophy-driven identity**, not **problem-driven research identity**.

Faculty do not select:

“Someone interested in behavior, UX, and persuasion”

They select:

“Someone working on a clearly defined, researchable problem within human–computer interaction systems”

5. Core Positioning Problem

What is Missing?

The candidate currently lacks:

- A clearly defined central research problem
- A unifying intellectual and theoretical anchor
- A precise research question within HCI
- A methodological identity (qualitative? computational? hybrid?)
- Translation of industry work into **generalizable research contributions**

6. Reconstructed Research Positioning

Recommended Core Positioning

“Culturally adaptive and ethically grounded persuasive systems in human–computer interaction, focusing on how behavioral signals, cognitive biases, and interface design can be modeled to influence long-term human behavior.”

Refined Research Framing (Faculty-Readable)

The candidate should be positioned as working on:



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Academic & Research Positioning Report

- Mechanisms of **behavioral influence in interactive systems**
 - Cross-cultural variability in **persuasion receptivity and user response**
 - Design of **ethical, autonomy-preserving nudging systems**
 - Modeling **habit formation and behavioral adaptation in digital environments**
 - Translating behavioral insights into **scalable, system-level interaction frameworks**
-

Why This Works

This positioning:

- Moves from **interest** → **research problem**
 - Moves from **design practice** → **behavioral systems science**
 - Moves from **industry work** → **generalizable research inquiry**
 - Signals **clear continuity into PhD-level research**
-

7. Methodological Positioning

Current Perception

- UX researcher
 - Qualitative / ethnographic practitioner
 - Design-led thinker
-

Required Upgrade

Position as:

Hybrid behavioral systems researcher

- Ethnographic + qualitative research
 - Behavioral modeling and pattern abstraction
 - Experimental / A/B testing frameworks
 - (Optional expansion) computational modeling of behavior
-

Strategic Upgrade Recommendation

Add explicit signaling of:

- Research frameworks (HCI, cognitive science, behavioral economics)
- Structured methodologies (experimental design, hypothesis testing)
- Analytical rigor (data-backed behavioral validation)
- Potential integration with AI-driven systems



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Academic & Research Positioning Report

8. Strength Signals ((What Helps Selection))

Strong Signals

- Deep industry research experience (Bosch, global systems)
 - Cross-cultural behavioral analysis (rare and valuable)
 - Large-scale real-world impact (multi-country systems)
 - Strong understanding of human behavior and cognition
 - Leadership in UX and academic environments
 - Mentorship and teaching (academic readiness signal)
-

Interpretation

This is: A highly credible, high-impact applied researcher - not a beginner profile

9. Weak Signals (What Creates Doubt)

Key Weaknesses

- No sharply defined research problem
 - No academic publications (major gap)
 - Limited explicit theoretical grounding
 - No visible faculty-specific alignment
 - Research identity appears **philosophical rather than analytical**
 - Industry dominance overshadows academic credibility
-

Faculty Concern

“Is this candidate a researcher - or a senior industry practitioner exploring research?”

10. Positioning Strategy

Strategic Shift Required

From:

“I work on UX, behavior, persuasion, and human-centered design”

To:

“I study how persuasive mechanisms in human-computer interaction systems can be modeled, adapted across cultures, and designed to influence behavior ethically and effectively.”



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Academic & Research Positioning Report

Positioning Anchors

All documents (SOP, Research Statement, CV) must align around:

- 1. Core Problem** Culturally adaptive and ethical persuasive systems in HCI
- 2. Scientific Lens** Behavioral science + HCI + cognitive modeling
- 3. Application Context** Digital systems influencing human behavior (UX, AI interfaces, platforms)
- 4. Future Direction** Scalable, ethically grounded behavior-change technologies

11. Narrative Direction (For SOP / Research Statement)

The narrative should follow:

Phase 1 - Exposure

- Early curiosity about human behavior and perception
- Transition from engineering → design → behavior

Phase 2 - Applied Research Engagement

- IIT Delhi research (persuasive systems, ethnography)
- Industry work (Bosch, cross-cultural behavioral systems)

Phase 3 - Intellectual Shift

- Realization: behavioral design requires deeper scientific modeling
- Recognition of gaps between practice and theory

Phase 4 - Research Direction

- Focus on persuasive systems, cultural adaptation, and ethical nudging
- Movement toward formal research inquiry

Phase 5 - Future Vision

- Designing globally adaptive, ethical behavioral systems
 - Bridging HCI, AI, and behavioral science
-



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Academic & Research Positioning Report

12. Risk Factors

Key Risks in Current Positioning

- Being perceived as **industry practitioner, not academic researcher**
 - Being seen as **broad and unfocused**
 - Lack of publications weakening credibility
 - Misalignment with theory-heavy HCI labs
 - Over-emphasis on experience vs research clarity
-

13. Final Positioning Statement

This is the line that defines the candidate.

“A behavioral HCI researcher focused on modeling and designing culturally adaptive and ethically grounded persuasive systems that influence human behavior in digital environments.”

14. Final Strategic Insight

This is not a weak profile.

This is a **mis-positioned elite profile**.

The difference between:

- Rejection
- Multiple funded PhD admits

...will not come from more experience.

It will come from:

- Converting experience into **research identity**
 - Anchoring work into a **clear research problem**
 - Aligning with **faculty and research ecosystems**
 - Demonstrating **academic credibility (especially publications)**
-

The Real Leverage Point

You do not need to become stronger.



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2602

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Academic & Research Positioning Report

You need to become:

Legible to academia

Alignment, positioning, projection and translation will determine outcomes – not scores, capability or absolute merit.

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REAL SPECIMEN

Research Direction Map

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Research Direction Map

Candidate: [REDACTED]

Field: Human–Computer Interaction (HCI) / Behavioral & Persuasive Design

Objective: Funded PhD Admission

Document Type: Research Alignment & Direction Strategy Map

1. Purpose of This Report

This document identifies the **most strategically viable research directions** for the candidate within the global PhD ecosystem.

It answers:

- Where should this candidate compete?
- Which research domains maximize funded PhD probability?
- Which directions should be avoided despite interest?
- How should research trajectory evolve into PhD-level work?

This is not a list of interests. This is a **decision map**.

2. Candidate Research Base

Established Strength Zone

- Persuasive design systems and behavioral nudging
 - Cross-cultural human–computer interaction research
 - Ethnographic and qualitative behavioral analysis
 - Cognitive triggers, motivation, and habit formation
 - Industry-scale behavioral system design (Bosch, global platforms)
-

Interpretation

The candidate sits at the intersection of: **Human Behavior × Interactive Systems × Applied Behavioral Design**

3. Global Research Landscape

To position correctly, we map the broader ecosystem:

Major Active Research Domains

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Human–Computer Interaction (HCI) | 4. Social Computing & Digital Behavior |
| 2. Persuasive Technology & Behavior Change Systems | 5. Human-AI Interaction |
| 3. Cognitive Systems & Human Behavior Modeling | 6. Computational Behavioral Science |
| | 7. Digital Health & Behavior Change |
| | 8. Ethics of AI & Persuasive Systems |
-



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2603

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Research Direction Map

4. Research Direction Map

Research Domain	Alignment	Funding Density	Entry Difficulty	Strategic Value	Recommendation
Persuasive Technology	Very High	High	Medium	Very High	Core Focus
Behavioral HCI Systems	Very High	High	Medium	Very High	Core Focus
Human-AI Interaction	High	Very High	High	Very High	Strong
Social Computing	High	High	Medium	High	Strong
Cognitive Modeling in HCI	Medium–High	High	High	Very High	Strategic
Digital Behavior Change (Health / Policy)	High	High	Medium	High	Strong
Computational Behavioral Science	Medium	Very High	High	Very High	Strategic Expansion
Pure AI / ML Systems	Low	Very High	Very High	High	Avoid
Generic UX / Design Practice	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Avoid

5. High-Alignment Research Zones (Where You Must Compete)

Zone 1 — Core Zone (Primary Target)

Persuasive Systems & Behavioral Influence in HCI

Focus:

- Mechanisms of behavioral nudging in digital systems
- Interface-driven persuasion and decision-making
- Habit formation and long-term engagement systems
- Ethical influence and autonomy-preserving design

Why:

- Direct continuity with current work
- Strong global research demand
- Clear differentiation advantage

Zone 2 — Behavioral HCI Systems

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REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2603

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Research Direction Map

Human Behavior Modeling in Interactive Systems

Focus:

- Behavioral signal interpretation in user interactions
- Cross-cultural variability in user behavior
- Cognitive and motivational modeling
- Design of adaptive interaction systems

Why:

- Strong overlap with ethnographic and UX research
 - Bridges qualitative insight with research systems
 - High relevance in top HCI labs
-

Zone 3 — Applied Behavioral Systems

Digital Behavior Change & Social Computing

Focus:

- Behavior change technologies (health, policy, platforms)
- Social influence and digital ecosystems
- Large-scale behavioral interventions

Why:

- Strong industry + research overlap
 - High funding (health, public systems, tech platforms)
 - High real-world impact
-

6. Strategic Expansion Zone (Optional but Powerful)

Computational Behavioral Systems

Focus:

- Modeling human behavior computationally
- Data-driven behavioral prediction
- AI-driven adaptive persuasive systems

Why:

- Rapidly growing research area
- Strong funding and interdisciplinary demand
- Differentiation at top-tier programs

Reality Check

This is not your current strength. This is a **strategic upgrade path**, not immediate positioning.

7. Avoid Zones (Critical Insight)

These are areas that may appear related — but reduce admission probability.

Avoid:

- Pure software engineering / development tracks
- Generic AI / ML without behavioral anchoring
- Broad “UX design” positioning (too practice-oriented)
- Overly philosophical “human behavior” framing without systems grounding



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Research Direction Map

Strategic Principle

- **Problem clarity beats domain breadth.**
-

8. Research Direction Architecture

Current → Optimal Positioning Flow

Current State Broad: UX + behavior + persuasion + design

↓

Refined Direction Behavioral influence mechanisms in interactive systems

↓

PhD-Level Positioning Culturally adaptive, ethically grounded persuasive systems in human-computer interaction

9. Methodological Direction Map

Current Methods

- Ethnographic research
 - Qualitative UX research
 - Behavioral observation and pattern identification
 - Design-led experimentation
-

Required Additions

- Experimental design (controlled behavioral studies)
 - Hypothesis-driven research framing
 - Behavioral metrics and quantification
 - Integration with computational / AI systems (optional but valuable)
-

10. Future Research Trajectory (PhD → Post-PhD)

Short-Term (PhD)

- Formalize behavioral models in HCI systems
 - Conduct experimental studies on persuasion and behavior
 - Develop publishable frameworks and models
-

Mid-Term (Postdoc / Early Career)

- Expand into computational behavioral systems
 - Integrate AI-driven adaptive systems
 - Lead interdisciplinary research initiatives
-

Long-Term

- Design global behavioral systems at scale
 - Influence ethical standards in persuasive technologies
 - Shape human-centered AI ecosystems
-



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2603

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Research Direction Map

Position as a behavioral HCI researcher focused on designing and modeling culturally adaptive and ethically grounded persuasive systems that influence human behavior in digital environments.

11. Decision Summary

What You SHOULD Do

- Anchor on persuasive systems and behavioral HCI
 - Define a clear research problem within behavior-change systems
 - Target labs working on HCI + behavior + human-AI interaction
 - Strengthen methodological rigor
-

What You SHOULD NOT Do

- Present yourself as a general UX designer
 - Drift into unrelated AI / CS domains
 - Apply without research clarity
 - Overextend into computational areas without grounding
-

13. Final Insight

This is not about finding “interesting areas.”

This is about finding: **Where your probability of funded PhD admission is highest.**

And that lies in:

- High alignment
 - Clear research identity
 - Strong faculty demand
 - Academic legibility
-

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REAL SPECIMEN

Portfolio of Application Target Universities

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Portfolio of Application Target Universities

Candidate: [REDACTED]

Field: Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) / Behavioral & Persuasive Design

Objective: Funded PhD Admission

Document Type: Optimized Application Portfolio (Probability-Engineered)

1. Purpose of This Report

This document defines the **final application portfolio (~10-12 programs)** optimized to maximize: **P (Funded Admit | Program × Faculty × Alignment)**.

Notably, since this is a precision-engineered shortlist, it can be developed and shared only once a Scholaria™ applicant is deemed to be research-ready with a decent body of research work and exposure and clear research direction, and fulfils all standard funded-Ph.D. pre-requisites, generally understood to be applicable across universities. Hence, for applicants who are academically ready but need time to upgrade their research-readiness, this report will be developed later - with no additional fee – once the Ph.D-requisite profile is built.

2. How the Portfolio was Derived?

This shortlist is constructed by filtering the starting portfolio across:

- Alignment strength
 - Faculty demand signals
 - Funding probability
 - Admission competitiveness
 - Portfolio balance
-

3. Portfolio Structure

Category	Count	Role
High Probability	4	Conversion base
Target	5	Core admits
Ambitious	3	Upside

Total: 12 Programs

4. Final Shortlist (Core Table)

A. Target Programs (Can Convert with some effort)



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Portfolio of Application Target Universities

University	Faculty Focus	Alignment Score	Funding Probability	Admission Probability	Final Category
Indiana University Bloomington	Social computing, behavioral systems	9/10	High	High	Target
Pennsylvania State University	Persuasive systems, social computing	9/10	Medium–High	High	Target
Arizona State University	Digital behavior systems, HCI	8.5/10	Medium	High	Target
University of Colorado Boulder	Human-centered systems, interaction design	8.5/10	Medium	High	Target

B. High Potential Programs (If you can compete successfully)

University	Faculty Focus	Alignment Score	Funding Probability	Admission Probability	Final Category
University of Maryland	Human-AI interaction, behavior	9/10	High	Moderate	High Potential
Georgia Institute of Technology	Persuasive tech, HCI systems	9/10	Medium–High	Moderate	High Potential
University of Michigan	Social computing, behavioral systems	9/10	Medium	Moderate	High Potential
University of California Irvine	Informatics, interaction systems	8.5/10	Medium	Moderate	High Potential
University of Washington	Human-centered design & engineering	9/10	High	Moderate	High Potential

C. Ambitious Programs

University	Faculty Focus	Alignment Score	Funding Probability	Admission Probability	Final Category
Carnegie Mellon University	HCI Institute, behavioral systems	9/10	High	Low	Ambitious
Stanford University	Behavior design, persuasive tech	9/10	High	Low	Ambitious



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2602

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Portfolio of Application Target Universities

Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Media Lab, human-AI systems	9/10	High	Low	Ambitious
---------------------------------------	-----------------------------	------	------	-----	-----------

5. Portfolio Risk Balance

Distribution

- High Probability: 5
- Target: 4
- Ambitious: 3

Strategic Truth

Most funded admits will come from the Target category, not the Ambitious category.

6. Faculty Targeting Strategy

At this stage, each university is no longer a “program.” It becomes: **A set of 3–5 faculty targets**

Example of How Each Program Is Handled

Indiana University Bloomington

- Faculty A — Social computing & behavior
- Faculty B — Digital persuasion systems
- Faculty C — Human-centered AI

Each application must:

- Align to at least 2–3 faculty
- Reflect specific research overlap
- Avoid generic statements

7. Alignment Score — What It Means

Score	Meaning
9–10	Direct research overlap
8–9	Strong alignment with minor gaps



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Portfolio of Application Target Universities

7–8	Acceptable but needs framing
<7	Misaligned (excluded from shortlist)

8. Funding Probability — Interpretation

Level	Meaning
High	Active labs, strong grants, consistent intake
Medium–High	Good funding but competitive
Medium	Limited intake or funding variability

9. Admission Probability — Reality Check

Level	Meaning
High	Strong alignment + moderate competition
Medium	Balanced competition
Low	Highly competitive programs

10. Execution Implications

This shortlist now defines:

- Where you will apply
- How many applications to build
- Where to prioritize effort
- How to allocate time

Effort Allocation Strategy

Category	Effort Level
----------	--------------



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Portfolio of Application Target Universities

High Probability	Medium
Target	Very High
Ambitious	Selective High

11. Expected Outcome Scenarios

Scenario 1 (Strong Execution)

- 2–4 funded admits
- Majority from Target programs

Scenario 2 (Moderate Execution)

- 1–2 admits
- Likely from High Probability programs

Scenario 3 (Weak Execution)

- Few or no admits despite strong profile

12. Final Strategic Insight

At this stage:

You do not need:

- More experience
- More industry exposure
- More random applications

You need:

- Precision
- Research clarity
- Faculty alignment
- Execution discipline

This portfolio is engineered to maximize funded PhD admission probability through high-alignment targeting, faculty-driven positioning, and balanced risk distribution.

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REAL SPECIMEN

Detailed Application Checklist

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REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2605

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Detailed Application Checklist

Candidate: [REDACTED]

Field: Human–Computer Interaction (HCI) / Behavioral & Persuasive Design

Objective: Funded PhD Admission

Document Type: Execution Control & Tracking System

1. Purpose of This Report

This document is your **operational control system**.

It ensures:

- Every requirement is completed
- Every deadline is met
- Every document is aligned
- Every application is executed without error

This is not a checklist.

This is your **application command center**.

2. How to Use This System?

- Update this **daily or at least 3× per week**
- Do not rely on memory
- Treat this as your **single source of truth**
- No submission happens unless this is complete

3. Master Application Tracker (Core Table)

University	Deadline	SOP	RS	CV	LOR	Test Scores	Faculty Contact	Application Status	Submitted
Indiana University	Dec XX	✓	✓	✓	Pending	✓	Done	In Progress	No
Penn State	Dec XX	✓	✓	✓	Sent	✓	Done	Ready	No
Georgia Tech	Jan XX	Draft	Draft	✓	Not Sent	✓	Pending	Not Started	No

Status Codes

- Not Started
- In Progress
- Ready
- Submitted



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2605

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Detailed Application Checklist

4. Document Preparation Checklist

Statement of Purpose (SOP)

- Core research positioning clearly defined (**behavioral systems, not UX**)
- Faculty alignment embedded (not generic)
- No industry storytelling dominating narrative
- Coherent research-driven flow
- Word limit adhered to
- No vague “design thinking” language

Research Statement

- Clear behavioral research problem defined
- Industry work translated into research contribution
- Methodological clarity present (not just insights)
- No philosophical/general statements
- Strong alignment with HCI / behavioral labs

Academic CV

- Research interests clearly stated at top (**persuasive systems / HCI**)
- Industry work framed as research (not product delivery)
- Behavioral research experience detailed
- Skills aligned with research (not tools-heavy UX listing)
- No irrelevant corporate noise

5. Faculty Outreach Checklist

For each faculty:

- Identified (name + lab)
- Research reviewed (papers/topics)
- Behavioral alignment noted
- Email sent
- Follow-up scheduled
- Response recorded

Outreach Tracker Table

University	Faculty	Email Sent	Response	Follow-Up	Status
Indiana University	Prof A	Yes	No	Pending	Active
Georgia Tech	Prof B	Yes	Positive	Done	Engaged



REAL SPECIMEN – GS-2605

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Detailed Application Checklist

6. Letters of Recommendation (LOR) System

Required Actions

- Identify 3 referees (**at least 1–2 academic**)
- Confirm availability
- Share:
 - CV
 - SOP draft
 - Research direction summary

Tracking Table

Referee	Confirmed	Documents Shared	Submitted	Status
Ref 1	Yes	Yes	Pending	Active
Ref 2	Yes	Yes	Submitted	Complete

Critical Rule

Strong industry LORs cannot compensate for weak academic LORs

7. Application Submission Checklist

Before submitting ANY application:

- SOP finalized (research-focused, university-specific)
 - Research Statement aligned with faculty
 - CV updated (academic framing)
 - Faculty alignment verified
 - All fields filled correctly
 - Documents uploaded in correct format
 - Payment completed
 - Application reviewed once fully
-

Final Pre-Submission Rule

If it reads like a UX professional applying — do not submit



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Detailed Application Checklist

8. Timeline Checklist (Execution Control)

Phase 1 — Foundation

- Master SOP complete
 - Research Statement complete
 - CV aligned to research identity
-

Phase 2 — Alignment

- Faculty mapping complete
 - Outreach initiated
 - SOP variants started
-

Phase 3 — Application Build

- High Probability programs submitted
 - Target programs in progress
-

Phase 4 — Finalization

- All applications submitted
 - Follow-ups completed
 - Interview preparation begins
-

9. Interview Preparation Checklist (Forward Layer)

- Research problem clearly articulated
 - Behavior–system–impact clarity
 - Faculty work deeply understood
 - Questions prepared (research-focused, not generic)
 - Mock interviews completed
-

10. Decision Tracking System

University	Interview	Offer	Funding	Decision
Indiana University	Yes	Pending	Pending	Awaited
Georgia Tech	No	Pending	Pending	Awaited



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Detailed Application Checklist

11. Common Failure Points (Don'ts)

- Submitting industry-heavy SOPs
 - No clear behavioral research problem
 - Weak faculty alignment
 - Poor LOR mix (too industry-heavy)
 - Last-minute submissions
 - No structured tracking system
 - Confusing UX practice with research positioning
-

12. Your Execution Discipline

You already have:

- Deep behavioral insight
- Global system experience
- Cross-cultural research exposure

This system ensures:

None of that is dismissed due to poor academic signaling

Strong applicants fail without systems. Non-traditional applicants fail faster without them

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