

Statement of Intent – MSc Harvard University – Muhammad AlHussein

It is my intention to complete a Masters in Computer Science at Harvard University specializing in the field of Information Security under the honorary guidance of Dr. Thomas Schleisser. I have had an interest in computers since the age of thirteen when I first fell in love with technology. Information Security has both professional and personal significance for me.

My knack for computers originates from the time I was thirteen when my older brother purchased a Commodore 64. Back then, I played around with the word processor program, trying to create new fonts and color schemes. Throughout my school years, I continued to pursue my interests in computers finding it the subject which I both enjoyed, and excelled at. I learned my first programming language, QBasic, at 17, and was further inspired by teachers such as Ahmad Hassan to be a critical thinker.

After my graduation I enrolled in King Abdulaziz University, and chose a computer science major in my second year. I had saved enough money in the prior summer to buy and build my first “state-of-the-art” computer component-by-component. I took great pleasure and enthusiasm in my classes, and completed 26 courses on varying topics in computer science.

Following my graduation, I had one of the most negative experiences of my life. My house was broken into and all of my computer hardware and data were stolen. Shortly after replacing my equipment, four weeks to be exact, my laptop and desktop computers were again stolen from my home. This devastated me, and as a result, I decided to spend my next few years self-reflecting.

I worked in the field of computers in administrative positions, analyzing a variety of work-flow processes, digitizing materials and providing optimizations for client and employee management software. During my three years of employment, my desire to contribute more to the field of computers continued to increase. I decided that I would study abroad, and gain worldly knowledge and experience. Simultaneously, the opportunity for the King Abdullah Higher Education Ministry Scholarship had been established.

Taking affirmative action, I applied and received the scholarship and moved to the United States. Having had the experience of computers throughout my life and, as a consequence, the inspiration to develop, maintain and upgrade better information security systems, my goals are now set on studying under the guidance of Dr. Thomas Schleisser.

I have done extensive research into the MSc program at Harvard and the publications of Dr. Traore. The mid-size program is perfect for my needs to provide both detailed instructions and networking opportunities with peers and supervisors. I am deeply interested in Dr. Schleisser’s work in intrusion detection, owner-retained access control and software security. I feel that he has a deep cultural and professional perspective and brings a wealth of education and know-how into his expertise. I am certain that under his guidance I will be able to develop a keen sense of information securities and adapt my studies expertise in my pursuing ventures.

Once achieving a MSc, I plan to return back to Saudi Arabia and set up an information security company. It is my intent to provide outstanding services to both the public and private sectors to ensure that their data and computer systems are safe. I plan to create software and lead development teams in the innovation of twenty first century information protection.