The letter of motivation serves as the basis for the selection committee's decision. While standard criteria such as previous grade point average take no account of individual factors, the letter of motivation should provide an insight into the personal reasons that applicants believe speak in favour of a stay abroad at a particular location. Ideally, the letter of motivation fulfils two purposes:

1) The letter of motivation shows that the applicants have thought about the design of their semester abroad when choosing their prioritisation and are thus pursuing personally relevant educational or life goals.

2) The letter of motivation shows that and why the prioritised universities actually serve or are necessary for the pursuit of these educational or life goals.

Ad 1: There is no 'template' for a good letter of motivation, as personally relevant educational or life goals can be as diverse as the people behind them. The following examples can only serve as examples of what can play a role (the order does not reflect a measure of quality):

 I already know that I want to do my Master's in subject X, but this usually requires courses on Y, which are not offered at IKW or UOS, but are offered at my target universities.

 I have attended courses on X at IKW that have aroused my interest, and there is much more on offer at the target university than here.

 I am thinking about doing my Master's at University X and would like to get a taste of it during my stay abroad.

 I would like to use the semester abroad to improve my language skills and would therefore definitely like to go to a target university in country X.

 I have personal circumstances that characterise the target universities in a special way, for example

o My partner's family is from country X and I would like to use the semester abroad to get to know the country and culture first-hand;

o I have an illness that does not tolerate a sunny/cold climate;

o I play X semi-professionally and can't afford not to train abroad, but destination university Y has a good offer;

o I am X, and country or destination university Y are known for their X community.

 I don't have a degree, my elective area is full, but I've always wanted to take courses in Old Norse runic studies, 16th century Portuguese love poetry, deep sea diving, ... and would like to use my stay abroad to do so.

In other words, basically anything can be included in the letter of motivation as long as it provides a recognisable and comprehensible reason for the prioritisation.

Ad 2: This point covers the selection committee's considerations, which may include the following, for example:

The applicant primarily wants to polish up their language skills, but has chosen a university for this purpose that others have chosen for convincing subject-related reasons: Couldn't the language skills possibly be polished up just as well at another university where there is less competition?

The applicant would like to deepen their knowledge in area X, specifically take courses on Y, but that would be much better elsewhere: Wouldn't an alternative suggestion make sense?

(Semi-)Formalities

The letter of motivation is written in German or English (regardless of the target country); it is only addressed to the selection committee, not to the target university.

Depending on the personal justification, there may be one longer letter of motivation for a 'complete package' of prioritisation or n separate letters of motivation, one for each target university.

As a rule, letters of motivation are 1 - 3 pages long.

Letters of motivation will also play a central role on the further academic path, for example when applying for Master's or doctoral places or for scholarships. The following applies everywhere: the external appearance of the letter of motivation influences (at least unconsciously) the selection committee's expectations of the seriousness of the applicant, as do spelling, grammar, etc. The more care the letter of motivation shows, the more care will be taken by those who read it.