

Applying to Graduate School

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Common Questions about Grad School Apps

1. What are the components of a grad school application?
2. Which tests do I need to pass before I can apply?
3. How do I prepare myself to get to a good school?
4. Which Universities should I apply to?
5. When should I start preparing my application?

A bit about the Masters degree

- **Masters**
 - Typical duration: 1-2 years
- **Funding**
 - USA: *Need to pay tuition but...*
 - Canada/Europe/Australia: *Some offer Masters by Research...*
 - Some European Countries (e.g., Germany): *No tuition*
- **Benefits**
 - Good preparation for industry positions
 - Can be used as a stepping stone for a Ph.D. degree

A bit about the Ph.D. degree...

- **Ph.D. is a research degree**
 - Training for becoming an independent researcher
 - *How to conduct, publish, and present research?*
- **Typical duration**
 - USA, Canada: ~5-7 year
 - UK, Europe, Australia: ~3 years
- **Funding**
 - Generally, fully-funded (i.e., *full tuition coverage and a monthly stipend*)

Outline

- **Application Process**
- University Selection
- Submitting Applications
- After Acceptances...
- Q&A

Components of a Grad School App

- 1) GPA
- 2) Independent Work/Research Experience
- 3) Recommendation letters
- 4) Personal statement
- 5) GRE
- 6) Awards & extracurricular

GPA

- An indicator of
 - Knowledge/Mastery of the subject
 - Desire for high achievement and high self-expectations
- Not the best indicator of “research potential”
- However, a good GPA is very important for getting into Masters/Ph.D. programs!
 - CS, EE, and MATH grades are particularly important

Independent Work / Research Experience

- Gives confidence to the committee that the student is **aware** of the challenges involved in research
- Can substantially **improve chances** of getting admission into a Ph.D. program
- Even more important now
 - KAIST, Seoul National (Korea)
 - Tsinghua, Beijing University (China)
 - ...

GRE (Graduate Record Exam)

- Assesses **basic analytical and verbal skills**
- **Uniformity of scale** facilitates evaluation
- Usually serves as an **initial filter**

Personal Statement

A template:

- 1) Describe general areas that interest you and why
- 2) Describe a project you've worked on
- 3) Describe a project you've worked on
- 4) Say why you want a MS or a PhD
- 5) Why do you want to be at school X

• *Best SOPs are original and authentic – so be yourself*

Recommendations

At least 3 Letters

~1 research advisor letters

~2 course-based letters

Asking for recommendations

Function of quality and duration of interaction

Who should you ask for a letter?

Give each person a packet

- *Summary of each research project*
- *Resume/CV*
- *Class listing with grades*
- *Details (including University list and deadlines)*

Awards & Extracurriculars

... provides a way to be memorable

A Graduate Application in a Nutshell

- 1) Transcript
- 2) Recommendation letters
- 3) Research/Independent Work Experience
- 4) Personal statement
- 5) GRE
- 6) Awards & extracurriculars

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University Selection

- Target ~8-10
 - Apply to a range of Universities (in terms of ranking, repute, etc)
- Some factors to consider
 - University Rank
 - Faculty Research Interests
 - ...

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Submitting Applications

- TOEFL ~\$165
- GRE ~\$195
 - *Not required for Europe*
- Usually each application costs ~\$60 - \$100
 - GRE ~ \$25/Univ (*1st four University for free*)
 - TOEFL ~ \$19/Univ (*1st four University for free*)
- Relatively costly process

*These are approximate costs
for the year 2016*

Timeline

- GRE preparation: ~July-Aug
- Begin Writing SOP: ~Aug
- Take the GRE Exam: ~Aug-Oct
- Ask for Letters: ~Oct
- Application Deadlines: ~Dec-Feb

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After Acceptances....

- **Clear and Timely Communication**
 - Universities have others candidates lined up
 - Helps Universities in making timely decisions
- **Multiple Offers**
 - Send acceptance to *only one* University and communicate to others about your decision
 - **Unacceptable** to send acceptances to >1 Universities

Thank you!