How to Apply to Grad School

Stephen Gilbert, with material from Thelma Harding
Topics

How to search for grad schools (less Google)
Finding a professor
Admission process
Expenses
Timeline
Common Challenges

Building relationships with faculty
Essays
Researching grad programs
Timeliness of applying
Timeliness of requesting letters of recommendation
Common Fears

The complicated process
Getting started
Moving to a new city
Fear of making new friends/peers
Fear that you may not be smart enough
Preparation

Process is not quick!

Very different than applying to college

Organization, careful reading, and following directions – very important skills
Starting Point

What’s my research interest?

Who and where are the faculty who are doing research in my area of interest?
Finding a faculty advisor

More important than location. They can make or break you.

Bad email:
- I’m so great. You should hire me.

Good email:
- I read these two papers of yours and appreciated…
- My skills in XYZ can help you reach your research goals.
Faculty Advisor Types

Dr. Ima Superbusee
• Has 8 grad students
• Full professor
• Has multiple grants

Less attention for you, but funding is secure. Probably more choices for research topic.

Dr. Bin Heronli Wonyear
• Has 1 grad student
• Assistant professor
• No grants yet

More attention for you, but funding less secure. Probably fewer choices for research topic.

Stephen Gilbert, SPIRE-EIT 2024
Identifying Graduate Programs

Will require time and patience.

Google is less helpful.

Better:

www.petersons.com

www.princetonreview.com

Professional Associations
Academic Journals
Faculty mentor recommendations
Information to Look For

Faculty doing research in your area of interest

Degrees offered (Masters, Doctorate, both)

Admissions requirements (GPA, GRE, coursework, etc.)

Size and diversity of program

Whether a professor will accept new students for your term of entry
## Organize Your List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Prof.</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>GRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U of Wisconsin</td>
<td>Madison, WI</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Soil Physics</td>
<td>Dr. Ace</td>
<td>Feb. 1(^{st})</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell</td>
<td>Ithaca, NY</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Crop Prod</td>
<td>Dr. Bee</td>
<td>Jan. 15(^{th})</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona State</td>
<td>Tempe, AZ</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Soil Chemistry</td>
<td>Dr. Cece</td>
<td>Dec. 15(^{th})</td>
<td>WAIVED</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Admission Requirements

Application
Academic records/Transcripts
Letters of recommendation
GRE scores (probably)
Admissions Essay and Other Essays
Other documents
  o Pre-application
  o Departmental application
  o Resume/CV
# Application Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRE General Test</td>
<td>$220 (four schools included) and two practice tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Score Reports</td>
<td>$35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts from all Schools Attended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Fees</td>
<td>Average cost = $60 - $150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some schools pay the application fee.  
GRE Fee Reduction Program (U.S. citizens or resident aliens)
Planning Timeline

Summer

✓ Research grad schools and finalize list
✓ Study for and take GRE
✓ Identify and notify recommenders
✓ Draft admissions essay

Beginning of fall semester

✓ Finalize admissions essay and begin applying

Fall semester (before fall break, semester break, or before application deadlines)

✓ Submit all applications
Grad School Funding

Graduate Assistantships to pay stipend
  – Research
  – Teaching
Tuition support for students with assistantships
  – PhD students typically receive 100% tuition
  – MS students receive less
Internal and external fellowships

Monthly stipend minimum probably $2400-$3400 depending on cost of living
Graduate Research Fellowship Program

Very prestigious. Pays for most of grad school.

www.nsfgrfp.org

Eligible in college or during 1st year of grad school
Unofficial: Need to be a co-author on two academic pubs
Need to work with a faculty member on the application

Alex Lang tips website