

University Application Orientation Meeting October 3, 2014

The Application Process and Graduate Admission Committees

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“You never get a **second** chance to make a **first** impression!”

Your goal in the application is to:

1. Make sure your application is complete and accurate
2. Know how your application will be gathered together and used
3. Present yourself in a honest and **professional** way
4. Compete effectively with other applicants with good credentials
5. Submit in a timely way and be patient while waiting for the result

Nearly all US Universities use an On-line Application Process

1. Convenient for student and timely for submission
2. Complete application sent to Graduate School is in one document (location)
3. Application fee is paid (credit card, or may be automatic for VEF)
4. Everyone evaluates the same document, but **four** distinct steps
5. Many programs have deadlines for submission, but are not totally firm

Step 1. Graduate School checks if all material is submitted and meets University requirements (basic, but many programs require more)

- Full name, birth date and contact information. Name should be EXACTLY as on passport (needed for your visa application)
- List all family members who may come along (needed for visas)
- Official letter showing you are nominated for VEF support (needed for visa)
- Degree program of interest, e.g., Physics, Biology, etc., but make sure it matches EXACTLY with the degree program offered. Program name may be different among universities
- Educational background indicating each degree earned (GPA) and the College or University that awarded the degree
- PDF copies of all undergraduate and graduate transcripts. **Official transcripts** are submitted later when official admission is accepted

Step 1 Continued (mainly to insure minimums are met)

- PDF copy of official scores for TOEFL or IELTS
- PDF copy of official score for GRE (if required by program)

- GPA meets the minimum for the desired Graduate Program
- Test scores of English proficiency are above the minimum required by the desired Graduate Program
- All transcripts are submitted
- Three letters of reference are submitted on line. References are listed in the application and email addresses are given. The Graduate School will automatically send an email to the referee and describe how to submit the letter and rankings of the applicant.
- The applicant has the option of seeing the letters, but that is discouraged, and considered a negative by the Departmental evaluation committee.
- A Statement of Purpose

- The Graduate School may or may not advise you of missing information

- If all material is submitted and minimum scores are met, the complete application is forwarded to the Departmental Evaluation Committee that is responsible for the desired degree program (major)

Step 2. Roles of the Departmental Evaluation Committee: Committee of 3-5 faculty formed by election or appointment

- Applications are evaluated to insure the scores meet the Department requirements and to have confidence the applicant can complete the degree
- English proficiency is very critical (TOEFL and IELTS score)
- Transcripts indicate the breadth of classes and academic ability
- GPA is indicator of success in classes
- GRE score shows proficiency in English use and science knowledge
- References are of modest value since they are not very specific
- SOP is the **very critical** since it reflects English skill, vision or goals and “organizational skill”. This is the **most important part** of the application.
- Most critical is the Statement of Purpose or Reasons I want a graduate degree
 - Organizing thoughts into good sentences
 - Organizing sentences into paragraphs
 - Shows progression in academic life and broad perspective with a focus
 - Adds insight into social skills (things you like to do) and commitment
- A CV with a picture is very helpful and can be added to the application
- Committee looks for clues about research proficiency (publications, science reports, contests, ways creativity is reflected and use of the scientific method)
- Committee recommends or denies acceptance to the Graduate Program

Step 3. Acceptance by a Professor in the program

1. Professor needs to have a match in interests
2. Professor needs to have an “opening” and willing to serve as advisor
3. Professor has or will have funding for extra years to finish the degree
4. Permissible to contact the potential professors by email early
 - Check websites for professors to see potential matches
 - Send emails to those who “match” interests and indicate you have applied or am applying, and hope they will consider you as a student.
 - Inform them you have been nominated for a VEF fellowship with 2 years of support if accepted into the graduate program
5. Professor review the overall situation and informs the Graduate Committee that informs the Graduate School about admission or denial

Step 4. The Graduate School will inform applicant about admission or denial.

Written acceptance of the admission offer will signal the Graduate School to