

## FAQs on Grad Admissions

1. What graduate programs are available in Statistics at Penn State?

Information about our graduate programs can be found at <http://www.stat.psu.edu/grad/>. New students can apply to the MAS, MS or Ph.D. program.

2. What criteria are used for selecting new graduate students?

Graduate admissions are determined by the Graduate Admissions Committee. The committee considers grades, particularly in quantitative courses, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, research and work experience and statement of purpose. We do not have target scores for grades or GREs, but admission is quite competitive. Students with quantitative GRE below 750 (all applicants) or verbal GRE below 500 (native English speakers) are unlikely to be admitted.

3. What tests of English are required for students who come from non-English speaking countries?

We require only the TOEFL test. However, to be a teaching assistant at Penn State you must (upon arrival) take a short course on teaching and pass the language test administered during the course. The minimum acceptable score for the TOEFL is 550 for the paper-based test, 213 for the computer-based test, or a total score of 80 with a 20 on the speaking section for the Internet-based test (iBT). Applicants with iBT speaking scores between 15 and 19 may be considered for provisional admission, which requires an institutional test of English proficiency upon first enrollment and, if necessary, remedial course work.

4. My score on the spoken part of the IBT is less than 20. Can I apply?

Applicants with iBT speaking scores between 17 and 19 may be considered for provisional admission, which requires an institutional test of English proficiency upon first enrollment and, if necessary, remedial course work. We will consider your grades and the verbal part of the GRE as evidence of your language abilities.

5. The language of instruction in my undergraduate program was English. Do I still need to take the TOEFL?

International applicants are exempt from the TOEFL/IELTS requirement who have received a baccalaureate or a masters degree from a college/university/institution in any of the following: Australia, Belize, British Caribbean and British West Indies, Canada (except Quebec), England, Guyana, Republic of Ireland, Liberia, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, the United States and Wales.

Applicants from other countries need a TOEFL score, even if the language of instruction was English. The Graduate School has a small list of exceptions for specific universities – please send email to the Graduate School if you think you should be exempt, and forward their response to us if they agree.

6. I have not yet taken my GRE or TOEFL test. Can I apply?

You can apply without your scores, but you should have the testing service send the scores directly to us. We will not process your application until we have the GRE scores.

7. My TOEFL and/or GRE score has already expired or will expire before August of the next year. Should I retake the test?

We require official TOEFL and GRE scores sent to us by ETS. As long as we have official scores on record, you do not need to take the test. So, if you previously sent scores to Penn State, or if you can arrange to send the scores before they expire, you do not need to retake the test.

8. I have taken the TOEFL or GRE twice. Which score will you take?

We consider the most recent score.

9. Should I take the Math Subject GRE test?

We do not require subject tests.

10. Can I send photocopies of documents (and send official copies if I am admitted)?

We require originals of the GRE and TOEFL scores, and official university transcripts sent directly from the university or in a sealed untampered envelope from the university. Photocopies can be used for screening purposes, but we cannot admit students without official documents.

11. What do I do with the financial certification form?

For most applicants, item 4 "Stipend from Penn State graduate assistantship or fellowship" should be sufficient. If you accept an offer without financial assistance you will need to document that you or your family have sufficient funds on deposit to cover the expenses as required by US immigration for visa purposes. See [http://www.international.psu.edu/iss/financial\\_requirements\\_p.html](http://www.international.psu.edu/iss/financial_requirements_p.html) for the expenses required for visa purposes. While the cost of living will be significantly less for those sharing accommodation, you still need to show that the funds are available.

12. How many students are admitted each year?

The MS and Ph.D. programs admit 5 to 18 students each fall, depending on our available space. We usually do not know the final number until February.

13. If I apply for the Ph.D. program and am not admitted, can I apply to the MS program?

The admissions criteria are the same for both programs, so if you are not admitted, you cannot apply to the other program.

14. Do you admit students in the Spring semester?

No.

15. How many applications do you receive?

Like all equivalent US programs, we receive over 300.

16. Do you accept self-funded students?

Very rarely. We may accept a self-funded MS student if we feel there may be a chance for funding later.

17. How much will it cost me if I pay my own way?

[http://www.international.psu.edu/iss/financial\\_requirements\\_p.html](http://www.international.psu.edu/iss/financial_requirements_p.html)

has financial estimates for international students. This is the amount that you must guarantee in order to obtain a visa. Our students report that the amount is higher than actually required to live here, but the money must be on deposit. Tuition waivers are available only for students who receive financial aid.

18. How are (international) graduate students funded?

Most students are funded by fellowships, teaching assistantships and research assistantships. These are all considered financial aid.

19. How can I apply for financial aid or a scholarship?

Please fill out the financial aid form. You will then be eligible for a teaching or research assistantship (TA or RA). All applicants are available for any Penn State scholarships. US applicants should consider applying for a NSF fellowship – applications are due in November of the year before admission (i.e. at the same time you are applying for graduate school.) Other US programs may also provide graduate fellowships – check with the sponsored programs department in your current university. International applicants should consider whether their home country provides fellowships, or whether the Fulbright Foundation has a program in their country.

20. Do I need to fill out the visa application form?

International applicants should fill out the visa application form. You do not need financial certification. Check the box that states that you will receive financial aid from the department to cover your expenses. If you do not fill out this form, we will screen your application without it. However, your visa application will be delayed, which could cause problems if you are admitted but your visa does not arrive on time.

21. If I have my own funds or a fellowship, will this improve my chances for admission?

Maybe. The Graduate Admissions Committee will rank all applicants to our program without regard for need of financial assistance, and will admit according to this ranking. Fellowships from recognized organizations are considered as a positive outside assessment of your ability and should definitely be noted in your application materials. Applicants on the waiting list who have their own funding might be admitted if there is room. However, having funding will not move an applicant onto the waiting list and self-funded applicants who are on our waiting list will not be admitted if we reach our maximum number of admissions.

22. I am currently enrolled in a graduate program at another university. How do I switch to Penn State?

Students currently enrolled in other graduate programs are expected to complete a degree in that program before starting a program at Penn State. Your application will be considered along with all other applicants. Penn State does not allow a second Ph.D.

23. I am currently enrolled in a graduate program at another university. We have a program which will fund a semester (a year) abroad. Can I come to Penn State?

We do sometimes host visiting international students. We will provide office space, computing facilities and access to seminars and other activities at Penn State. We will not provide any financial assistance. We require a letter from the sponsor, stating the terms of the visiting program, and a letter from your department, stating what type of activities they expect you to pursue, and what type of documentation we need to provide that you fulfilled these requirements. If you wish to take courses for credit, you will need to enroll as a non-degree student in the Graduate School, which requires a TOEFL score and tuition payment. Please make your request at least 5 months before you hope to arrive, as making arrangements can take a long time. The TOEFL requirement for graduate applicants (FAQ 5 above) applies. For visa purposes, you will also need financial certification:

[http://www.international.psu.edu/iss/financial\\_requirements\\_p.html](http://www.international.psu.edu/iss/financial_requirements_p.html)  
has the amounts required by US immigration.

Please contact us at [admissions@stat.psu.edu](mailto:admissions@stat.psu.edu) to inquire about visiting.

24. I am currently enrolled in a graduate program at Penn State. How can I switch to Statistics?

Your application will be considered along with all other applicants, and the rules are the same as applicants from other universities. You can improve your chances of admission by taking some courses in the MS program in Statistics at Penn State before applying to our program. Alternatively, if your department agrees, you can apply for the concurrent degree program, and earn degrees in both departments at the same time.

25. I already have an advanced degree. How do I apply to your program?

Students with a masters degree can apply for any of our programs.

Penn State does not allow a second Ph.D. Students with a Ph.D. in another field can apply to our MS program but will not receive funding.

26. Can I improve my chances of admission by contacting a faculty member?

Faculty members receive many such inquiries and generally forward them to the Graduate Admissions Committee. A student who is already collaborating or studying with a member of our faculty should definitely request a letter of recommendation from that person. E-mail sent to multiple faculty members (or graduate students) in the department is considered a nuisance and is frowned upon by the Admissions Committee.

27. Should I send in all my letters of reference with my application?

Because of the number of applications we receive, keeping track of the application materials leads to delays. We prefer if your references use the on-line reference system. When you enter their names and email addresses, the on-line application system will automatically send your references the web link to the reference system.

28. Where is the recommendation form?

See 25.

29. Can my references be sent by e-mail?

No.

30. What is the admission deadline?

January 15

31. Do you accept late admissions?

We continue to review applications until our space is filled. However, applications received after we have made our first set of offers can at best be offered a place on the waiting list. Applying on time increases your chances of both admission and funding.

32. When will you acknowledge receipt of my application materials?

We do not use the on-line application system to acknowledge receipt. Up until mid-November, we process applications about every 2 weeks. If your materials arrive after Nov. 10, they may not be processed until the application deadline. Once your application is processed, you will receive an acknowledgement by email, and a list of any missing items. If you receive acknowledgement after the application deadline, we will give you some additional time to send us any missing items. If you have not had an acknowledgement 4 weeks after the deadline, please contact us at [admissions@stat.psu.edu](mailto:admissions@stat.psu.edu) to let us know there is a problem. Queries earlier than this usually lead to a suggestion that you give us more time, as we cannot find your materials until they are processed.

33. Why does it take so long for you to acknowledge receipt of my materials?

We need to match the applications with the GRE and TOEFL scores and letters of recommendation. To avoid multiple checks of the applications and multiple emails to applicants, we do not check for completeness until most of application mail has been processed. Please be patient.

34. My friend got a letter from you. Why didn't I?

We try to send out our letters all together to avoid this question. But we find that some of the large email groups such as hotmail, gmail and yahoo sometime mark our letters as spam. Please set your spam filter to accept email from psu.edu, or manually check your junk mail folder before discarding letters.

35. Can I visit Penn State?

We are always happy to have visits from interested applicants in the summer and fall. We definitely encourage applicants who have offers of admission or who are on the waiting list to visit us in the spring semester and can sometimes provide partial funding for the trip – information about visits will be included in our letter to you. We have less time to meet with other applicants during the spring.

36. When will I know if I am admitted?

Because of the large number of applicants, letters of admission or rejection tend to go out in batches. We usually have completed most of the process by mid-March, but funding decisions may take longer. If you have not heard from us by early April and our decision

impacts your decision to accept another offer, please contact us at [admissions@stat.psu.edu](mailto:admissions@stat.psu.edu).

37. Can I appeal a rejection?

No. The only exception would be in cases when there is a major change in your application – e.g. you just earned an A in a course in which you previously had a failing grade or have published research paper relevant to our program.

38. I applied last year and did not get in. How can I reapply?

Start a new application using the on-line application system. If you state that you applied within the last 3 years your application will be re-activated. You need to send an email to [admissions@stat.psu.edu](mailto:admissions@stat.psu.edu) so that we can retrieve any materials sent by mail, such as transcripts. The on-line application DOES NOT notify us about the re-activation, so if we do not get your email, your transcripts WILL NOT be with the application. The system will give you a chance to update your information and add new references. You do not need to update your TOEFL and GRE scores unless you have retaken the tests.

We never remove information from the application, but we will add new grades, test scores and letters. Changes in our decision are unlikely unless there is a major change in your application, except for those who were previously on the waiting list. If you were notified that you were on the waiting list, and you wish to reapply, please remind us of your previous status.