

## 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 upload pdfs 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. Pdfs 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.

13. Do you admit students in the Spring semester?

No.

14. How many applications do you receive?

Like all equivalent US programs, we receive over 200.

15. 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.

16. How are (international) graduate students funded?

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

17. 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.

18. 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 will 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.

19. 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.

20. 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 and pay tuition. 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.

21. 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 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.

22. 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.

23. 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 in the department is considered a nuisance and is frowned upon by the Admissions Committee.

24. How do my references send their letters.

Once you complete your on-line application, the application system will notify your references to complete the recommendation form and letter.

25. What is the admission deadline?

January 15

26. 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.

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

The on-line application system tracks your application. The only materials we should receive by mail are your official university transcripts and we ask you to upload an unofficial copy of these for screening purposes. We will not acknowledge receipt of your transcripts. However, if we want to make an admission offer and we have not received your transcripts, we will notify you.

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

We try to send out our letters all together to avoid a lot of email like this. 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.

29. 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.

30. 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).

31. 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.

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

Let us know that you want us to re-activate your application and we will include your materials in this year's applicant pool, along with any updates you send. 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.