Cornell University Graduate School
Steps for Admission

The basics
• Learn as much as possible about the Cornell field structure and your specific field of interest before submitting your application
• Applicants to professional degree programs may find it helpful to review the costs and funding information @ - [http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/costs-and-funding](http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/costs-and-funding)
• Applicants to research degree programs (PhD, MA and MS) may wish to learn about the research of individual faculty members. (Faculty are listed under the "Faculty" tab for each field in the catalog - [http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/fields-study/catalog](http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/fields-study/catalog))
• The Cornell Graduate School is decentralized. Each field sets its own admission requirements, application deadlines and makes independent admission decisions.

Graduate School Application Timeline

**Before You Apply**

2 years before: Start planning and create a file containing all information related to your graduate school search

18 Months before:
• Research academic programs (make a note of deadlines). Browse through guides to graduate programs, websites, and college catalogs.
• Practice and take required exams (GRE, LSAT, GMAT, etc.)
• Select your recommenders

Summer before:
• Prepare your statement of purpose
• Meet with faculty members to discuss your personal statement
• Ask for letters of recommendation

September/October:
• Order transcripts from all post-secondary institutions. Unofficial copies are acceptable; Cornell will request official copies if you are admitted.
• Complete application forms
• Submit applications. Even if deadlines are later, it is good to get applications in early.

**You Apply**

February: Monitor your application status online

**After you have been admitted**
• You will receive an official letter and instructions for matriculating
• Contact programs about the possibility of visiting
• Visit schools if possible
• Accept or decline admission

**After you have accepted Cornell’s offer**
• Send an official copy of your transcript showing degree completion
• If you are applying for need-based financial aid programs, file a copy of your federal income tax return
• Attend Graduate School Orientation in August
Your first step in the admission process is to identify the field and faculty with whom you wish to study.

With nearly 100 fields of study, the Graduate School exemplifies Cornell's motto to be an institution where any person can find instruction in any study. To find the field that best fits your academic and professional goals, please explore our programs using the many online resources available. More detailed information can typically be found on individual field websites. Applicants interested in PhD and research masters programs often find it useful to look at the research interests of specific faculty members.

**Graduate Field Structure and Special Committee**

At Cornell graduate education is organized around two key foundational elements: graduate fields and the special committee system.

Both represent a belief and tradition grounded in academic freedom that encourages students to work across departments, disciplines, and colleges. As embodied in the graduate field structure, academic freedom is a foundational value for the Graduate School, which is a centralized unit, formally independent of the various colleges of the university.

**The Field Structure:**

At Cornell, graduate study is organized using a field structure. Fields are composed of faculty members from a number of departments who come together around a shared intellectual interest, and may draw from different campuses or colleges. Graduate students are admitted to fields of study. Within each field, they select major and minor subjects, which are research interests or concentrations. Fields span departments and even disciplines. It’s possible for a student in the field of economics to include faculty on his or special committee from industrial labor and economics, civil and environmental engineering, and sociology along with the more traditional economics and management.

For example, the graduate field of economics includes faculty from

- policy analysis and management (College of Human Ecology)
- applied economics and management (College of Agriculture & Life Sciences)
- industrial and labor relations (School of Industrial and Labor Relations)
- management (Johnson Graduate School of Management)
- civil and environmental engineering (College of Engineering)
- sociology (College of Arts & Sciences)
- economics (College of Arts & Sciences)

See our complete list of fields @ [http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/fields-study/index](http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/fields-study/index)
The Special Committee:

For research degrees, most fields of study have no core course requirements. Instead, students pick a group of faculty members to work with during their coursework and research. These faculty members comprise the “Special Committee” and will guide students throughout their graduate study. The advisor, also known as the committee chair, works closely with students to make sure they meet their academic objectives.

While the committee chair must be a member of the student’s special committee, committee members can be drawn from nearly 1800 graduate faculty. Cornell encourages graduate students to form a committee whose members cross disciplines.

Faculty and Staff Support

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) - Faculty members in each field appoint a director of graduate studies (DGS) to represent them to the Graduate School and coordinate activities of the field. The DGS is the primary liaison between the field and the Graduate School. He or she helps establish academic priorities and allocate resources for graduate students. The DGS strives to enhance the quality of graduate education and general student welfare. These individuals also oversee the admissions process and may be the most familiar with admitted students when they arrive. The DGS signs documents required by the Graduate School.

Graduate Field Assistant (GFA) - Graduate field assistants (GFAs) help students, faculty members, and the DGS. The GFAs serve as liaisons between students and faculty members. They are familiar with campus resources and can answer many questions about the degree process. Your GFA also can help you with paperwork and clarify your student status.

Graduate Student Services Office - In addition to the GFA and the DGS, the Graduate School has staff members who can assist students on administrative issues. The graduate student services staffs serve as a resource for issues related to admissions, records, fellowships, and financial aid.
Prepare

At Cornell, graduate admissions decisions are made by faculty in your proposed field of study. Although the Graduate School coordinates the admission process and establishes minimum requirements for admission, application deadlines and additional requirements vary by field of study and degree program.

**Take required tests**

**GRE** - Most fields require applicants to submit Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores. Several fields require Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). International applicants must meet English language proficiency requirements and may be required to submit TOEFL scores.

**Deadline:** The Graduate School must receive all scores prior to the field's application deadline.

** Sending scores to Cornell:** All official test scores should be reported directly to Cornell University. Please be sure to use the exact same spelling of your name on both your application and test score report. The GRE institutional code for Cornell is 2098. Department codes may be used but are not required.

**Score expiration:** GRE test scores are valid for five years from the test date.

**GMAT** - GMAT requirements vary by field. Please check the application requirements for your proposed field for details on which tests are required. The fields of Hotel Administration and Real Estate require GMAT rather than GRE scores. The fields of Management and Industrial and Labor Relations, and the Sloan Program in the Field of Policy Analysis and Management accept either test score.

**Deadline:** The Graduate School must receive all scores prior to the field's application deadline.

** Sending scores to Cornell:** All official test scores should be reported directly to Cornell University. The GMAT institutional code for Cornell is 5811.

**TOEFL** - Refer to the “For International Applicants” page

**Write a personal statement**

Each applicant must submit a statement of purpose. The statement of purpose is your opportunity to help reviewers better understand your academic objectives and determine if you are a good match for the field to which you are applying. Some fields ask that you address particular questions in your statement of purpose. Please check with your field for field requirements.

**Length and Format:** The statement should be one or two pages. Include your full name and the proposed field of study at the top of each page. Please use a standard font and font size for ease of reading.

**Topic:** The statement of purpose should include your reasons for undertaking graduate work and an explanation of your academic interests, including their relation to your undergraduate study and professional goals.
Request recommendations

References are a required part of the Graduate School application. Students must submit the names and contact information for their references directly on the application. These faculty receive an email with a link to an online form to complete the reference. Referees can upload or type directly into the text box provided.

**Number of recommendations:** Most fields require two or three letters of recommendation. Please check field admissions requirements for your proposed field.

**Recommenders - Ph.D., M.A. and M.S. applicants:** Letters must be submitted by faculty members from your college or institution who are acquainted with your work. If that work occurred some time ago, check with the field to see whether recommendations from those familiar with your professional performance might be acceptable.

**Applicants for professional master's degrees:** Letters may be submitted by faculty members or those familiar with your professional performance. Contact your field for specific guidance.

**Your rights:** Under federal legislation, enrolled students may have access to their letters of recommendation. Your right of access can be waived by checking the appropriate box on the online application.

**Check with your field to confirm supplemental requirements:**
http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/fields-study/index

Prepare transcripts

Transcripts from each previously attended college or university are required. Please inform the graduate field if the name on any credential will be different from that on your application.

To submit a transcript, applicants must follow the steps below:

- Redact, cross out or cover your Social Security Number (SSN) on paper transcripts prior to scanning. Please do not upload transcripts that include your SSN.
- Scan each transcript (and English translation, if required) as a PDF, TIFF, JPEG or GIF file. The file size must be less than 10mb.
- Ensure the scanned image is clear and easy to read.
- Upload the scanned transcript(s) into the on-line application as part of the submissions process.

**If you are unable to submit your transcript electronically, you must send a transcript from each college or university previously attended directly to the field to which you are applying using the mailing addresses provided on the field of study pages.

Admitted students are required to submit an official paper transcript directly to The Graduate School prior to matriculation. This requirement will appear on the "response to offer of admission" form and the New Student Checklist.
**For International Applicants**

**English language proficiency**

Cornell's graduate community includes students from around the world. Find additional information just for international applicants here.

All international applicants must demonstrate proficiency in the English language. International students demonstrate proficiency by submitting official test scores from TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Cornell does not currently accept IELTS or PTE scores as an alternative to the TOEFL. For applicants in regions where the TOEFL iBT is not available, Cornell will continue to accept scores for the paper-based test (PBT). Although individual graduate fields may require higher scores, Cornell’s official minimum sub-scores for each element of the TOEFL are:

**IBT Version:**

- Writing: 20
- Listening: 15
- Reading: 20
- Speaking: 22

- Send scores to Cornell University Graduate School, Code # 2098.
- The TOEFL score must be dated within two years of your program’s application deadline. Photocopies of TOEFL score reports will not be accepted.
- Take the TOEFL early enough to have the results submitted at the time of your application. Please note that we cannot confirm receipt of test scores until the student has submitted an online application. Exam dates are posted on the TOEFL web site.
- If you receive your test results and any sub-score does not meet the requirement, you should make arrangements to retake the test.
- An application cannot be considered complete until Cornell receives official scores from ETS. An offer of admissions cannot be made nor can a visa document be issued if an application is incomplete. If your TOEFL score does not meet the requirement, we cannot issue the document, and you will not be able to enter the country.

**Exceptions:**

The TOEFL requirement may be waived if the applicant meets at least one of these criteria:

- is a native citizen of the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand or Canada (except Quebec). Applicants who are citizens of India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, or Singapore, are not exempt from the TOEFL requirement.
- studied in full-time status for at least two academic years within the last five years in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, or New Zealand, or with English language instruction in Canada or South Africa. You must submit a transcript that shows you have attended college in one of these approved locations.
International Transcripts

Successful applicants will have received a baccalaureate degree from a college or university of recognized standing. For students with foreign credentials, an equivalent international degree is required.

Requirements for international credentials:

• All transcripts, diplomas or academic records must be official documents issued by the college or university and provided in the original language.
  o If not issued by the college or university as original documents, they should be notarized, full-sized photocopies.
  o A certified English translation must accompany the transcript or diploma if the original language is not English.

• Transcripts should include grades received in each subject each year, and the number of weeks and hours per week that each subject was studied.

• Courses must be described in detail. The general subject name (e.g., "mathematics") is not sufficient; the particular subject (e.g., "differential equations," "algebraic topology") must be identified.

• Transcripts should be scanned and uploaded at the time of application. Admitted applicants will be required to send an official paper transcript prior to registration.

For a comprehensive list of international degree equivalencies visit:
http://gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/applying/international-degree-equivalencies
All application materials should be uploaded with your online application. Please do not send unsolicited additional materials to your proposed field of study or the Graduate School. Changes are not permitted once you submit your application. Questions should be directed to your graduate field.

**Application Fee and Payment**

The nonrefundable application fee of $95 must be submitted with the online application.

Payment must be made using either:

1. an e-check in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank, or
2. a Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover credit card.

Payment must be made through the online application.

**Application Fee Waivers**

**Financial Hardship:** In cases of extreme financial need, the Graduate School will consider a request for a fee waiver. Please include documentation of need, such as a letter from a college financial aid office. An email request must be sent to gradadmissions@cornell.edu.

**Special Programs:** The Graduate School is pleased to offer admission fee waivers to qualified participants in certain programs. For a complete listing of these programs, visit: http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/fees

For these special programs listed, applicants can request a fee waiver and send the following information to grad_assoc_dean@cornell.edu: name, date of birth, name of the undergrad summer research or other grad school prep program they participated in and date of participation, name of the field to which they are applying at Cornell. Applicants will receive an email reply with a fee waiver code and instructions on how to use it. **Please note:** Fee waivers will be processed Monday through Friday, during normal business hours. Please allow 72 hours for processing.

**Important Application Policies**

**Deadlines:** Application deadlines vary by field. Please review field listings for the most current dates.

**Applying to more than one field:** You may submit one application for a given term; multiple applications will not be processed. If you are not offered admission, you may contact one different graduate field and ask to have your application reviewed. If the new field's deadline has not passed and that field is willing to review your application, you should contact your original field and request that they forward your materials. Application can be made to major fields only. Please review the field of study listing to verify that you are applying to a major field.
Credentialing services or other forms of paid professional assistance: Cornell University expects all applicants to complete their application materials without the use of paid agents, credentialing services, or other paid professional assistance. The use of such services violates University policy, and may lead to the rejection of application materials, the revocation of an admissions offer, cancellation of admission, or involuntary withdrawal from the University.

Unsolicited application materials: Publications, award certificates, resumes, theses, and similar materials should not be sent unless prior approval has been given by the field of study to which you are applying. Mail any approved materials directly to the graduate field, not to the Graduate School.

Notification: Contact the field to which you are applying for its notification timeline. In most cases, offers of financial aid are made no later than April 1.

Deferring an admission offer: Generally, you are offered admission for a particular semester. If you want to defer admission, you must receive approval from your graduate field.

Apply

By now, you have learned about the Graduate School’s field structure, explored our wide array of offerings, and identified a degree program that will offer a great fit for your research interests and career objectives. You are ready to apply!

Before getting started, make sure that you thoroughly understand your field’s admissions requirements and have gathered all of the necessary materials.

You will complete your application online and should be prepared to upload all required materials with your application. You will not be permitted to make changes to your application or add supporting materials once you hit “submit”.

Apply now!

http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/applying/apply-now
You may check the status of your application from your ApplyWeb account. Fields will update the status as your material is processed. Please allow at least 7 days for your status to be updated.

Checking your application status

After submitting your application, you should receive a confirmation e-mail. The application will be forwarded to your proposed field of study for review.

You can easily check your application status by logging onto your ApplyWeb account and reviewing the checklist on your personal Activity log. Your field will update your checklist as they receive and process your materials. After submitting your application, please allow at least 7 days for your application status to be updated. Any questions you have concerning your application (e.g. optional materials, missing information, anticipated notification date, etc.) should be directed to your field.

You will receive decision notifications directly from your field.

Accepting, deferring, and re-applying

How do I accept an admissions offer?
Admissions letters are sent directly from your graduate field and include important information on funding and resources at Cornell. To accept Cornell’s offer of admission, please visit www.gradschool.cornell.edu/response, log into your ApplyWeb account and select your Cornell application. You will find a section labeled “Decision” with instructions on how to accept or decline Cornell's offer. Of course, you must be formally offered admission before you can accept or decline Cornell offer.

How long do I have to accept an offer of admission?
Admissions letters are sent directly from your graduate field and include important information on funding and resources at Cornell. To accept Cornell’s offer of admission, please visit www.gradschool.cornell.edu/response, log into your ApplyWeb account and select your Cornell application. You will find a section labeled “Decision” with instructions on how to accept or decline Cornell's offer. Of course, you must be formally offered admission before you can accept or decline Cornell offer.

How long do I have to accept an offer of admission?
Your offer of admission letter will indicate when a response is due. Cornell abides by the Council of Graduate Schools’ “Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees, and Assistants”, extracted below and available on the CGS website http://www.cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CGS_Resolution.pdf.

Students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution. In those instances in which a student accepts an offer before April 15, and subsequently desires to withdraw that acceptance, the student may submit in writing a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted offer. Early notification is always appreciated and helps us plan for the upcoming year.
May I defer my offer of admission?
You may be able to defer entrance to your program for one or two semesters under some special circumstances. To inquire about a deferral please contact your graduate field directly.

I was not offered admission and want to re-apply next year. How do I reapply?
If you are refused admission or declined a previous offer, you may reapply in the future using the standard online application. You should plan to submit new supporting materials to be considered for admission. Information on fees and fee waivers can be found here: http://gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/applying/fees

Funding and next steps

I have questions about my funding package. Who should I contact?
If you have questions about your funding package as described in your admission letter, please contact your field of study.

I have accepted an admissions offer. What do I do next?
Welcome! Your first step should be to visit www.newstudents.cornell.edu. This site contains a checklist of items to help you prepare to start your program at Cornell. You will soon receive an email from Cornell’s Computing and Information Technology service with instructions to activate your Cornell email account and network ID (NetID). Your NetID will allow you to access many online systems at Cornell.

How can I learn more about life at Cornell?
To learn more about life at Cornell, please visit the following links:

- The Ithaca Community - www.visitithaca.com
- Cornell and the greater Ithaca area – http://www.cornell.edu/visiting/ithaca
- Coming to Cornell for International Students - http://www.isso.cornell.edu/students/comingtocornell.php

I will be entering the United States on a student visa and have questions about the immigration process. Who should I contact?
Cornell’s International Student and Scholars Office can help with all immigration issues and help with your adjustment to life at Cornell. www.isso.cornell.edu