

Graduate Program Admissions - Frequently Asked Questions

Application Deadline: Thursday, December 1, 2021 at 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

*Please note: neither the History of Science Department nor GSAS has the capacity to edit or change submitted applications. Please double check **all** admissions materials **before submitting**.*

GRE

Q: Is the GRE required?

A: No, the GRE is optional.

Q: Will applications without a GRE score be read differently than those with scores?

A: Every aspect of the application is evaluated with great care by multiple members of the faculty.

Language Requirement

Q: Do you accept the IELTS?

A: Yes, we accept the IELTS Academic as well as TOEFL.

Q: What is the minimum score requirement for the IELTS Academic and the TOEFL IBT?

A: The minimum score required for the IELTS is 6.5 and the minimum score for the TOEFL is 80.

Q: In light of more limited IELTS and TOEFL availability, will GSAS accept TOEFL ITP Plus?

A: No. This is because the TOEFL ITP Plus does not provide a robust assessment of the candidate's proficiency in spoken English, which is one of the most critical components of our English proficiency requirement. Applicants unable to take the TOEFL IBT, IELTS or IELTS indicator exams may apply without these scores, and if programs recommend these applicants for admission, their admission will be provisional until they provide scores from one of the accepted tests that demonstrate the required level of English proficiency.

Q: I received my undergraduate degree from an institution where English was not the primary language; however, I did receive my master's degree from a school where English was the primary language. Can I use my master's degree to demonstrate English proficiency instead of submitting the IELTS or TOEFL?

A: No, if your undergraduate degree is from an academic institution where English is not the primary language of instruction you must submit the IELTS or TOEFL score.

Master's Program (AM) Specific Questions

Q: Does the History of Science Department offer fellowships for study in the master's program?

A: No, our master's program is self-funded.

Q: How long is the AM program?

A: One year.

PhD Program Specific Questions

Q: Is it possible for a Harvard employee to enroll as a part-time student?

A: No, we do not offer part-time enrollment in our program nor do we have alternatives for Harvard employees. Our PhD students receive a stipend so they can enroll full-time.

Q: Is it mandatory to contact faculty before applying?

A: No, it is not mandatory to contact faculty before applying.

Personal Statement/Statement of Purpose

Q: Are there guidelines for the personal statement?

A: No guidelines; tell us about your intellectual journey, what questions you're interested in, why you want to study, and why at Harvard.

Q: My personal statement is running over the required length of 1000 words due to in-text citations and references. Do in-text citations and references count towards word limit and length?

A: If you can fit the text into the text box on the application, that is fine. If not, you will need to edit your statement.

Recommendation Letters

Q: Should my recommendation letters be from professors or would letters from colleagues/supervisors where I worked most recently be better?

A: Please submit letters from professors where possible.

Writing Sample

Q: Can I submit a paper that I co-authored?

A: Single authored is preferable but can be acceptable if it's the only paper that the student has in English.

Q: Is there a word count for the writing sample?

A: No, there is no required word length.

Q: Content-wise, should the writing sample be on any academic field or focused on themes pertaining to the history of science?

A: A writing sample related to the history of science or intended subject of study at Harvard would be useful, but not necessary. The aim is to demonstrate your ability to delineate issues, research them, and write them up.

Dual Degree Program

Q: Is it possible to undertake the History of Science PhD program in conjunction with another program at Harvard?

A: While there is no formal program in place for combination of fields, students can apply to create an ad hoc program after being enrolled as a PhD at GSAS for a year.

Note: More about the Ad Hoc Degree Program here: <https://gsas.harvard.edu/academic-programs/ad-hoc-degree-programs>

Q: Do you allow dual-PhD enrollment between Harvard and another institution?

A: No, [Harvard does not offer dual-PhDs at this time.](#)