Frequently Asked Questions in Applying to the Ph.D. in Information Studies Program

College of Information Studies
University of Maryland, College Park
ischooladmission@umd.edu

Deciding Whether to Apply…

1. **How many Ph.D. students are currently enrolled in the program? How many are international students?**
Fifty students are presently enrolled in the Ph.D. in Information Studies program. Approximately one quarter of them are international students.

2. **Do you have a distance-learning program for the Ph.D. degree?**
No. Our PhD program is based on face-to-face instruction and mentoring, although some courses that some doctoral students take are offered in online or hybrid format.

3. **What are your average acceptance rates?**
Approximately 20% in recent years

4. **I am currently a Ph.D. student at another university. Can I transfer to your school? If so, how many credits will transfer?**
We do not accept transfer students in the Ph.D. program. No credits are transferable at the Ph.D. level. You are welcome to submit a new application to the program.

5. **Should I already have programming and basic technology skills before applying to the Ph.D. program or is it possible to take these courses while enrolled in the program?**
Most of the applicants have basic technology skills before applying to the program. However, the level of specific skills you will need will depend on your research interests as well as future career goals. For example, programming skills are crucial for students interested in doing research in information retrieval and natural language processing, but they are not so important for students mainly conducting survey or ethnographic research.

6. **What educational backgrounds are most of your successful applicants from?**
As our faculty directory (http://ischool.umd.edu/faculty) and doctoral student profiles (http://ischool.umd.edu/phd-students) show, our faculty and doctoral students come from many diverse backgrounds. The Ph.D. in Information Studies is multidisciplinary in nature, therefore, we accept students from a wide range of backgrounds.

7. **Must I have work experience before applying to the program?**
    Work experience is not required, but prior experience relevant to your doctoral study will be valued in the application review process.

8. **I don't have a Master's degree. Can I apply to the Ph.D. program?**
    Yes, you can.

9. **Does the Ph.D. program accept part-time students?**
    Yes. Some of our doctoral students have full-time jobs elsewhere and thus study at iSchool on a part-time basis. Because they usually take fewer courses each semester than full-time students do, it may take longer for them to complete the course work required. Similarly, due to their work priorities, part-time students may need more time to complete their integrative papers and dissertations than their full-time peers.

Regarding the Application Process…

10. **Where can I find the schedule for the Ph.D. Program Information Sessions?**http://ischool.umd.edu/information-sessions

11. **Why are there two application deadlines (December and January) for the same admission cycle?**
    For international applicants the "best consideration date" is in December. This date allows 1 month for the Graduate School to process foreign documents (e.g., transcripts) in international applications ahead of the general "best consideration date" in January. The general "best consideration date" for applications without foreign documents is January.

12. **Will my application be rejected if all materials are not in by the application deadline?**
    Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until May each year. However, your application will miss the opportunity to be considered during the first round of review, which begins shortly after January. You may also miss the opportunity to be considered for funding because most funds are allocated in the first round of review.

13. **Is there a Spring admission cycle?**
    We have only one admission cycle per year for students who begin their doctoral studies in the Fall semester. We do not admit new students in the Spring semester.

14. **Do you admit students on a rolling basis?**
    Yes. Applications are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis until May. But most applications are reviewed and all funding is allocated shortly after the January deadline.

15. **Does individual contact with faculty who share my research interest help me in the admission process? Can I simply submit my application materials before the deadline and wait for a response from the iSchool without having made any personal contact?**
We encourage you to contact the faculty whose research interests match yours. Your application is more likely to be successful if a faculty member expresses interest in your application. However, contacting faculty is not required in the admissions process.

16. **How do I get in touch with a faculty member?**
You can find the contact information of our faculty at http://ischool.umd.edu/faculty.

17. **I am unclear about the process of choosing a specialization—for example in Digital Libraries or Knowledge Management. Do such specializations exist at the Ph.D. level?**
We do not have official specializations in the Ph.D. program, but every student specializes in a certain area of research. Please take a look at our faculty directory (http://ischool.umd.edu/faculty) and doctoral student profiles (http://ischool.umd.edu/phd-students) to see how they describe their research interests and specialized research areas.

18. **If I apply to the Ph.D. program and I am not accepted, can I then ask for consideration to get into one of your Master's programs?**
No. Each degree program at our college is unique thus requires its own application.

19. **Some schools allow students who do not meet all admission criteria to come in on a provisional basis. Does your school do this?**
We do not admit students on a provisional basis.

Regarding the Application…

20. **Can I send in my application, resume, and cover letter by email?**
No. You must fill out an online application. Please follow the prompts on this website: http://ischool.umd.edu/phd-admissions.

21. **The online application system asks for a Personal Statement for the Graduate School and another statement of research interests for the iSchool. Should the two statements focus on different aspects of my background and interests?**You can submit the same statement for both purposes. If you do so, please make sure your statement address the specific questions raised in the iSchool supplemental requirement section.

22. **Where can I find more information about the online application system?**http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/admissions

Regarding Test Scores and Transcripts…

23. Is there a minimum TOEFL/IELTS Score?
Our requirements for TOEFL/IELTS are the same as those of the Graduate School.
Please see details here:
http://gradschool.umd.edu/sites/gradschool.umd.edu/files/uploads/ibt-and-ielts-requirements-spring14.pdf

24. Who may be exempt from taking the TOEFL/IELTS?
Please see the information about the test exemption here:
http://gradschool.umd.edu/sites/gradschool.umd.edu/files/uploads/ibt-and-ielts-requirements-spring14.pdf

25. I am an international applicant. When should I take the TOEFL/IELTS/GRE to ensure that my scores are received before the application deadline?
You are encouraged to take your tests as soon as you can. It takes at least 15 days for the testing agency to send us your test scores.

26. I don't like my current GRE/TOEFL/IELTS scores but if I wait to retake my test I will miss the deadline, so I am considering sending the low scores and then retaking the tests in the near future. Can I send improved scores after the application deadline?
All complete applications will be reviewed soon after the deadline and admission decisions will be made. Retaking your tests after the deadline may not be a useful choice.

27. My GRE scores are more than 5 years old. Do I have to retake the test?
We only accept GRE sores less than 5 years old by the deadline. ETS does not report scores older than 5 years, nor does the Graduate School accept them.

28. I have many years of relevant work experience. Can I have the GRE waived?
We do not waive GRE scores under any circumstance.

29. What are the minimum and average GRE scores for successful applicants?
We do not have a minimum cut-off line for GRE scores. Most of our students have Quantitative and Verbal scores at or above the 70th percentile. Exceptions exist and they need justification from the faculty who express interests in such applications.

30. How do you weigh each section of the GRE?
Each complete application will be reviewed according to multiple criteria including the GRE scores. The importance of each section varies depending on the specific type of research you propose to do in your doctoral study. For example, if qualitative methods are important to your doctoral research, then a relatively high score in the Verbal section of the GRE would be necessary.

31. **My GMAT scores are current. Can I use GMAT scores instead of GRE scores to apply to the Ph.D. program?**
    The Ph.D. program at iSchool does not accept GMAT scores.

32. **Which address should I send my official transcripts to?**
    All applicants must complete an online graduate application through the Hobsons ApplyYourself Graduate Admissions System. You can upload your unofficial transcripts through this system. If you are admitted, you will be asked to mail or hand carry official transcripts to the Graduate School.

Regarding Tuition and Financial Aid…

33. **What is the tuition fee per course for both in-state and out-of-state students?**
    Tuition information is here: http://bursar.umd.edu/index.php.

34. **I am an international applicant. Can I apply for financial aid? When and how?**
    Yes. Please indicate you need financial aid in your application. International applicants can apply for assistantships or fellowships. They are not eligible to receive any U.S. federal or state aid.

35. **I am an international applicant. Should I submit my certificate of finance before Nov 1, with all my application materials, or after Nov 1?**
    There is no need to include your certificate of finance in your application. If you are admitted, you will receive instructions on how to submit the financial documents.

If you have any other questions about Ph.D. admission, please feel free to email ischooladmission@umd.edu. Thank you for your interest in the Ph.D. in Information Studies program at Maryland's iSchool!

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