

FP GUIDE

APPLYING TO GRAD SCHOOL IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR GRAD SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

3

STEPS

FOR ENHANCING
YOUR GRAD
SCHOOL
APPLICATIONS

INSIDE

Q&A

WITH LEADERS
FROM THREE TOP
SCHOOLS OF
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS



3 Tell Your Story

"The strongest applications tell a distinct story—one that could only belong to you," says Carmen Iezzi Mezzera, executive director of the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs (APSIA). "Anyone can pull a famous quote off the internet. Instead, build an application that explains: Why is this particular program right for you? How does it fit with your objectives post-graduation? What distinctive personal and professional experiences can you bring into the classroom to help others meet their goals? Each piece of the application should reinforce that narrative to give admissions counselors a sense of who you are."

In your application, explain what you would like to achieve in your career that graduate school will help you accomplish. Clarify why you are applying to graduate school and to a particular program.

As you think about whom you'd like to request recommendations from, consider who could add something specific and detailed to complement your personal statement, transcripts, résumé, and writing samples.

1 Research Schools

Admissions directors want to know what attracts you to their school, so it pays to get to know the school before applying. Consider a program's academic structure, curriculum, prerequisite courses, location, and costs. Think about your career goals, and look for programs that set you up for short-term and long-term success.

Note the admissions and financial aid deadlines. Ensure that you meet them, especially if you are seeking any type of funding.

2 Reach Out

Introduce yourself and build a relationship with a school's admissions team before you apply. This is your chance to demonstrate interest by asking questions. It also pays to take advantage of any opportunity for a one-on-one interview with an admissions or alumni representative. If you can't do it in person, an interview via Skype might be feasible.

Visit campus if possible. It demonstrates your interest and can help both you and the admissions officers determine whether the school is a good fit for you.

For upcoming opportunities to build relationships with admissions representatives, see page 7.

APSIA

TRANSFORM YOURSELF
AND YOUR CAREER!

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SCHOOLS OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

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the right graduate program for you

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careers in international affairs

Johns Hopkins University

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (SAIS)

SIDNEY T. JACKSON, DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL ENROLLMENT AND RECRUITMENT

"IN ADDITION TO PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, ACADEMIC PREPARATION, AND INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE, JOHNS HOPKINS SAIS EMPHASIZES A CANDIDATE'S QUANTITATIVE APTITUDE.



WE BELIEVE THAT A SOUND UNDERSTANDING OF ECONOMICS IS INSTRUMENTAL TO BUILDING COMPETENCE AS AN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PROFESSIONAL."

-SIDNEY T. JACKSON,
DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL
ENROLLMENT AND
RECRUITMENT

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS MAKE FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT TO SAIS?

The answer to this question is slightly different for each of our programs, but generally speaking, we look for applicants who are creative, passionate, and driven, and demonstrate that they are poised for success. Of course there are several ways of illustrating these characteristics in an application, but there are a few commonalities: Most successful applicants come to Johns Hopkins SAIS with significant international exposure—either having worked, studied, volunteered, or traveled outside of their home country. They also demonstrate strong analytic and quantitative aptitude—as evidenced through previous coursework, professional experience, and/or standardized test scores. Finally, our students are often proficient in one or two foreign languages.

HOW MUCH DO GRE SCORES MATTER IN YOUR ADMISSIONS REVIEW?

The admissions committee takes a holistic approach to reviewing candidates and looks for indicators throughout the admissions cycle that will predict success at Johns Hopkins SAIS. Although standardized tests such as the GRE and GMAT can demonstrate an applicant's quantitative and qualitative aptitude, they are not the determining factor in the admissions review. For example, there are some candidates who do very well on the GRE or GMAT, but lack appropriate work experience. (Johns Hopkins SAIS requires the GRE or GMAT for most degree programs; the GMAT is quite popular with applicants pursuing a dual MA/MBA degree.)

DOES APPLYING EARLY INCREASE ONE'S CHANCES OF ADMISSION?

Johns Hopkins SAIS seeks talented and motivated candidates who wish to further develop their expertise and build a globally minded career. Candidates should apply as soon as they feel their application best highlights their academic and work experience, extracurricular activities, and personal or professional leadership roles. While the school offers an early notification enrollment option for some master's degree applicants, the acceptance rate is comparable in both early notification and regular decision pools. For the most competitive applicants, an early acceptance reduces the need to apply to other programs.

HOW MUCH DOES WORK EXPERIENCE MATTER?

Work experience helps the admissions committee to see that a student's goals are informed by practical exposure to the subjects they wish to study. Students with relevant work experience are called upon to contribute in classroom discussions. That said, about 10 to 12 percent of our incoming Master of Arts students arrive at Johns Hopkins SAIS directly from undergraduate programs, and they typically distinguish themselves by having a strong academic record, unique internship experience, or fellowship supporting their graduate study.

WHAT TYPES OF RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE?

If the candidate is employed, the committee would prefer that at least one recommendation come from an immediate supervisor. Also, the longer someone has been out of school, the more emphasis will be placed on their professional accomplishments and career trajectory. Many undergraduate applicants will have professors write academic recommendations; however, the committee also welcomes recommendations from an internship supervisor or a volunteer organization. Applicants should avoid recommendations from someone who does not know them well, but rather seek out a recommender who can talk about their interpersonal skills, character, leadership, and ability to succeed in the program.

Master's Degree Programs Options and Campus Locations:

Master of Arts (Bologna, Italy; Nanjing, China; Washington, D.C.)
Master of Arts in International Affairs (Bologna, Italy)
Master of Arts in International Studies (Nanjing, China)
Master of Arts in International Economics and Finance (Washington, D.C.)
Master of Arts in Global Policy Program (Washington, D.C.)
Master of Arts in Global Risk (Bologna, Italy)
Master of International Public Policy (Bologna, Italy; Washington, D.C.)

Fall 2017 Application Deadlines: Varies by program. See deadline dates at: <http://www.sais-jhu.edu/content/admissions#important-dates>

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE or GMAT required

Recommendation Letters: Two required

Application Checklist: <http://www.sais-jhu.edu/application-checklist>



STUDY WITH PURPOSE

“In a world where problems of growth, poverty, governance, inequality, and vulnerability persist as central questions of global affairs, the demand for advanced study in international relations has never been higher. Johns Hopkins SAIS graduates play key roles solving critical global problems.”

— DEBORAH BRÄUTIGAM, PhD
Director of the International
Development program and the
China-Africa Research Initiative



JOHNS HOPKINS
SCHOOL of ADVANCED
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

LEARN HOW YOU CAN ADVANCE YOUR CAREER WITH GRADUATE DEGREES
AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, ECONOMICS, AND MORE

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Boston University

FREDERICK S. PARDEE SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

AMBASSADOR ROBERT LOFTIS, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
PROFESSOR OF THE PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

"THE PARDEE SCHOOL EDUCATES OUR STUDENTS NOT JUST TO UNDERSTAND GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, BUT OFFERS THEM THE TOOLS TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT."



WE SEEK STUDENTS WHO ARE INSPIRED, MOTIVATED IN THE CLASSROOM AND THE FIELD, AND INTELLECTUALLY CURIOUS."

-AMBASSADOR ROBERT LOFTIS,
DIRECTOR OF
GRADUATE STUDIES
AND PROFESSOR
OF THE PRACTICE
OF INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS MAKE FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT TO PARDEE?

For all of our programs, we want to see a demonstrated commitment to a career in international relations as well as international experience. In terms of academic preparation, we pay particular attention to writing ability and foreign language skills. We are interdisciplinary at our core, so we look for applicants who are open to various approaches and methods. We teach our students not only how to look at the world from multiple perspectives, but also how to choose the right analytical approach for any given issue. Our programs are problem-driven rather than methodology-driven, so we do not emphasize applicants' quantitative preparation above other attributes.

HOW MUCH DO GRE SCORES MATTER IN YOUR ADMISSIONS REVIEW?

The GRE is required for all of our programs except for the dual-degree programs with Law and Business, but it is not the main filter. We pay special attention to the elements of the application that reveal applicants' insights and engagement with global issues, as well as the quality of their reasoning and writing. GRE scores are just one piece of the overall picture of whether we expect an applicant to thrive at the Pardee School.

DOES APPLYING EARLY INCREASE ONE'S CHANCES OF ADMISSION?

Applications for the fall semester are open until April 15, and applying early does not make a difference in admissions decisions. However, in awarding aid, priority is given to applicants who submit a complete application by January 15. Most of our programs also accept applicants for the spring semester, with a deadline of October 15.

HOW MUCH DOES WORK EXPERIENCE MATTER?

We value work experience, but it is not required. Internships, volunteer work, and other forms of community and social engagement can also provide evidence of the applicant's potential for future professional success. As with the GRE, work experience is one piece of the larger picture.

WHAT TYPES OF RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE?

We require three letters of recommendation, one of which should be from a university professor, if at all possible. Letters that address the applicant's work experience are also encouraged. Recommenders should speak to the applicant's academic strengths, leadership abilities, and commitment to global policy.

Master's Degree Program Options: Master of Arts in International Affairs (MAIA); Master of Arts in Global Development Policy (GDP); Master of Arts in International Relations & Environmental Policy (IREP); Master of Arts in International Relations & International Communication (IRIC); Master of Arts in International Relations, Mid-Career (IREL); Master of Arts in International Relations & Religion (IRRN); Master of Arts in Latin American Studies (LASMA); Master of Arts in International Relations & Juris Doctor (IR/JD); Master of Arts in International Relations & Master of Business Administration (IR/MBA). Also offers: Graduate Certificate in African Studies; Graduate Certificate in Asian Studies

Fall 2017 Application Deadlines: January 15, 2017, for financial aid priority consideration. Final deadline: April 15, 2017

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE required, except for IR/JD and IR/MBA. TOEFL required for most international applicants.

Recommendation Letters: Three required; one must be from a university professor

Application Checklist:
<http://www.bu.edu/pardeeschool/prospective-students/prospective-graduate-info/>



School

FREDERICK S. PARDEE SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

Global Vision
Local Impact
International Perspective
Regional Insight

Graduate Programs (MA)

International Affairs
Global Development Policy
International Relations & Environmental Policy
International Relations & International Communication
International Relations, Mid Career
International Relations & Religion
Latin American Studies
International Relations & Juris Doctor
International Relations & Master
of Business Administration

2

Graduate Certificates

African Studies Certificate
Asian Studies Certificate

5

Undergraduate Majors (BA)

International Relations
Asian Studies
European Studies
Latin American Studies
Middle East & North Africa Studies

8

Undergraduate Minors

International Relations
African Languages & Literature
African Studies
East Asian Studies
European Studies
Latin American Studies
Muslim Cultures
Muslim Societies

7

Centers and Programs

African Studies Center
Center for the Study of Asia
Center for the Study of Europe
Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies
& Civilizations
Latin American Studies
Middle East & North Africa Studies
Institute on Culture, Religion & World Affairs

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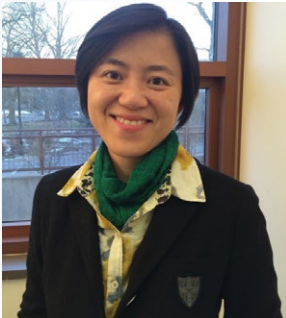
BOSTON
UNIVERSITY

American University

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE (SIS)

JIA JIANG, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

"SIS IS COMMITTED TO CREATING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE READY TO TAKE ON THE GREAT CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME."



WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO BEHAVE WITH AN UNFAILING SPIRIT OF INQUIRY AND A DEEP COMMITMENT TO SERVICE."

-JIA JIANG,
DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE
ENROLLMENT
MANAGEMENT

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS MAKE FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT TO SIS?

Successful applicants all share a strong academic background, have multiple indicators for how they can succeed at SIS, and have a compelling rationale for why they have chosen the specific program to which they are applying. Many of our successful applicants actively interact with the SIS community before applying to understand our degree offerings, learning expectations, global opportunities, opportunities to be involved in scholar-practitioner-led research, and ways to pursue their unique interests within our structured but flexible curriculum. Successful candidates also understand that SIS has a very collaborative culture, built around a strong commitment to public service, which is rooted in the school's history. People who come here often find some common ground in their core values and their interest in making a positive impact on the larger communities around them. These values connect students with each other and with faculty.

HOW MUCH DO GRE SCORES MATTER IN YOUR ADMISSIONS REVIEW?

The GRE is significant and useful, but it is only one of many indicators. We review applications holistically, so any weakness has the potential to be mitigated by other factors, such as impressive work experience; a statement of purpose that demonstrates substantive knowledge of the field and conveys a clear understanding of the program; and evidence of critical thinking, leadership, and resilience.

DOES APPLYING EARLY INCREASE ONE'S CHANCES OF ADMISSION?

For master's applicants, completing your application before our priority deadline of January 15 is required for merit-based funding consideration. All applications submitted (and complete with supporting documents) by this date are considered with the same weight. Applications completed after this date are reviewed on a space-available basis.

HOW MUCH DOES WORK EXPERIENCE MATTER?

SIS prides itself on combining knowledge and practice, so having relevant work experience is really valuable for our students to be able to measure it up against the theory they are learning and to contribute real-world perspectives. Members of our incoming class who came straight out of undergrad have usually completed at least one internship, volunteer program, or study-abroad program, and have proactively put themselves on the path of gaining relevant work experience.

WHAT TYPES OF RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE?

There are two types of recommendation letters that can be particularly effective for SIS applicants. One type speaks to the applicant's academic performance and potential, commitment to public service, and work ethic. It may cite specific examples that we can't see elsewhere in the application. While those attributes can certainly come across in a personal statement or résumé, having a third party cite them in a recommendation can certainly enhance the application. A second type of recommendation might help offset an applicant's weakness. If quantitative GRE scores are a concern, for example, a letter from a supervisor who managed quantitative analysis the applicant successfully completed at work could be a great way of highlighting the strengths and balancing the weaknesses in an application.

Master's Degree Program Options: MS in Development Management; MA in Ethics, Peace, and Global Affairs; MA in Global Environmental Policy; MA in International Affairs (Comparative and Regional Studies; Global Governance, Politics, and Security; International Economic Relations; Natural Resources and Sustainable Development [with University for Peace, Costa Rica]; or United States Foreign Policy and National Security); MA in Intercultural and International Communication; MA in International Development; MA in International Economics; MA in International Media; MA in International Peace and Conflict Resolution; MA in International Relations (online); MA in Social Enterprise; Executive Master of International Service (on-campus or online); and other degrees

Fall 2017 Application Deadline: Priority deadline: January 15, 2017
Standardized Exam Scores: See www.american.edu/sis/admissions/requiredmaterials.cfm for more on test requirements.
Recommendation Letters: Two required for master's degree applications
Application Checklist:
<http://american.edu/sis/admissions/requiredmaterials.cfm>
Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers



SCHOOL of INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

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GUIDE

APSIA Admissions Fairs

On November 16, 2016, the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs (APSIA) will offer a virtual admissions fair, where you can personally connect online with admissions staff from APSIA member schools from anywhere in the world.

APSIA is also offering the following in-person admissions fairs this fall:

- New York, N.Y.: September 13
- Washington, D.C.: September 14
- Toronto, Ontario: September 15
- Chicago, Illinois: September 20
- Berlin, Germany: November 8
- Paris, France: November 9
- Stockholm, Sweden: November 10

In addition, APSIA hosts monthly one-hour webinars focusing on “Best Practices for Applying to Graduate School.” Participation is free. Upcoming webinars will be held on September 27 and October 27.

For more information about any of these events, go to www.apsia.org/admissions-fairs.

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