

APPLYING TO GRAD SCHOOL IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



5 WAYS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR APPLICATIONS

TIPS FROM ADMISSIONS EXPERTS AT LEADING SCHOOLS

How can you put your best foot forward when applying to a graduate school program in international affairs? In this FP Guide, admissions directors and other experts at leading schools share information about what they look for in an admission application.

Requirements and strategies vary from school to school, as detailed on the pages that follow. Some of their advice, however, may apply to many different schools of international affairs:

- 1 | TELL YOUR STORY.**
Schools want to know what inspires you to pursue a career in international affairs and how your work experience or other background will contribute to your pursuits.
- 2 | PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DEADLINES.**
It sounds like a no-brainer, but you might be surprised how easy it can be to miss a date and lose out on admissions priority or financial aid.
- 3 | PREPARE FOR EXAMS.**
GRE/GMAT requirements are listed in the profiles in this FP Guide. In addition, most schools require an exam such as the TOEFL or IELTS for international applicants, or other proof of English proficiency. See individual school websites for details.
- 4 | BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE SCHOOL AND ITS PROGRAMS.**
Schools appreciate applicants who understand their programs and culture. They also like to know why you are interested in a particular program.
- 5 | THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT WHOM TO ASK FOR RECOMMENDATION LETTERS.**
Programs vary in the number of letters required and whom you should ask.

American University

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE (SIS)

“It is important for applicants to tell us not just why they are seeking a master’s degree, but also why this particular degree in this particular field—what drives them and why doing it at SIS is important.”



-Jia Jiang, Director of Graduate Enrollment Management, School of International Service (SIS), American University



“Successful candidates make a thoughtful and concerted effort to understand who we are and what we do as a school,” says Jia Jiang, director of graduate enrollment management at the American University School of International Service (SIS). “They understand that SIS’s key vision and mission is to be of *service* to the international community, and that we understand service to be a mindset and not just a moment.”

Students work toward their individual ideas of service. Some focus on social justice and poverty alleviation, or on educational and cultural exchange. Others may address issues involving global governance, security, or foreign policy.

“At the core of these approaches, we have an incredibly collaborative learning culture that is built around our strong commitment to public service,” says Jiang. “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.” She finds that competitive applicants to SIS demonstrate academic and co-curricular success, a clear sense of focus for their graduate education, and a compelling rationale for why they have chosen the specific program to which they are applying.

“With increasing demand in the job market for advanced degrees, it is important for applicants to tell us not just why they are seeking a master’s degree, but also why this particular degree in this particular field—what drives them and why doing it at SIS is important,” says Jiang.

Before applying, many successful candidates interact with the SIS community to better understand the school’s learning expectations, program offerings, research opportunities, and ways to pursue their unique interests within SIS’s structured but flexible curriculum. In-depth experience with SIS helps candidates put together a focused and thoughtful application that fully reflects their achievements and potential.

GRE scores are important but only one of many indicators. “We review applications holistically, so any weakness has the potential to be mitigated by other factors,” says Jiang. Key factors include relevant 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.

About 80 percent of master’s degree students at SIS have a broad range of post-college work experience. It is helpful when work experience is relevant to an applicant’s intended area of study, but many students bring professional perspectives from a related field.

Students who enter the program directly after college graduation have been highly engaged in undergraduate curricular and co-curricular activities. Most have interned or volunteered extensively and have experience with a second language or a study-abroad program.

An effective recommendation letter may provide details on an applicant’s academic achievements and identify strengths such as commitment to public service, work ethic, and overall potential to succeed. Another useful type of letter may help offset a weakness. For example, if quantitative test scores are a concern, a letter from a supervisor who managed the applicant’s successful quantitative analysis at work may be helpful. “It is always important for us to hear from recommenders who can elaborate on an applicant’s successes and areas of growth,” says Jiang.

Master’s Degree Program Options: MA in Comparative and Regional Studies; MS in Development Management; MA in Ethics, Peace, and Human Rights; MA in Global Environmental Policy; MA in Global Governance, Politics, and Security; MA in Global Media; MA in Intercultural and International Communication; MA in International Development; MA in International Economic Relations; MA in International Economics; MA in International Peace and Conflict Resolution; MA in Natural Resources and Sustainable Development; MA in United States Foreign Policy and National Security; MA in International Relations (online); MA in Social Enterprise (on campus or online); Executive Master’s in International Service (on campus or online).

Priority Deadline for Fall 2019: January 15, 2019

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE required for most applicants

Recommendation Letters: Two required for master’s degree applications

Application Checklist:

<http://american.edu/sis/admi/requiredmaterials.cfm>

Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and matching program for Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION | ECONOMY & TRADE
IMMIGRATION | ANTIRACIST STUDIES | URBAN ECOLOGY
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | TRANSNATIONAL SECURITY
TRADE POLICY | POLITICAL VIOLENCE
PEACE BUILDING | NATIONAL SECURITY | DIPLOMACY
SOCIAL ISSUES | TECHNOLOGY
INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS | REGIONAL SECURITY & STABILITY
CLIMATE CHANGE | GLOBAL INEQUALITY
MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE
POLITICAL ECONOMY | EUROPE & EURASIA
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY | INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
THE MIDDLE EAST | WORLD ORDER
GLOBAL GOVERNANCE | SOUTHEAST ASIAN POLITICS
NATIONALISM | TRADE RELATIONS
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Learn more at
[**www.american.edu/sis**](http://www.american.edu/sis)

University of Denver

JOSEF KORBEL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

"Applicants should detail how their backgrounds and experiences have shaped their career ambitions, as well as how they would contribute to the unique learning environment at the Josef Korbel School."



-Daniel Doerr,
Director of Graduate
Enrollment, Josef
Korbel School of
International Studies,
University of Denver

Successful applicants to the University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies not only demonstrate a strong academic or professional background, but are also change agents looking for interdisciplinary solutions to pressing global issues.

"Applicants should detail how their backgrounds and experiences have shaped their career ambitions, as well as how they would contribute to the unique learning environment at the Josef Korbel School," says Daniel Doerr, director of graduate enrollment.

Applicants to the Josef Korbel School typically have some experience working, volunteering, or studying outside their home countries. "Such firsthand cultural experiences can increase emotional intelligence, challenge perceived social norms, and help fuel classroom discussions," says Doerr. Rather than simply reading about an applicant's passion for public policy or international affairs in a personal statement, the admissions committee prefers to see some kind of a commitment to such fields on one's résumé.

The school is committed to fostering an equitable and inclusive learning environment and values diversity in students' backgrounds and ideas. "We are always looking to better include the participation and voices of those from historically underrepresented groups," says Doerr.

Work experience is not required for admission, but candidates who have relevant experience in public policy or international affairs often have a leg up during the scholarship review process. "We are less interested in a minimum amount of work experience than in an applicant's accomplishments relative to the length of his or her career thus far," says Doerr.

While numerous Josef Korbel School graduates pursue careers in D.C. and abroad, many choose to remain in Denver for the area's professional opportunities and quality of life. Not only is Colorado home to a large number of NGOs, federal agencies, and nonprofits, but it is also considered one of the country's happiest, healthiest, and most prosperous places to live.

All applicants must submit GRE scores, but the school looks closely at each applicant's personal statement for signs of intellectual honesty and self-awareness. "Some of the best applicants are not necessarily those with the highest test scores, but those who know their shortcomings and demonstrate an ability to compensate for them," says Doerr.

The best recommendation letters add depth and insight to an application and speak to a candidate's ability to handle graduate-level coursework. Professors and industry professionals often provide an understanding of an applicant's work ethic, intellectual capacity, and commitment to the field.



Master's Degree Program Options:

- MA in Conflict Resolution
- MA in Global Finance, Trade and Economic Integration
- MA in International Administration
- MA in International Development
- MA in International Human Rights
- MA in International Security
- MA in International Studies
- Master of Public Policy (MPP)
- Dual degrees, including MA and MSW, MPP and MSW, MPP and JD, and flexible options

MA students may also select from seven certificate programs to further tailor their studies.

Application Timetable:

- Priority Deadline for Fall 2019: January 23, 2019
- Deadline for Priority for Scholarship Consideration: January 23, 2019

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE required

Recommendation Letters: Two required

Application Checklist:

<https://www.du.edu/korbel/admission/apply.html>

Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

JOSEF KORBEL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

*“I bridged religion & democracy
in the Middle East.”*

your turn.

— Nader Hashemi *Professor*

du.edu/korbel

Johns Hopkins University

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (SAIS)

“Our students are collaborative in nature and able to form lasting connections with expert faculty, talented classmates, and influential thought leaders who regularly make time to visit the school’s three campuses and meet with students.”



-Sidney T. Jackson,
Assistant Dean of
Global Enrollment and
Recruitment, Johns
Hopkins University
School of Advanced
International Studies
(SAIS)



“Students at Johns Hopkins SAIS are known for being talented, collaborative, and ambitious. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, pursue diverse fields of study, and have vast and varied career aspirations, but they also share much in common: They seek to learn from the best, become experts, build their professional networks, and advance their careers.

The school is a home for intellectually curious learners who understand that the world is more complex and interconnected than ever before. Johns Hopkins SAIS students are passionate about making a difference and dedicated to becoming experts in their fields.

“Our students are collaborative in nature and able to form lasting connections with expert faculty, talented classmates, and influential thought leaders who regularly make time to visit the school’s three campuses and meet with students,” says Sidney T. Jackson, assistant dean of global enrollment and recruitment.

The school’s diverse degree offerings cover a wide range of approaches to addressing multifaceted issues, such as cyberterrorism, sustainable energy, water scarcity, migration, financial instability, and economic development. “We have recently added new faculty in areas of strategic importance, such as global health and development, cybersecurity, energy and sustainability, human rights, and migration, to grow our program offerings and ensure that our graduates are well positioned to lead the response to vital global challenges,” says Jackson.

Johns Hopkins SAIS students are ambitious. They partner with the Office of Global Careers to explore rewarding career and internship opportunities. They attend career treks to industry hub cities around the world, and they meet with alumni. After graduating, they are inducted into an alumni network of 20,000 innovative and accomplished professionals working across diverse industry sectors around the world.

The admissions committee at Johns Hopkins SAIS views work experience as a way to measure motivation and to ensure an engaging classroom experience. Candidates are encouraged to highlight the quality and depth of their experience, their increasing levels of responsibility, and their career progression as a way to demonstrate how they will be able to draw upon their firsthand experiences and perspectives and contribute to class discussions.

Johns Hopkins SAIS requires the GRE or GMAT for most degree programs. The admissions committee recognizes that while standardized test scores can demonstrate an applicant’s quantitative and qualitative aptitude, they are not the determining factor in the admissions review. In reviewing candidates, the committee also considers previous academic performance; work experience; international exposure from having worked, studied, volunteered, or traveled outside of their home country; career aspirations; and overall fit with the school’s community.

The admissions committee seeks at least two letters of recommendation from individuals who can best address the candidate’s interpersonal skills, communication skills, character, maturity, aptitude for leadership, and ability to succeed in a competitive graduate school environment. Recommendation letters often come from current or former supervisors, professors, and supervisors from internship and volunteer experiences. For candidates who are currently employed, the committee would prefer that at least one recommendation come from an immediate supervisor.

Master’s Degree Program Options:

- Master of Arts (MA)
- MA in International Affairs
- MA in International Studies
- MA in Global Risk
- MA in International Economics and Finance
- MA in Global Policy (for experienced professionals)
- Master of International Public Policy (for experienced professionals)

Also offers dual and cooperative degree programs, and a PhD program.

Priority Deadline for Fall 2019:

Early notification deadline is November 1, 2018. Actual deadline varies by program: <https://www.sais-jhu.edu/admissions-important-dates-fp-guide>

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE or GMAT required for most degree programs

Recommendation Letters: Two required

Application Checklist:

<https://www.sais-jhu.edu/fp-guide-application-checklist>

STUDY WITH PURPOSE

"It's never been more important to study international relations at a school that understands that truth is elusive but real; that history cannot be rewritten to suit today's preferences; that tradeoffs are inescapable facts of economic life; and that leaders are those who inspire, not those who inflame."

— ELIOT COHEN, PhD

Director of the Philip Merrill Center for
Strategic Studies and Robert E. Osgood
Professor of Strategic Studies



JOHNS HOPKINS

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Arizona State University

THUNDERBIRD SCHOOL OF GLOBAL MANAGEMENT

“We like to see that you can navigate the boundaries of language and culture seamlessly, and that you can adapt to an ever-changing business environment with relative ease.”



-MaryAnne Riodique,
Assistant Director of
Global Recruitment,
Thunderbird School of
Global Management,
Arizona State University

Thunderbird School of Global Management prepares students to enter the complex and exciting environment of international leadership, with specialized training in a master's degree program that includes preparation in cross-cultural relations, global political economy, and regional business environments.

Successful applicants to Thunderbird demonstrate a global mindset in their academic and professional pursuits. This may include language or study-abroad experience, as well as some form of global focus in their previous studies. However, the school is also interested in applicants who may have limited global experience but aspire to work in a global role, aim to make an impact in a global organization, or seek to become a change agent in their own right as an entrepreneur.

“Showing continuity—tying undergraduate studies, internships, and work experience—in a particular field or passion makes for a compelling profile,” says MaryAnne Riodique, assistant director of global recruitment. “We also like to see evidence of strategic decision-making and problem-solving experience.”

In discussing what to highlight on an application, Riodique asks, “Did you come up with an innovative idea, process, or project and have an opportunity to implement it? Did it affect your organization or firm’s trajectory in some way? Did you intentionally put yourself in a foreign environment, outside of your comfort zone, just to push your limits?”

Thunderbird prepares students to be leaders in global environments of volatility, uncertainty, and ambiguity. Along with international management fundamentals, a Thunderbird education focuses on dealing with diversity, change, and the unexpected.

The school favors candidates who are comfortable putting themselves in uncomfortable situations. “That is a very ‘Thunderbird’ quality,” says Riodique. “We like to see that you can navigate the boundaries of language and culture seamlessly, and that you can adapt to an ever-changing business environment with relative ease.”

Thunderbird requires GMAT or GRE scores for applicants to both full-time programs: the Master of Arts in Global Affairs & Management (MAGAM) and the Master of Global Management (MGM). The school also looks at applicants’ college grade-point average as well as the amount and quality of work experience.

A quality recommendation letter can speak to an applicant’s strengths and explain how various qualifications would equip the applicant to perform well in the program and beyond. The school requires one letter of recommendation. “While a recommendation from a manager, director, or supervisor is always preferred, a recommendation from a colleague or a client would also qualify,” says Riodique.



Master’s Degree Program Options:

- Master of Arts in Global Affairs & Management (MAGAM)
- Master of Global Management (MGM)
- Executive Master of Global Management (EMGM)
- Online Master of Global Management
- Online Master of Applied Leadership & Management (MALM)

Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

Application Deadlines for Fall 2019:

- October 30, 2018 – for early consideration
- November 30, 2018 – first round
- January 30, 2019 – second round
- January 30, 2019 – for private/endowed scholarship opportunities
- March 30, 2019 – for international applicants
- May 25, 2019 – final deadline

Standardized Exam Scores: GMAT OR GRE (MAGAM and MGM applicants)

Recommendation Letters: One required, preferably from a manager, director, or supervisor

Application Checklist: <http://thunderbird.asu.edu/magam>

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Boston University

FREDERICK S. PARDEE SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

"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."



-William W. Grimes,
Associate Dean for
Academic Affairs
and Professor of
International Relations
and Political Science,
Frederick S. Pardee
School of Global
Studies, Boston
University

Successful applicants to the Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies typically have a demonstrated commitment to pursuing a career in international relations, as well as international experience and foreign language skills. Because the school is consciously interdisciplinary, it favors 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," says William W. Grimes, associate dean for academic affairs and professor of international relations and political science. "Our programs are problem-driven rather than methodology-driven, so we do not emphasize applicants' quantitative preparation above other attributes. We pay special attention to elements of the application that reveal insights and engagement with global issues, as well as strong reasoning and writing skills."

Pardee School introduced a substantial curricular revision in 2017, so applicants should look carefully at the programs now offered to identify which would best suit their interests and background. The MA in International Affairs (MAIA) is a four-semester program offering specializations in Diplomacy, Global Economic Affairs, Security Studies, Religion and World Affairs, and International Communication. The MA in Global Policy (MGP) is a three-semester program with specializations in Environmental Policy, Development Policy, and International Public Health Policy. The MA in Latin American Studies (LASMA) is a one-year program, and the MA in International Relations (MAIR) is for international relations professionals with significant work experience. The school offers dual degrees with Boston University's law school and business school.

Work experience is not required, but the Pardee School values what it reveals about a candidate's commitment to a career in international relations and global policy. Work experience may also show that a candidate has gained substantive knowledge and practical skills that are relevant to the proposed degree program. Internships, volunteer experience, and other forms of community and social engagement can also provide evidence of an applicant's potential for future professional success.

GRE scores are another factor for assessing a candidate's potential to thrive at the Pardee School. Details about the school's GRE and English proficiency requirements are available at <http://www.bu.edu/pardeeschool/prospective-students/prospective-graduate-info/standardized-testing>.

The Pardee School requires three recommendation letters and strongly recommends that at least one of those letters comes from a university professor. Professional recommendation letters are also welcome, especially from sources relevant to international affairs. Recommendation letters should speak to the skills and characteristics that are most important for a career as an international relations practitioner and for academic success in a rigorous program. Effective letters often address the applicant's research and writing skills, depth and breadth of knowledge in the chosen field of interest, practical experience, and commitment to advancing peace and prosperity.



Master's Degree Program Options:

- MA in International Affairs (MAIA)
- MA in Global Policy (MGP)
- MA in Latin American Studies (LASMA)
- MA in International Relations (MAIR – executive degree)
- MA in International Relations and JD (IR/JD)
- MA in International Relations and MBA (IR/MBA)

Application Timetable:

- Deadline for Spring 2019 Enrollment: December 15, 2018
- Priority Deadlines for Fall 2019: January 18, 2019 (for financial aid consideration); and March 15, 2019 (for merit aid consideration)
- Final Deadline for Fall 2019 Enrollment: May 1, 2019

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE required

Recommendation Letters: Three required

Application Checklist: www.bu.edu/pardeeschool/prospective-students/prospective-graduate-info/application-instructions

PARDEE SCHOOL

of Global Studies

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A
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**BOSTON
UNIVERSITY**



PROGRAM DIRECTORY

MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

American University, School of International Service (SIS)

MA in Comparative and Regional Studies; MS in Development Management; MA in Ethics, Peace, and Human Rights; MA in Global Environmental Policy; MA in Global Governance, Politics, and Security; MA in Global Media; MA in Intercultural and International Communication; MA in International Development; MA in International Economic Relations; MA in International Economics; MA in International Peace and Conflict Resolution; MA in Natural Resources and Sustainable Development; MA in United States Foreign Policy and National Security; MA in International Relations (online); MA in Social Enterprise (on campus or online); Executive Master's in International Service (on campus or online). *Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and matching program for the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.*

<http://american.edu/sis/admissions>

University of Denver, Josef Korbel School of International Studies

- MA in Conflict Resolution
- MA in Global Finance, Trade and Economic Integration
- MA in International Administration
- MA in International Development
- MA in International Human Rights
- MA in International Security
- MA in International Studies
- Master of Public Policy (MPP)
- Dual degrees, including MA and MSW, MPP and MSW, MPP and JD, and flexible options

MA students may also select from seven certificate programs to further tailor their studies. Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

www.du.edu/korbel

Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)

- Master of Arts (MA)
- MA in International Affairs
- MA in International Studies
- MA in Global Risk
- MA in International Economics and Finance
- MA in Global Policy (for experienced professionals)
- Master of International Public Policy (for experienced professionals)

Also offers dual and cooperative degree programs, and a PhD program.

www.sais-jhu.edu

Thunderbird School of Global Management, Arizona State University

- Master of Arts in Global Affairs & Management (MAGAM)
- Master of Global Management (MGM)
- Executive Master of Global Management (EMGM)
- Online Master of Global Management
- Online Master of Applied Leadership & Management (MALM)

Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

<http://thunderbird.asu.edu>

Boston University, Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies

- MA in International Affairs (MAIA)
- MA in Global Policy (MGP)
- MA in Latin American Studies (LASMA)
- MA in International Relations (MAIR – executive degree)
- MA in International Relations and JD (IR/JD)
- MA in International Relations and MBA (IR/MBA)

www.bu.edu/pardeeschool

See these schools and more in the online FP Guide to Graduate Education

- UC San Diego, School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS)
- University of Kent, Brussels School of International Studies
- The New School, Graduate Program in International Affairs
- University of Washington, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies
- Texas A&M University, Bush School of Government and Public Service

<https://fpguide.foreignpolicy.com/2018-apply-grad>

The copy in this report was prepared by independent writer Nancy Henderson in connection with the business department of *FOREIGN POLICY*, and did not involve the editorial staff of this magazine.

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