



APPLYING TO GRAD SCHOOL IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



6 WAYS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR APPLICATIONS

TIPS FROM ADMISSIONS EXPERTS AT LEADING SCHOOLS

Successful applicants to international affairs graduate programs follow the guidelines below, recommended by admissions directors and other experts at leading schools in this FP Guide. Requirements and strategies vary from school to school, as detailed on the pages that follow. Some of this advice, however, may apply more generally:

- 1** Consider working for a few years before graduate study. While work experience is not always required for acceptance, schools consider it a bonus, both as an indicator of a student's motivation for further study and as a way to gain appreciation for the classroom experience.
- 2** Actively interact with the school community before applying. This can be accomplished through information sessions, open houses, webinars, and online workshops.
- 3** Present a compelling rationale for why you want to attend a particular program, how the degree will fit into your career plan—and how you will contribute to the program.
- 4** Display intellectual honesty in your personal statement. Schools look for applicants who know their shortcomings and demonstrate an ability to compensate for them.
- 5** Prepare for standardized exams (the GRE or GMAT, plus the TOEFL or IELTS for international applicants). If an exam is not required, focus on shaping the different qualitative pieces of your application into a portfolio that tells a story about you.
- 6** Think carefully about recommendation letters. The most effective are those that add depth and distinctive detail, rather than repeating information that can be gleaned from a transcript or résumé.

Johns Hopkins University

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (SAIS)

“Learning beyond the classroom is a hallmark of the Johns Hopkins SAIS experience. Through study trips, practicum projects, summer internships and extracurricular activities, students are encouraged to apply what they have learned in the classroom to address complex, real-world scenarios.”



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



Successful applicants to Johns Hopkins’ School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) bring valuable experience and a collaborative spirit to the program. In return, the school offers diverse degree and course options, instruction from influential thought leaders, an impressive alumni network—and the chance to study internationally.

“Learning beyond the classroom is a hallmark of the Johns Hopkins SAIS experience,” says Sidney T. Jackson, assistant dean of global enrollment and recruitment. “Through study trips, practicum projects, summer internships, and extracurricular activities, students are encouraged to apply what they have learned in the classroom to address complex, real-world scenarios.”

For example, students in the Energy, Resources, and Environment program completed a practicum with global reinsurance provider Swiss Re to analyze the economic consequences of climate-related disasters in agriculture-dependent communities. The outcome: the students proposed solutions to protect the financial stability of farms after crop loss and to lessen the financial burden on the public sector.

In addition to the opportunity to study at our campus locations in Washington, DC, Europe, and China, students can gain hands-on, global experience through study trips, consulting projects, summer internships, and career treks. A career trek allows students to visit companies and attend networking receptions to meet some of the school’s 20,000 accomplished alumni. The school hosts between 20 and 30 career treks a year around the world, to help students learn about career paths in a range of industries—from asset management to political risk to think tanks. One recent example was an energy career trek to Houston and Austin, Texas, to explore careers in the oil-and-gas and renewable-energy sectors.

A new program this year, the Doctor of International Affairs, fills a gap in higher education: an advanced research degree for those who want to pursue a practitioner role rather than an academic one.

The school also recently added faculty in areas of strategic importance, such as global health and development, cybersecurity, energy and sustainability, human rights, and migration, to grow its program offerings and ensure that its graduates are well positioned to lead the response to vital global challenges, Jackson says.

The admissions committee views previous work experience as a way to measure motivation and to ensure an engaging classroom experience. The committee also considers previous academic performance; international exposure from having worked, studied, volunteered, or traveled in other countries; career aspirations; and overall fit with the school’s community.

Candidates should submit at least two letters of recommendation that address their interpersonal and communication skills, character, maturity, aptitude for leadership, and ability to succeed in a competitive graduate school environment. For candidates who are employed, the committee prefers that at least one recommendation come from an immediate supervisor.

Graduate 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)
- MA in European Public Policy (pending endorsement by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC))
- Doctor of International Affairs (for experienced professionals)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Also, dual and cooperative degree programs with partner institutions

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Early Notification: November 1, 2019

Regular Decision: Varies by program (<https://saiss.jhu.edu/admissions>)

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE or GMAT optional for most degree programs. TOEFL or IELTS required for non-native English speakers.

Recommendation Letters: Two required

Application Checklist: <https://saiss.jhu.edu/admissions>

Study with Purpose

The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) develops leaders who seek a deeper understanding of how politics, economics, and international relations drive global change.

Attend an upcoming on-campus or virtual information session to learn more about our degree programs for experienced professionals.

saais.jhu.edu



JOHNS HOPKINS
SCHOOL *of* ADVANCED
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

› Europe › Washington, DC › China

UC San Diego

SCHOOL OF GLOBAL POLICY AND STRATEGY (GPS)

“The value that work experience brings to the application is the perspective it gives an applicant on the purpose of graduate studies.”



–Sonja Steinbrech,
Director of Admissions,
School of Global
Policy and Strategy,
UC San Diego

UC San Diego’s School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) has become the policy hub for a campus known for its work in science, technology, engineering, and math, also known as STEM.

GPS is increasingly hiring STEM faculty, and its programs emphasize rigorous, data-driven analytics based in economics, advanced statistics, and related fields, taking a systematic approach to program design and evaluation—whether in human rights, sustainable energy, or other areas. So, in addition to seeking students with more traditional educational or professional backgrounds related to international affairs, the school welcomes students with undergraduate STEM degrees who are pivoting toward policy and international work.

About half of the degree-seeking students at GPS come from outside the United States, offering unique opportunities for interaction and mutual learning experiences with other students as well as faculty. The school attracts many students from the diverse state of California, as well as applicants with significant experience working in Washington, DC, or other world capitals.

“The value that work experience brings to the application is the perspective it gives an applicant on the purpose of graduate studies,” says Director of Admissions Sonja Steinbrech. There’s no minimum work experience requirement for the two-year master’s degree programs, but “professional work allows a focus and an appreciation for the classroom experience that is hard to gain otherwise,” Steinbrech says.

Candidates for the two-year master’s programs have a wide range of work experiences, from serving in the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps to working for private companies, government, or the military in the United States or abroad.

The school’s executive degree program, the Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs, requires five years of full-time professional experience, though students in the program have worked an average of 10 years in government, military, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector.

Successful applicants to GPS, which celebrated its 30th anniversary last year, have a passion for international affairs, an open mind, and innate curiosity.

“They are ready to take a deep dive into quantitative-methods training, while at the same time exploring the breadth of contemporary challenges in policy implementation,” Steinbrech says.

Candidates submit either GRE or GMAT scores for the two-year programs, and the admissions committee evaluates those scores in conjunction with their academic records and a series of subjective factors. The Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs does not require an entrance exam.

Three letters of recommendation are required, including at least one that addresses the prospective student’s performance in the classroom and suitability for the planned course of study, and two others from someone, especially a supervisor, who knows the applicant well.



Graduate Degree Program Options

- Master of International Affairs (MIA)
- Master of Public Policy (MPP)
- Master of Chinese Economic and Political Affairs (MCEPA)
- Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs (MAS-IA)
- PhD joint program, International Relations and Political Science

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Application: January 15, 2020, for master’s programs; December 10, 2019, for PhD joint program

Financial Aid: January 15, 2020

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE or GMAT required (except for MAS-IA program)

Recommendation Letters: Three required

Application Checklist: <https://gps.ucsd.edu/admissions/applying.html>



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Discover our degrees in International Affairs & Public Policy

The UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy provides analytical training for the next generation of policymakers, using the latest science and technology to solve the world's greatest challenges.



gps.ucsd.edu

UC San Diego

American University

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE (SIS)

“We ask our applicants to truly focus on the qualitative elements of their application and think of it as a portfolio versus a collection of disparate parts—how do the different pieces come together to tell a story, and what is the research identity you wish the committee to discern from the story?”



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



As a master’s student in international development, Dilanthi Ranaweera dreamed of a job helping rural, low-income farmers attain health care, education, and better technology. “The seeds of that dream were planted” at the American University School of International Service (SIS), says Ranaweera, MA 2015, now part of the field operations team at One Acre Fund, a nonprofit that works with farmers in Africa to increase productivity and combat poverty.

Ranaweera was drawn to the learning environment at SIS, a human-centered institution founded in response to President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s call to prepare students of international affairs to “wage peace.” The core of SIS’s mission is to be of service and to create a positive impact on the global community.

“We understand *service* to be a mind-set and not just a moment,” says Jia Jiang, director of graduate enrollment management at SIS. “People who come here often find some common ground in their core values and help enhance a collaborative learning culture that advances our commitment to service.”

Jiang notes that applicants can learn about programs at SIS—“where Washington, DC, is our campus”—through information sessions, open houses, webinars, online workshops, and more.

Many of the school’s successful applicants interact with the SIS community before applying, Jiang says. This allows the prospective students to understand the school’s learning expectations, program offerings, opportunities to be involved in research led by scholar-practitioners, and ways to pursue their unique interests within the school’s curriculum.

Because the GRE is no longer required for an SIS master’s degree application, Jiang says, “we ask our applicants to truly focus on the qualitative elements of their application, and think of it as a portfolio versus a collection of disparate parts—how do the different pieces come together to tell a story, and what is the research identity you wish the committee to discern from the story?”

Students come to SIS working toward their individual ideas of service—some through social justice and poverty alleviation, others through people-to-people educational and cultural exchange, and still others through global governance and security or foreign policy. Competitive applicants share a strong academic background, multiple indicators for academic and cocurricular success, a clear sense of focus for their graduate education, and a compelling rationale for why they have applied to a particular program.

About 75 percent of SIS master’s degree students have a broad range of post-collegiate work experience. Work that is relevant to an applicant’s intended area of study usually enhances the application, but many students bring professional perspectives from a related field that complement what they want to study.

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

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Application: January 15, 2020 (priority deadline for master’s); December 15, 2019 (final deadline for PhD)

Financial Aid: January 15, 2020

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE required for PhD application but not required for master’s; TOEFL/IELTS/PTE required for international students, if applicable

Recommendation Letters: Two required for master’s degree applications; three required for PhD applications

Application Checklist: <https://www.american.edu/sis/admissions/required-materials.cfm>

More Information: <https://www.american.edu/sis/admissions>

Graduate 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 Intercultural and International Communication
- MA in International Affairs Policy and Analysis
- 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 US Foreign Policy and National Security
- MA in International Relations (online)
- MS in International Relations and Business (online)
- Executive Master of International Service (on campus or online)
- PhD in International Relations

CONFLICT RESOLUTION | ECONOMY & TRADE
IMMIGRATION | ANTIRACIST STUDIES | URBAN ECOLOGY
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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
FOOD & AGRICULTURE | RECONCILIATION & JUSTICE
ETHICS, PEACE & HUMAN RIGHTS
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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT | POLITICAL THOUGHT

At the School of International Service, we're guided by an important principle: we need the world, and it needs us. Join our top-10 school of international affairs and turn your passion for challenging the status quo into a career of global leadership and service.



SCHOOL *of* INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
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Learn more at
www.american.edu/sis

University of Denver

JOSEF KORBEL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

“We are a top-rated school of international affairs that is outside the Washington Beltway. Being here in Denver allows students and faculty to engage with those issues in a different capacity. We are able to challenge thinking, offer a fresh perspective, and come up with new ideas.”



–Brittani McClendon,
Associate Director of
Graduate Enrollment,
Josef Korbel School of
International Studies,
University of Denver



Five overarching global issues—inclusive economic growth, security, social justice, sustainability, and democracy—provide the structural underpinnings of the curriculum for incoming graduate students at the University of Denver’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies.

“If you care about these issues, if you want to have impact in these areas, then we’re the school where you should be studying,” says Brittani McClendon, associate director of graduate enrollment. “In practice, what that looks like is that we offer graduate degrees and certificate programs that fall into these issues.”

Sustainability, for example, refers to environmental issues but also to the need for good governance to achieve lasting stability, McClendon says. Related coursework might cover climate change, inclusivity of government policies, or “future modeling” to test various scenarios and possible solutions.

“With the arrival of our new dean, Frederick ‘Fritz’ Mayer, the school is ready to take on the great challenges of our time,” says McClendon. “We are working to find ways to make the global economy more equitable and inclusive, respond to new and emerging security threats, advance human rights and social justice, combat climate change, and promote healthy democracy through our research, curriculum, and community involvement.”

The focus on the five issues is a new element at the school this year, as is a revised standard for admissions and scholarship consideration that makes the GRE optional.

“Historically, some of the best applicants have not necessarily been those with the highest test scores, but those who knew their shortcomings and demonstrated an ability to compensate for them,” McClendon says. “We look closely at the personal statement for signs of intellectual honesty and self-awareness.”

For the two required letters of recommendation, the most effective are those that add depth and distinctive detail, rather than repeating information that can be gleaned from an applicant’s transcript or résumé.

Work experience is not a requirement for admission, though relevant experience in public policy or international affairs can provide a leg up for scholarships. Applicants typically do have some experience working, volunteering, or studying outside their home countries.

To translate studies into practice, students have access to more than 40 active research projects and 13 centers or institutes. In September 2018, the school received a \$14 million gift to invest in faculty, scholarships, and programs that advance interdisciplinary public policy solutions through the university’s Scrivner Institute of Public Policy, newly renamed after the donors.

The Josef Korbel School’s location away from the US East and West coasts offers a unique and valuable perspective, McClendon says.

“We are a top-rated school of international affairs that is outside the Washington Beltway,” McClendon notes. “Being here in Denver allows students and faculty to engage with those issues in a different capacity. We are able to challenge thinking, offer a fresh perspective, and come up with new ideas.”

Graduate Degree Program Options

- MA in Global Finance, Trade and Economic Integration
- 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
- PhD in International Studies

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.

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Application: January 8, 2020 (priority deadline)

Scholarships: January 8, 2020 (priority deadline)

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE optional

Recommendation Letters: Two required

Application Checklist: <https://korbel.du.edu/admission-aid>



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

University of Notre Dame

KEOUGH SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS

“The Keough School is committed to diversity and strives to create a student body that includes students of all international, linguistic, socioeconomic, and disciplinary backgrounds.”



–Becca Méndez,
Associate Director
of the Master of
Global Affairs
program, Keough
School of Global
Affairs, University
of Notre Dame



The University of Notre Dame’s Keough School of Global Affairs operates under the principle that no single discipline can practice its methods in isolation, and therefore it is committed to addressing global problems from many different perspectives—and with a sensitivity to the cultures, religions, and histories of the communities it engages.

Accordingly, the Keough School’s growing list of classes for its Master of Global Affairs (MGA) program allows students to reach across disciplines in their studies, equipping them with a toolbox of integrated skills to use in their professional pursuits.

The school’s curriculum focuses on the intersection of theory and practice, so students must be able to take academic theories taught in the classroom and weigh them against their own experiences. Therefore, the MGA program requires that applicants have at least two years of previous work or volunteer experience.

It is also important that students identify with the Keough School’s mission of integral human development—the flourishing of whole communities and the whole person.

“Through the Keough School, Notre Dame will prepare students for effective and ethically grounded professional leadership in government, the private sector, and global civil society, engaging them in the worldwide effort to address the greatest challenges of our century: threats to security and human dignity that come in the form of crushing poverty and underdevelopment, failed governance and corruption, resource wars, civil wars, and other forms of political violence and human rights violations,” said Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., president of the university when the new school was announced in 2014. (At the time, the Keough School was the first new college or school at Notre Dame since 1921; it welcomed its first class of students in 2017.)

Successful MGA candidates should have a strong work ethic and international or cross-cultural experience that made a positive impact. They should be proficient in English as well as another language. Applications also should demonstrate how the MGA degree will fit into their overall career plans.

This year, the school is launching a two-year professional development and career-planning program that will guide students from orientation to graduation. The program will provide students with career-planning experience, as well as vital practice in job-search skills such as résumé building, networking, and interviewing.

Students choose among three concentrations: Sustainable Development, International Peace Studies, or Global Affairs + Specialization.

Students get practical experience working with global partners on issues such as public health, displacement and migration, and peace building. Last summer, students fanned out to 18 countries for fieldwork such as improving the housing markets in India and Mexico, promoting gender equality in Cambodia and Timor-Leste, and enhancing school performance and innovation in Chile.

Graduate Degree Program Options

- Master of Global Affairs (MGA)
- MGA/JD
- MGA/MBA

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Application: December 15, 2019

Financial Aid/Scholarships: December 15, 2019

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE is required. International Peace Studies students are not required to take the GRE before submitting their application, but they are required to take the exam during their course of study. TOEFL or IELTS scores are required for non-native English speakers, unless they have completed two years of study at a university where courses are taught in English.

Recommendation Letters: Three required—at least one that addresses academic ability and one that speaks to professional capabilities. Letters that attest to an applicant’s character are also valued.

Application Checklist: <https://keough.nd.edu/master-of-global-affairs/apply>



KEOUGH SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS

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places development at the heart
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Master of Global Affairs

a two-year program offering concentrations
in peace studies, sustainable development,
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a place to explore new insights
and diverse policy perspectives

nd.edu/globalaffairs



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GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) <https://saiss.jhu.edu>

- 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)
- MA in European Public Policy (pending endorsement by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC))
- Doctor of International Affairs (for experienced professionals)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Also, dual and cooperative degree programs with partner institutions

UC San Diego, School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) <https://gps.ucsd.edu>

- Master of International Affairs (MIA)
- Master of Public Policy (MPP)
- Master of Chinese Economic and Political Affairs (MCEPA)
- Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs (MAS-IA)
- PhD joint program, International Relations and Political Science

American University, School of International Service (SIS) www.american.edu/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 Intercultural and International Communication
- MA in International Affairs Policy and Analysis
- 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 US Foreign Policy and National Security
- MA in International Relations (online)
- MS in International Relations and Business (online)
- Executive Master of International Service (on campus or online)
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University of Denver, Josef Korbel School of International Studies www.du.edu/korbel

- MA in Global Finance, Trade and Economic Integration
- 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
- PhD in International Studies

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University of Notre Dame, Keough School of Global Affairs <https://keough.nd.edu>

- Master of Global Affairs (MGA)
- MGA/JD
- MGA/MBA

See these schools and more at <https://fpguide.foreignpolicy.com/2019-apply-grad>

- **University of Kent, Brussels School of International Studies (BSIS)**
- **University of Kentucky, Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce**
- **The New School, Julien J. Studley Graduate Programs in International Affairs**
- **Texas A&M University, Bush School of Government and Public Service**
- **Sciences Po, Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA)**

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

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