

Don't panic! Getting into graduate school

Questions & Answers

Graduate School Acceptance

- 1) **My advisor told me that he is worried that graduate schools may be accepting fewer students this year due to the waiving of the GRE scores that many schools are doing. From your knowledge, does that seem to be accurate?**
 - That is likely to be accurate. Some of the Fall 2020 students have deferred to Fall 2021 (and may take the spot of a new student for Fall 2021), and some states are facing budget issues that may reduce the number of students. The best thing to do is to work on making your application as competitive as it can be.

Choosing the Right Grad School for You

- 1) **How do you determine your reach, safety, and perfect fit schools?**
 - This is a personal decision. Think about your motivations, goal and expectations. Review the ACS's booklet called [Graduate School Reality Check](#) - it is very useful in this process.
 - It's a balance of your grades, experience and credentials against the rank of the school. It is reasonable to think about it as a marketplace with supply and demand. But an important answer to this question is good advice from mentors.
- 2) **How do we assess which programs are more competitive and which are easier to get into?**
 - This is a good starting point: <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges>. There is a graduate section.
- 3) **What's a good resource to find what programs are out there?**
 - <https://inchemistry.acs.org/content/inchemistry/en/grad-school/grad-school-choices.html> talks about the process that many students took. The ACS also has this site: <https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/students/graduate/gradschool.html>
 - I often suggest students simply google areas of research interest or look for papers they find interesting and then start looking at programs linked to those papers.
- 4) **What are some things to keep in mind if you are unable to travel to/visit schools? Tips on asking the right questions if you are only given a virtual tour/meeting opportunity?**
 - Make sure to have small group / one-on-one meetings with students. They are the best source of info.

Graduate School Applications

- 1) What's the most important part of the application: SOP, GPA, Recommendation letter, Research experience?**
 - Your application is all about showing yourself to a school, so every part is valuable...even if one area of your package is weak, you can use the rest of your package to show your strengths and put any weaknesses in context.
- 2) When you say, document all these things, what do you mean specifically?**
 - Try to show, not just tell, what you have done. If you have a poster presentation (even if it just at your school) it is worth mentioning. Even just writing a paper-style lab report of your research experiences is something to show that you have accomplished something.
 - Here's an example in this YouTube: <https://youtu.be/DhNqoX9hGsw>
- 3) How are first-generation applicants looked at?**
 - You should always self-identify and apply early as there might be additional fellowships for you at that school.
- 4) How important is it to have an updated and complete LinkedIn profile?**
 - It's not required, but it's increasingly useful. It's great to have a professional page pop up as the first thing when someone searches your name on Google.
 - It may not be looked at in the Admissions process, but necessary for your career long term.
- 5) I am a rising senior and have had a difficult time deciding about programs. Is it okay that I did not start a year in advance? Is the process able to get done in a few months?**
 - If you have done the things necessary in preparation (classes, research opportunities, etc.), you can put the applications together in less than a month.
 - You have time if you are looking now, so long as you stay focused and get your applications in on time (or early, especially for "rolling admission" programs, you want them in early!) no one will know when you started getting serious about applying.
- 6) Usually, how different is the application process between a Masters and PhD program?**
 - It's usually very similar or exactly the same, but the expectations--and often the funding--are different. (MS programs are usually not funded; PhD are.)
- 7) What are some big or common mistakes you see a lot of the time when you see individuals applying to graduate school programs.**
 - A personal statement that says "I want to work for Prof. X, Y and Z at School A", but the letter is sent to School B without Prof. X, Y, Z.
 - If there are weaknesses in your application, make sure to explain it in your personal statement. Otherwise the committee will imagine all sorts of reasons that will not help your application."
 - Typos, generic essays, not talking about the research in terms of accomplishments, not doing your homework about the faculty members that you might be interested in.

- 8) **I am a chemical engineer and I have done well in every subject but physics. I really struggled in this subject, will they focus on this?**
- It will depend on the concentration you would like to do your research in.
- 9) **Should shadowing experiences done early in my undergrad career be mentioned even if I have experience beyond that**
- They can be mentioned, but your focus should be on more substantive experiences.
 - Seems reasonable to list them but not give them a lot of space on the CV/resume
- 10) **Where and how much time should I devote to explaining weaknesses in my application?**
- At most one paragraph, just to acknowledge them.
 - Yes -exactly. Give a context, and then move on to show you are more than those weaknesses.
- 11) **I am able to graduate one year early with two degrees and ample lab experience. I have the ability to stay at my undergraduate institution for one more year, if necessary, to gain more experience and relevant courses to become better applicant (mostly concerned about my GPA). Is it acceptable to reach out to specific programs for general guidance purposes to see if I am considered a competitive applicant as I navigate my options - whether to apply to graduate school versus staying another year for my undergrad?**
- It is worth reaching out. Your intellectual growth will improve when you leave your current institution and move into a new environment with different ways of thinking.
- 12) **I want to be a prof at a small liberal arts college. Should this be mentioned in the personal statement? I have heard to stay away from this as some PIs want a “carbon-copy” of themselves.**
- I think you should mention your career goals, and how the PhD that you will earn at University X fits into that plan. It shows that you are motivated and that you have thought critically about your life goals.
- 13) **Is it useful to mention research we’ve done during high school for grad school applications? Or is it best to focus on research experience during college?**
- Focus more on recent work and college level work. If you have something spectacular from high school (national science fairs and such) it might be worth mentioning in terms of what brought you to this point as a young scientist....but more recent work is better.
 - It could be, but it's likely to be less important, so deserves less space in the statement and CV.
- 14) **How much does the experience as a student instructor to assist professors in teaching lower chemistry classes (i.e. Gen Chem, Orgo, etc.) matter? I have been working as one for nearly 5 semesters now.**
- Any strength you have, especially a solid experience like you mention, is worth discussing and is important to your application.
- 15) **Is there any way to get my application reviewed to have an idea of my chances of being accepted? I was told that I could get in touch with the school of admissions to talk with someone, have you heard of this before?**

- I get pre-applications from students every year and it is hard to give firm answers, because admissions are relative. You have to be competitive within the group of applications that were submitted that year. Some years are more competitive than others.
- Best way to do this is to find a professor doing research in your area of interest and ask them to look over the essential information and give you some advice.

16) What advice you can give when the application is well completed and you know you are qualified for the program but negative response was received?

- Call the person in charge and talk to them to get feedback as to what the issues were. Is there advice they would give you to make next year's application successful?

17) Having dual degrees in history and chemistry and doing undergraduate research in both (separately and combined) will having a liberal arts degree deter my chances on getting into a chemistry graduate school? Do they even want to see something like that?

- Everything that you have learned is potentially useful, and certainly what skills you have learned in all your classes (as Sam is saying right now) is useful and worth mentioning. You still want to focus on your chemistry experiences, but of course being good at reading and writing (from history work and chemistry work) is extremely valuable. Certainly it will not deter it. The ability to write and think critically is very important in science. Your application needs to show that you will be successful in Chemistry, but this can add to the overall picture.

18) I am a Biochemistry major and I am debating to get a math minor but I also would like to take interesting classes relating to chemistry (even grad courses), how are minors weighed when grad programs are selecting students?

- Minors are not critical in PhD applications. The Committee will be focused on your science/math classes and not focus on the minor unless it is another science or math.

19) Would having financial support that is limited, such as GI Bill, help with admissions process. Is it even worth mentioning? (ex. having 24 month of 100% GI Bill)

- For sure some places will be interested in this--do mention it.
- If you are a US Veteran, you should let to the program know - they want to know. Many programs will waive application fees.

CV/Resume

- 1) Are non-scientific extracurricular activities/community involvement worth mentioning in a resume/CV?**
 - If you have had a leadership role or significant impact, then it becomes worth mention.
- 2) I graduated with a Biochemistry degree. Most of my classes were more chemistry -based (Ichem, 2 semesters of pchem and ochem, and a senior integrated lab project with electrochem/Ichem) but my research exp. is more under the umbrella of biochem/mol bio. My experiences lack synthesis/med chem. Would these experiences compromise whether I apply either to chemical biology or biochemistry?**
 - It is all about transferrable skills, so talk about what you have in terms of experience, and even if the skills aren't 100% the same, you have learned a lot about research that is useful to biochemistry (and even biology)
- 3) If I'm not a TA for chemistry courses, but a tutor for math course, would it be worth to mention?**
 - Put it on your CV. If it showed you how to teach tricky subjects, you may present that as a skill in your personal statement.
- 4) Are math and computer science skills helpful? Are they relevant to mention? Can they help make you more competitive?**
 - All skills are important and useful, and if this is an area you enjoy, work on them and show them as strengths in your application.
- 5) If I am the co-author of a paper that has been submitted, but is yet to be published, should it be included in the resume/CV?**
 - Yes, just be clear about where it is in the process (submitted)
 - That might be a question for your PI more than anything else. If you have permission to talk about this paper, then yes, stating "submitted" with the paper title (instead of the publication data" is great.
- 6) If my academic background is quite different from the US education system, should I include the coursework in the CV? Example: I have completed Physics and biology coursework in A/L that would equal to college level in the US? If so should I add course codes and hours?**
 - Yes, please do. Also, address this issue in the personal statement.

Grades/GPA

1) What should your GPA look like?

- GPA is only one part of your package. If your GPA is not a good indicator of your ability (you and your research advisor think you are a solid A student but your grades don't reflect that), be sure that you have letters of rec that put your grades in context. If you had a poor semester because of various reasons, you have the chance to put it into context in your personal statement. Don't let your GPA keep you from applying, because you don't want to make the decision for the grad school (if you don't apply, you have already decided that the school doesn't want you). Give the grad school all the facts and work from there.

2) What if we were given the choice of pass/fail for a course and have chosen that option instead of a typical letter grade. Is that a disadvantage?

- We will be not be holding this against students for the coming years because of COVID.
- In general, I don't think it will be, but if it's important as a core chemistry class or in your area of interest, get a letter from the professor or talk about your performance in you statement of purpose.

3) I have a great major GPA, but I pass/failed a decent amount of my non-major related classes due to dealing with some health issues (and passed all of them). Will admissions committees look negatively at the amount of classes I pass/failed?

- Unlikely they will focus on the pass/fail grades. But, please address it in your personal statement and provide a brief explanation like you did above. Also, if a letter writer is privy to your situation - have them discuss it in their letter for you as well.

4) Are obtaining B's after earning a 4.0 in pervious semesters considered a dip in performance? What is considered a good/bad GPA?

- B's, especially with many A's, is a solid GPA.....if there is a dramatic dip that you want to discuss in your personal statement, it is worth discussing it....but don't dwell on it.

5) I have heard that it is possible to apply for PhD with my junior year results. As a senior year undergraduate student from Bangladesh whose study is currently halted due to the pandemic, how are my chances in applying for graduate school with my current credentials? I mean my junior year cGPA.

- This seems like the sort of question that you'd want to check with individual schools, to be sure that you meet the requirements of the school as a junior (have the minimum level of coursework and such). Good luck!

GRE

- 1) This isn't a question, but I found this spreadsheet online listing schools not requiring the GREs due to COVID: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-syXModkO-Heg4pckYcQakCwwymcpV4dgMegfAB-k8/htmlview>
 - Thanks for the link!
- 2) **Is there a resource we can use to check which schools have removed the GRE requirement?**
 - I would always ask the programs in question, but this article from 2019 has a link to an ongoing list (not comprehensive but a list) of schools who have dropped the requirement: <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2019/05/wave-graduate-programs-drop-gre-application-requirement>
 - This too <https://beyondthegre.org/grexit/> but I agree, check with each program of interest
- 3) **Some schools (e.g., MIT) have waived the GRE requirement due to COVID-19 and say that they won't even be considering GRE scores and that we shouldn't send them. However, for schools that have waived the GRE requirement but don't elaborate on that decision on their website, should we still consider the GREs as "highly recommended," or should we take it as that they won't hold it against us/look badly upon us if we don't submit scores?**
 - My instinct is to say to take the schools at their word. If they don't require it, they don't require it, so you don't need to submit the scores.
- 4) **If the graduate program isn't using your GRE score for admission, what exactly will they be using to compensate for lack of GRE score**
 - Grades, research experience/potential, signs of perseverance/independence, letters, statement of purpose
- 5) **I really struggle with math on standardized tests (particularly due to the fact that the sections are timed) and have only gotten 64th percentile on quant in all my practice GREs, but I did very well in calculus and all my math heavy science courses. How will graduate schools look at this discrepancy?**
 - We will base our decision of the transcript. Remember, the Q GRA doesn't have Trigonometry or Calculus on it - it has geometry!
- 6) **What scores are most schools looking for on the subject GRE?**
 - Above 70% is great.
- 7) **Is there any way to retract a submitted GRE score from an institution, if you have retaken it and have a better score?**
 - That would vary from institution to institution, so you would want to contact them directly.

Letters of Recommendation

- 1) Do letters of recommendation from other people in an internship/science related job carry any weight/would be advantageous?**
 - If you completed a science-related internship, you can include the letter. That includes REU-type programs. If your work/internship was not related to your career path, it might be interpreted differently by committee members.
- 2) Is it fine to email professors asking for letters of recommendation given the current uncertain environment?**
 - Yes. Please email them and provide your resume, and ask them if they can provide a supportive/positive letter of recommendation. The best letters are those where the writer can discuss your ability to perform research.
- 3) I'm having a challenging time thinking of how to ask recommenders for a letter from them beyond "Hi Dr. XYZ, can you write me a letter?" What exactly would be good for me to say to them? Sorry if this question is sort of silly or trivial**
 - Not silly at all! Read this: <https://inchemistry.acs.org/content/inchemistry/en/college-life/recommendation-letter.html>
 - You can schedule a meeting, come prepared with a list of schools, and a draft CV and statement as a minimum.
- 4) How can or should we even ask professors to tailor their letters to specific schools (besides things like names, etc.)? I feel like they're already doing a lot**
 - No need to ask them, they will do it themselves.
- 5) I completed a computational chemistry REU remotely under a highly cited professor. The host campus began opening up towards the end of my experience, thus I was able to visit for group meetings and appointments with my PI. I come from a PUI and have letters of rec from profs that know me very well. One of these can talk about my research skills. Should I include a Letter of Recommendation from my REU PI even if we don't know each other that well? I feel that it would be a letter of support as I am continuing to work with him this academic year.**
 - If you have better letters, use them.
- 6) How are letters of recommendation received if they are written by postdocs and/or grad students?**
 - They are received and are not weighted highly compared to a letter from a Professor who can speak to your research ability. They are typically less valuable. Better to have the advisor and PD/student mentor write a letter together.
- 7) I am a Chemistry and Chinese dual major, would a letter of rec from my Chinese advisor be appropriate?**
 - Your application should be more Chemistry-centered especially for competitive programs.

- 8) **For letters of recommendation, would it be sufficient to have a physics professor write a letter of rec? The professor is currently on my thesis committee and has had me as a student in physics lab courses.**
- A Professor who can discuss your research ability is a great letter - regardless of their area of expertise (Biology, Physics, Materials Science etc.).
- 9) **Which one is better, a letter of recommendation from a faculty under whom I have taken a course, or a faculty under whom I have worked for a summer?**
- It is always about who can talk best to your strengths and your ability to succeed in graduate school.
- 10) **Would a letter of recommendation from a high school teacher be acceptable if you have continued to be involved in a leadership position? I am looking to get into a Food Science program and since graduating high school I still teach the Food Science Career Development Event for the FFA club students.**
- It depends how competitive the school you are applying to. More competitive schools tend to emphasize research and grades.
- 11) **Would internship supervisors work as recommender?**
- If the internship is somewhat chemically-aligned, yes!
- 12) **In terms of getting a letter of recommendation from a supervisor at work, would you rather see a letter from a higher up person who I don't know as well but have talked with about grad schools, or a supervisor who I work directly with**
- It is about who can speak to you and your strengths the best. You do want someone who is a supervisor role (not a peer) but the highest-ranked person isn't the best if that person doesn't know you.
 - In general unless your work was research, these types of letters are of less value, but to the extent they are, someone who knows you well is generally better.

Personal Statement

- 1) What to think about and what is expected in Statement of Purpose?**
 - Check out this YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/DhNqoX9hGsw>
- 2) How long should a personal statement be? (3 pages etc.)**
 - Typically 2 pages but check requirements at each school
 - 2 pages should be sufficient. Write a long one and then distill it down.
- 3) How do you go about focusing on career goals in personal statement if you have several ideas on what your potential career could be?**
 - Do a little more self-reflection, check out the [ChemIDP](#) or [College to Career](#).
- 4) Since chemistry has many subfields, how can I show the admission office that I'm interested in THAT specific field, if my research experience doesn't really match with what I want to do in grad school?**
 - This is something to include in the personal statement.
- 5) In statement of purpose, is it better to show my general research interest and briefly mention professors whose research attract me in order to show that I am well-rounded and willing to do various projects? Or is it better to show that I look through professors' research projects and publications detailed and write about specific projects that really attract me?**
 - I prefer letters that are the latter (specific projects). Other schools may answer this differently.
- 6) How much should I talk about my research in my personal statement if the school also requires a lab statement?**
 - You still should, but you can refer the reviewers to the other one for technical details. But what you learned, how that affected your motivation for going to grad school, why it makes you a good fit for the school, all belong in the statement.
- 7) If we've done substantial research in areas besides chemistry (I've also worked in a computational physics lab in addition to chemistry) how much should that be covered in the Statement of Purpose etc. because it's supposed to be "chemistry" focused? For me I'm interested in pchem so it could probably be connected**
 - Include all research experience, even if it is not strictly chemistry related.
- 8) What would you suggest NOT writing in personal statement?**
 - A quote from a famous scientist. "Nothing overly personal."
- 9) What would be something "overly personal" that shouldn't be included in a personal statement?**
 - "I had a hard break up with my partner that was reflected in my Spring 2020 grades." vs. "My loser partner broke up with me during a Zoom session of PChem in Spring 2020. After this humiliation, I keyed my partner's car and did donuts in their yard every week for a month."

Research Experience

- 1) As a result of COVID-19, I lost the opportunity to gain research experience. To compensate, I spent summer improving my technical skills (python data science, and excel) and taking summer courses. How common is a complete lack of research experience? Any advice on how I can market myself?**
 - Many students have not been able to do research - for many reasons. In your personal statement be up front about it and explain what you did instead - it will show that you are committed to graduate study and preparing for it as best you can.
 - We all know that this is an unusual year. Market yourself based on what you *did* do this year, which sounds like quite a lot. Make clear that you were flexible with your plans and made the best of a difficult situation.
- 2) For research work that has gone unfinished as a result of inaccessibility to our labs. Would making a report of what you already have and otherwise planned to do be a good idea for applications?**
 - A full report might be too long. Talking about your research in terms of what you accomplished and the next steps in succinct way in your essay might be better.
 - If you are able to do a report for yourself/your lab, it might help you think about your research in a way that you can speak to it clearly in your application package.
- 3) I was given an opportunity to do research this summer overseas, but it was cancelled due to COVID-19. Should I put that on my CV or will that be unnecessary?**
 - Probably better to explain the statement of purpose
 - You can say you were accepted. Reach out to the program to ask about how competitive it was to get in.
- 4) How to convince a supervisor if I don't have any research experience to show for?**
 - Virtual conferences would be a great way to learn about research even if you can't do research right now, showing to a supervisor that you are interested in research.
- 5) If I was going to write a thesis but can't now should I mention that on my CV**
 - You can certainly talk about the title of your research topic even if you aren't writing a thesis. I wouldn't go into the details on a CV, but that could be addressed in a personal statement
- 6) Since I am completing an undergraduate thesis during both fall and spring of my senior year, how can I highlight this experience in my application even though I won't have a presentation/defense until December?**
 - Add it to your CV/resume, talk about it in your statement, update your application when you accomplish things
- 7) How to balance the length of research experience and research interest? Are they equally important?**

- Experience is more important, even if you learned that you don't want to work in research area X. You do need to address your interests and the professors that match that at that University.
- 8) I had a research experience for a year but I decided that the field was not my type. How can I include it in my application?**
- You should focus on the skills that you learned at the experience...because many skills (both hard and soft) can be transferred to different fields.
 - You learned the kind of chemistry that you do not want to do - stress what you learned from the experience and how you might apply it to the science that you do want to do.
- 9) For research experience is it particularly important that the research we are conducting in undergrad is relevant to the area in which we plan to study?**
- It helps but it is not a must. The important thing is to highlight the skills that you developed and what you accomplished in your project. It can be a positive if it is, but it's usually not essential. Explain your experience and your interest.
- 10) I had a professor who I worked on a separate research project with who published his work on a completely different project with my name on it that I never knew of. My concern is that it will show up in the interview for graduate school since it counts as being published is there a professional way to go about this so it doesn't hurt my application?**
- You can include your publication in your CV/resume.
 - It should also be mentioned in a recommendation letter and/or essay.
- 11) How are research and development industrial internships weighted in comparison to academic research? How should I discuss them in my application?**
- Always talk about them in terms of accomplishments and your contribution to the project.
- 12) I'm running into the issue where my lab experience is proprietary and I cannot talk about the actual research itself on my application and have little that I can actually show the public about what I did and what I worked on. How should I handle that on my applications and when talking to professors?**
- You can still talk about it in terms of accomplishment in a general way. Always make sure you clear the content with your PI.
 - You can focus on the skills that you have learned - like, if you have done a great deal of wet organic synthesis (for example), you have skills to talk about without getting into the specifics of the process you covered.
 - Check with your employer and talk about the research in broad strokes without details with the explanation that you are not allowed to go into specifics. For example, "I optimized a Friedel Crafts reaction and improved the yield by 35% etc."
- 13) I am currently working on an MS to gain research experience. Would it negatively affect my viewings if I were unable to get anything published during my time here?**

- Research is always challenging, and it is understood that sometimes projects cannot yield a publication. Focus on the skills that you learned and what you were able to learn in this process.
 - It would be a positive to publish, but we know there are a lot of factors. Talk about what you did, presentations, etc., and have your advisor describe your progress.
- 14) What is the benefit of taking a gap year(s) to work in a lab and gain more research experience and possibly be published in a paper? Is this something PhD programs look for or value? Does it help make you a more competitive candidate?**
- It would be very useful if you had little or no research experience as an undergraduate, both for your application and also so you will know what you want to do. But it's definitely not necessary to get into even a top program, if you had good undergrad experience.
- 15) How many hours of lab work should someone have to be competitive for a PhD program? Also, do you need to be published to be competitive?**
- It is not time (hours) but accomplishments that make you competitive.
 - There's no one answer, but a longer period of time, like over a year or more, and doing enough for an advisor to write a detailed meaningful letter.
- 16) I have done chemistry lab research work on my own and with groups of individuals, do reviewers of applications care more for group work?**
- There are useful skills from both independence and group work, so highlight both.
- 17) I go to a small liberal arts school and have done summer research and independent research for two semesters. My PI mainly focuses on teaching and hasn't published much in the past many years. I do have a presentation that is available online, which I plan on talking about in my personal statement. However, should I mention that I really haven't had any chance to publish a paper?**
- You don't have to have published a paper in an ACS journal to get into graduate school. You can simply state in your personal statement that publishing wasn't an opportunity that you had. But do talk about the skills you learned and progress you have made that will be important to your success in graduate school.
- 18) Assuming that I want to do research work in biophysics as a chemist, is there a benefit of applying to chemistry program over other programs as my background is in Chemistry? I know most schools do not have a specific department for biophysics.**
- Biophysics is an interesting case. Many Biophysics Departments are in Medical Schools, but some Schools of Arts and Sciences will have biophysics as a part of chemistry or physics. If you undergraduate training is in chemistry, a chemistry PhD program with a tract in biophysics might be more in line with your training.
 - Many schools have biophysics graduate programs even if they don't have a department. In many but not all places, a lot of biophysical chemists are in the chemistry department. It depends on a lot on the school.

Future Research Advisor

- 1) Is it necessary to email faculty members prior to applying to ask if they are looking to take on new students?**
 - It is not required, but a good practice to make sure that the opportunity exists.
- 2) Who can you contact to find out if a research faculty group of interest to you is accepting incoming students during that cycle?**
 - Contact the faculty member.
- 3) How do you write an email to a professor whose research you're interested in and are hopeful are taking on students? What should be included in the email?**
 - It should be professional but short and to the point
 - Say who you are and your interest, maybe a couple of sentences about yourself, and then ask directly.
- 4) I'm curious how advising across graduate departments work. I've found many faculty doing what seems to be chemistry-related work in materials science or mechanical engineering departments. If I wanted to do work in those faculty's groups, is it possible to do so without being in the MechE PhD program for example?**
 - It depends on the university, please check with the specific programs.
- 5) I want to apply to chemistry programs but there are faculty research in related areas (materials science, biophys) that I'm also interested in. Should I only mention faculty I want to work in in the department in my statement?**
 - The overall answer is yes, but you should really look at the application and see if they are asking for specific information. Check with the Department to make sure that you can work with the professors that you are interested. Otherwise, you will need to apply to the program that has those specific faculty.

International Students

- 1) Are their limitation of the number of international students accept into graduate programs**
 - That depends on the program.
- 2) As an international student, how can I make sure that my undergraduate program is validated internationally and which tests should I take to be able to apply to a graduate program in the US?**
 - Some universities require WES or CertiFile.
 - You will need a TOEFL or ILETS exam in addition to a WES transcript.
- 3) As an International student, I am concerned that if the format of my grades is in different from what the school is asking for, how can I convert them?**
 - Your transcript will contain a rubric that committees can use to convert it into the 4.0 scale of the US. We are very used to seeing non-4.0 scale transcripts.
 - Some school require using WES or certifile. This is more than a "translation" service. It looks at the equivalency of US-system courses versus to non-US courses. Some schools required them for students who complete their degree at a non-US school, even if it was English-speaking country.

Graduate Early/Late

- 1) Is graduating early (for 1 semester) going to be a hindrance on graduate school applications?**
 - Most programs start in the fall, but you may be able to start early.
- 2) Would graduating college a semester late negatively impact grad school applications?**
 - It may delay your start. Most programs start only in the Fall.

Stipends/Tuition

- 1) Do the stipends or tuition waivers have to be paid back if you drop out of the program?**
 - Typically you do not have to pay back stipends / tuition waivers if you do drop out.