

Preparation for Graduate Study in American Universities

Presentation to the Students of
Huazhong University of Science and Technology
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Acknowledgment

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This Presentation is Divided into 5 Parts

- What you need to do now to get ready
- What you need to do when you apply
- What you need to know about USCIS (Citizenship & Immigration Service)
- What you need to do when you first arrive
- What you need to do to make a success of your first year



What you need to do now to get ready

- Accelerate your English skills
 - Books on tape/CD with accompanying written text
 - Practice writing for an hour a day. Show someone whose English is better.
 - Find out about the GRE/TOEFL writing tests
- Start looking at programs that match your interest(s)
 - Barron's
 - Peterson's Guide
 - U.S. News and World Report Graduate Rankings



What you need to do now to get ready (continued)

- Start thinking about and planning for your finances
 - Unless you're offered a scholarship or fellowship, rarely do international students receive support the first semester they enroll
 - Some scholarships and grants are available only to students applying from their home country. You might also investigate all possible home-country sources of funding. Tuition is only one of many expenses you should expect when studying in the United States.



What you need to do now to get ready (continued)

- Other expenses may include the following:
 - Application fees;
 - Standardized test fees;
 - Travel expenses;
 - Living costs (including room and meals);
 - Books and supplies;
 - Health insurance; and
 - Incidental expenses.



What you need to do now to get ready (continued)

- Graduate students should begin the application process 18 months before the intended date of study--certainly no later than one year before—the school year begins. Use the steps below as a guideline for applying for financial assistance:
- Return completed financial assistance applications well ahead of the final deadline date
- Competition for grants is keen in the United States; an incomplete, tardy, poorly written, or messy application could cause your application to be rejected.



What you need to do now to get ready (continued)

- Sources of Finance
 - Private organizations (U.S. and international), foundations, and international agencies
 - Certain agencies of the U.S. and foreign governments offer scholarships to international students.
 - U.S. government student loans are not available to foreign students.
 - Teaching and research assistantships



What you need to do now to get ready (continued)

- Sources of Finance
 - Direct exchange programs between a home country university and the U.S.
 - Working in the United States is sometimes possible, but U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) regulations strictly prohibit foreign students from working off-campus in their first year. The rules also impose restrictions beyond the first year. Do not expect to be able to finance your study by working while studying in the United States
 - Loans from some commercial banks . Co-borrower who must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. Loan fees are very expensive; therefore, foreign students should use them only as a last resorts.



What you need to do now to get ready (continued)

- Develop a support network of like-minded friends here in Taiwan
 - Share what you learn from your research with others
- Find out if there are alumni in the area or anyone who knows someone who attended the university you're interested.
 - Use websites to find faculty who might know...email them. Be careful with your English



What you need to do when you apply

- Search Google for the names of faculty. What did they publish? What else do they do? If something interests you, find out more about them.
- Follow the admissions instructions very carefully. If asked for three letters of recommendation, be sure to contact your references early and give them three stamped, addressed envelopes.
- You won't hear when you expect. It may be sooner, it may be later. Be patient. But, if you write a follow-up email, be sure it uses the same proper English grammar as the previous material you submitted.



What you need to do when you apply

- Make sure your material is neat and uses proper English grammar. Have someone proofread it.
- Familiarize yourself with the program though the university's website.
- Study the course catalog...see what's required. Match your undergraduate courses to those that will be required.



What you need to know about USCIS

- The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is now the Bureau of Citizenship & Immigration Service
- SEVIS is the Citizenship & Immigration Service's newly created Student & Exchange Visitor Information System, also known as the "student tracking system"
 - All non-immigrant students, faculty and research scholars studying, doing research or teaching either an F-1 or J-1 visa status are required to be entered into the SEVIS system by the university with which they are enrolled/employed



What you need to know about USCIS (Continued)

- A Form I-20 or DS 2019 is a U.S. legal document, that the university has entered your information into the SEVIS tracking system and then produced the visa document for your use.
- The visa document entitles you to seek a corresponding F-1 or J-1 visa stamp from the U.S. consulate/embassy in your home country.
- The Form I-20 proves to the officials that the student has demonstrated that s/he has not only been accepted to the university to study, but that the bearer has shown that s/he possesses the requisite funding necessary to both study and live in the U.S.



What you need to know about USCIS (Continued)

- Once the student shows the newly issued Form I-20 or Form DS 2019 to the officials at the port of entry, the student is then allowed to enter the U.S. as an F-1 or J-1 student.
- An I-94 card records the entry and departure of a non-immigrant in to the United States. This card is completed on the plane by the individual. It is stamped at the port of entry by the Immigration Official to record when, in what status and on what date an individual enters the U.S. This card should be stapled in to the passport and surrendered upon departing the U.S.



What you need to do when you first arrive

- Arrive several weeks early, if possible, to adjust to the speed with which English is spoken.
- Email your advisor and let her or him know when you will arrive.
- If you plan to live off-campus, check with your advisor. He or she will know who to contact.
- Visit the international student center or organization – sometimes this is a requirement
- Settle in to your new accommodations.
- Take a tour of the university.
- Take a tour of the surrounding area.



What you need to do to make a success of your first year

- Take a light load the first term, 9 hours
- If you feel overwhelmed
 - Seek out help with English tutoring or other academic services from your university
 - Seek out help with adjustment issues with other professionals on campus
- Cultivate friendships with faculty and fellow graduate students
- Pace yourself. Graduate study is a marathon, not a sprint
- Learn about and participate in American holidays (keep your own, too!)



Resources and Links

- National Association of International Educators
<http://www.nafsa.org>
- UNESCO's Study Abroad 2004-2005 Guide
<http://www.unesco.org>
- College Opportunities Online (COOL)
<http://nces.ed.gov>



FSU – Example

Admission
Office of Admissions
Graduate program

Send the following to the Office of Admissions:

- the [International Application for Admission](#);
- an [application fee of twenty dollars \(\\$20\)](#) [check or money order drawn on a U.S. bank];
- two** copies of official transcripts, mark sheets, diplomas, and/or certificates sent directly from each post-secondary institution attended(ing) [in the native language, accompanied by certified English translations];
- [GRE](#) or [GMAT](#) score;
- [TOEFL](#) score of 550 (213 computer-based) [required of all applicants whose native language is not English].
- the [Certification of Financial Responsibility](#) Form and proof of financial support.

Send the following to the academic department:

- a departmental application (provided by the academic department);
- letters of recommendation;
- a personal statement of goals and/or research interests.



Department of Educational Psychology and Learning Systems

1. Documents Needed for Admission:

- A statement of purpose** from the applicant should indicate [career goals](#), [and expectations](#) with an indication of previous work, experience, or publications.
- A completed application** from the Department.
- Three letters of recommendation** from persons qualified to make predicative statements regarding the applicant's success in graduate study, personal work characteristics, intellectual ability, and/or scholarly attainments. No letter of recommendation form needed.
- All applicants must provide **Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score**.
- In addition, all applicants whose native language is not English must provide the University with a **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score** before being admitted to the Department.



2. Minimum Requirements to be considered for Admission:

•A minimum of 500 on the verbal and 500 on the quantitative sections of the GRE.

•For non-English speaking applicants, a 550 TOEFL, or a master's degree from an accredited institution.

•GPA:

•**Master's Program:** Grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 based on a (4.0) for the last two undergraduate years.

•**Doctoral Program:** GPA of 3.3 for the last two undergraduate years.

•Successful completion of a master's degree from a recognized institution may be considered in lieu of the GPA.

- Personal phone interviews
- Writing portion of GRE



•**Statement of Purpose** Your statement of purpose should be no more than two pages in length. It should indicate, for your intended major, your academic and professional goals and aspirations, and other information which attests to your commitment and ability to complete your program successfully. References to previous work and educational experience related to your stated goals is useful.

•**Letters of Recommendation** Letters of recommendation should be written by persons who are in a position to comment on the probability of your success in the Department. Letters have been found to be the most useful when they specifically state the basis of the writer's knowledge about you, the type and quality of activities you have been involved with in association with the writer, and the reason(s) for the writer's support of your proposed graduate studies. International students, may, if they wish, substitute Confidential Report forms for letters of recommendation. A total of three Confidential Report forms and/or letters of recommendation are required.



•International Applicants

- Notice of Admissions
- Finances
- Passports and Visas
- Health Insurance
- Intensive English Program
- International Center



When applicants leave their country, they must have enough money to pay for

- traveling expenses to the University,
- fees for the entire term,
- living expenses until more money arrives,
- and the return fare to their home country.

Students must be sure that they will have sufficient financial resources to cover all costs during their stay at the University.



Registration Fees and Out-of-State Tuition*	\$16,220
Books and Supplies	700
Room and Board**	8,220
Insurance***	508
Miscellaneous	2,000
Total	\$27,648 USD



Most of all, We want to leave you with this thought –
Don't be discouraged. Persistence is everything

