



Graduate Admissions Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Application-Related Questions

What is the application deadline?

January 15th (before midnight Eastern USA time) for the following fall semester. We do not admit for the spring semester.

When will I be notified if I have been admitted?

No later than March 15th.

Where do I submit my application materials?

Submit the following to the Graduate School via the [online application](#):

- Biographical information
- Academic information
- A PDF copy of academic transcripts (official or unofficial)
- Writing sample in philosophy (typically 15 but no more than 30 pages long)
- If applicable, TOEFL scores
- You may submit GRE scores, but they are not required.
- Three letters of recommendation (only three are required, but up to five may be submitted online)
- Financial support information
- Statement of Purpose
- Application fee

Do you have any tips for uploading the transcripts?

Try the following, and be ensure that your scanned copy is clearly legible and can print on letter size paper (8 ½” x 11”).

- Scan at the lowest dpi that results in a legible document (we recommend using under 200 dpi when possible)
- Ensure that the institution name and other identifying marks are not missed
- Save your document as a PDF file
- Scanning in “grey scale” or black and white may produce the best results
- If the scanned file is too large, then make a photocopy first (experiment with different settings until you find one that results in the most legible output) then scan the photocopy.

Is a GRE Score required? If I supply a GRE score, will it be taken into consideration?

The Sage School of Philosophy does not require GRE scores. If they are submitted, we may look at them, but they typically do not play a significant role in our admissions decisions.

How long should the writing sample be?

We look for a substantial, polished piece of writing that shows the applicant's philosophical abilities and skills. Typically a term-paper length paper (about 15 pages) is appropriate. Writing samples longer than 30 pages are unlikely to be read in their entirety. Something written for an upper-level philosophy course would typically be more appropriate than something written for an introductory course.

I wish to include more than the required three letters of recommendation. How should I proceed?

List up to five (5) recommenders in the appropriate place in the application. More than five letters are unlikely to be read.

May I forward my recommendation letters to you along with other supporting materials?

We will also accept letters of recommendation from you if the recommender has placed them in a signed sealed envelope, but prefer application materials to be submitted online.

Do I need to take the TOEFL exam? If so, where do I send the scores?

For requirements on the TOEFL exam, including specifics for having them sent to Cornell, visit the Graduate School website:

<http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/english-language-proficiency-requirement>

Can I get a printed version of the application?

No. The Graduate school requires you fill out their online application at:

<http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/apply>

On the application, what do you expect from the statement of purpose?

We seek insight into the fit between the applicant's interests, approach to philosophy, and academic background and our program – both what we would contribute to the applicant's development and what the applicant would contribute to our intellectual community.

Program-Related Questions

How selective are admissions? What makes a candidate competitive?

Our admissions process is highly selective: we receive approximately 300 applications each year for 5-6 places in our program. As a result, we look for students with outstanding potential for graduate work in philosophy. Academic record, letters of recommendation, and the writing sample all play major roles in this assessment. We also pay careful attention to the personal statement. We do not use any particular numerical criteria (no minimum grade point average, for example). We are interested in identifying candidates with very strong general academic backgrounds and special skill or talent for philosophy in particular.

I have not studied philosophy in an educational institution, but am instead a self-taught philosopher. Does your program consider such applicants?

While we consider such applicants, this background makes it hard for us to form the confident judgment of specifically philosophical ability that admission requires. In principle, the writing sample and letters, combined with overall academic excellence, might overcome this obstacle, but this is unlikely in practice. Work in a Philosophy M.A. program elsewhere, prior to applying, is the most promising way of making the transition.

What help can you give for on-campus visits?

Everyone admitted to the program is urged and helped to come and visit. Help includes a substantial travel subsidy and organized contact with faculty and graduate students.

I see your program is a PhD program, but is it possible just to get an MA?

We do not offer a terminal Master's degree.

I wish to apply to your JD/PhD program, how should I go about doing that?

Please contact the department at philosophy@cornell.edu for more information.