

Graduate Application Guidebook

By Students of CECS, CBM, CHS,
Teaching Assistants from CHS
and the Academic Engagement Team



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Acknowledgments

This publication is a collaborative effort between a group of students from the Cohort 2020 who have successfully applied for graduate degree programs at leading universities worldwide and the Academic Engagement Department (AE) at VinUniversity (VinUni). As members of the founding cohort from the College of Business Management (CBM), College of Health Sciences (CHS), and College of Engineering and Computer Science (CECS), we would like to leave a long lasting legacy to the following cohorts in the hope that our sharing and insights will somehow serve as a source of advice, guidance or even inspiration for those who would like to pursue graduate degree programs or in the long run academic career. It is the authors' hope that this 2024 edition of the Guidebook will continue to be further finetuned and updated by the students of the cohorts that follow.

We are very delighted to present this Graduation Guidebook as our legacy to the students who follow in our footsteps. This Guidebook is a testament to the collective experiences and insights that we have gathered throughout our academic journey at VinUni over the past four years. It is our sincere hope that what we have shared will serve as a helpful resource for you as you navigate your own academic and professional paths. Contributing to this Guidebook also offers us a chance to reflect on the path we have been to at VinUni. As we reach this stage, our hearts are filled with the feeling of gratitude. We would like to convey our thanks and appreciation to VinUni and all the people who have contributed to our initial success in realizing the graduate study dream.

First and foremost, we extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated faculty and staff. Your unwavering support, guidance, and mentorship have been instrumental in our success. Without your commitment to our education and personal growth, this Guidebook would not have been possible. Your dedication to fostering a learning environment that is both challenging and nurturing has empowered us to reach our fullest potential.

We would also like to thank our families and friends for their constant encouragement and belief in our potential. Your love and support have been our foundation, and we are forever grateful for your patience and understanding during our most challenging times. Your words of encouragement and unwavering belief in us have been the pillars that have supported us through every obstacle



To our fellow cohort members, thank you for your collaboration, and the countless memories we have created together. This Guidebook is a reflection of our shared experiences and the bonds we have formed. Your contributions and insights have enriched this project, making it a comprehensive and invaluable tool for future students. The friendships and professional relationships we have built will continue to inspire and support us in our future endeavors.

We also extend our gratitude to the academic and professional advisors and mentors who have paved the way for us. Your achievements and experiences have served as a source of inspiration and motivation. Your willingness to share your journeys has provided us with valuable insights and lessons that we have integrated into this guidebook.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to the future students who will be reading this Guidebook. We hope this Guidebook helps you achieve your goals and navigate the challenges of your academic journey with confidence and success. Embrace every opportunity, learn from every challenge, and remember that you are part of a supportive VinUni community that believes in your potential.

We also acknowledge that there are still shortcomings and limitations as we present this Guidebook to you. We welcome your feedback and recommendations to make the future editions better serve the interested audience.

With heartfelt thanks,

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Welcome & Introduction

Hanoi, June 29, 2024

Dear VinUni Students,
Welcome to the Graduate Application Guidebook specially dedicated to you!

As members of the founding cohort writing this graduate application Guidebook, we understand that the path to graduate study is filled with both opportunities and challenges. Through this Guidebook, we aim to share the experience we have gained, the lessons we have learned, the strategies that have come up with, or even the “pain” we have suffered that led us to graduate application success. Our experiences span across the diverse fields applicable to students of CBM, CECS and CHS (and later on College of Arts and Sciences - CAS). Each section of this book is enriched with practical tips, firsthand experience, and actionable advice tailored to your specific academic journey. Unlike other general graduate study guidebooks, this is especially tailor-made to suit the readers who are VinUni students. You will find many of the shared experiences familiar and related to you.

Consider this Guidebook your companion as you plan to apply to graduate study. The insights and lessons provided in this Guidebook are by no means the panacea addressing all your concerns in the process. You may find some advice true to you, some may be not quite. The Guidebook is designed to provide clarity and confidence as you navigate the complexities of your coursework, manage your time, and meet all the requirements for graduation. It includes the information we wish we had known before applying to graduate programs ourselves. Since engineering, business and health sciences related areas differ from one to the other, we have dedicated different chapters in this book for readers from different colleges. Therefore, repetitions in some of the sharing are expected. Although CAS students have not joined this project yet, we believe that they will find the sharing relevant to them to some extent. Whether you are just beginning your studies or are well on your way, it is our hope the insights contained within these pages will empower you to reach new heights.

We extend our best wishes for your success in all your endeavors. May this Guidebook be a companion, offering support and inspiration whenever you need it. Remember, the pursuit of knowledge and the pursuit of self-improvement are journeys, and each step brings you closer to the person you aspire to become. Here's to embracing the mantra of "I'm possible" and soaring confidently into a future filled with endless possibilities.

Sincerely,
Students of CECS, CBM, CHS, Teaching Assistant of CHS, and the Academic Engagement Team

ABBREVIATION LIST

Throughout this guidebook, you may encounter various abbreviations that are used to simplify and streamline the content. To ensure clarity and ease of reference, we have compiled a list of these abbreviations in the table below. This table serves as a quick reference tool, allowing you to familiarize yourself with the shorthand terms used throughout the book.

We hope you find this guidebook both informative and engaging. Happy reading!

| No. | Abbreviation | Full form |
|-----|--------------|---|
| 1 | CECS | College of Engineering and Computer Science |
| 2 | CBM | College of Business Management |
| 3 | CHS | College of Health Sciences |
| 4 | VinUni | VinUniversity |
| 5 | IELTS | International English Language Testing System |
| 6 | TOEFL | Test of English as a Foreign Language |
| 7 | GMAT | Graduate Management Admission Test |
| 8 | GRE | Graduate Record Examinations |
| | | |
| 9 | SoP | Statement of Purpose |
| 10 | LoR | Letter of Recommendation |
| 11 | VISHC | VinUni Illinois Smart Health Center |
| 12 | CEI | Center for Environmental Intelligence |
| 13 | MSc | Master of Science |
| 14 | Ph.D. | Doctor of Philosophy |

02

General Steps and Preparation for Graduation



General Steps and Preparation for Graduate School Applications

Embarking on the journey to graduate school is an exciting and transformative step in your academic pursuit. This section provides an overview of the essential steps and preparations required to successfully apply for graduate school after your graduation from VinUni. More details about preparation for graduate school application applicable for students of each College can be found in the next chapters. Stay tuned!

1. Qualification Requirements

1.1 Academic Qualifications:

- **GPA Requirements:** When you apply for graduate study, if there is one thing you cannot change at the time of your application, it is your GPA of your undergraduate program. As such, from day one, make sure you pay attention to your performance during each course. Though GPA is only one part of the admission requirements, many graduate admissions review committees set a minimum GPA eligibility. Ensure you meet the minimum GPA requirements for the graduate programs you are interested in. Many programs have specific GPA cutoffs, often around 3.0 or higher. Regularly check your academic progress and seek academic advising if you are close to or below the threshold.
- **Relevant Coursework:** Complete any prerequisite coursework required by the graduate programs. These courses provide foundational knowledge necessary for advanced study. Plan your undergraduate curriculum to include these prerequisites early on.

1.2 Standardized Tests:

- **GRE/GMAT:** Depending on your field and the intended graduate programs, you may need to take standardized tests such as the GRE (Graduate Record Examination) or GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test). Research the requirements of your target programs and allocate sufficient time for preparation. Consider enrolling in test prep courses or using online resources and practice tests.
- **LANGUAGE TESTS:** If you are applying to graduate programs overseas, you may need to take language standardized tests such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), Duolingo or other equivalency. Familiarize yourself with the test formats and practice regularly to achieve a competitive score. In some cases, since English is the medium of instruction at VinUni, you may be waived the English test score. Yet, please check the language requirements to make sure you complete your application.

03

1.3 Professional Experience

- **Work Experience:** While students can apply for Master's or Ph.D. degree programs before they even complete their undergraduate degree programs, some graduate programs, particularly in business (e.g. MBA programs) and health sciences, may expect applicants to possess relevant work experience. Gain experience through internships, jobs, or volunteer work in your field on and off campus. This experience not only strengthens your application but also provides practical insights and skills. If you are applying for government funded scholarship schemes such as Fulbright Program (funded by the U.S. Government), New Zealand Aid or Manaaki New Zealand Scholarships (funded by New Zealand Government), Chevening Scholarship (funded by the UK Government) to name just a few, normally 2 years of experiences is required.
- **Research Experience:** For research-focused programs, such as those in sciences and engineering, having research experience is crucial. Engage in undergraduate research projects, join research labs, or assist professors with their research. Present your findings at conferences or publish them in journals if possible. VinUni provides its students with such programs as the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) where you can participate in the research activities since very early on.



2. Navigation through Steps and Preparation for Application

2.1 Identify Potential Programs

- **Research Programs:** Investigate various graduate programs that align with your academic and career goals. Consider factors such as program curriculum, faculty expertise, location, alumni career path, and resources. Use university websites, program brochures, and academic journals to gather detailed information.
- **Create a Shortlist:** Narrow down your choices to a manageable number of programs. Ensure they fit your academic interests and career aspirations. Create a comparison chart to evaluate each program's strengths and weaknesses.

2.2 Application Preparation

- **Personal Statement:** Write a compelling personal statement or statement of purpose that outlines your academic background, research interests, career goals, and why you are a good fit for the program. Tailor each statement to the specific program, highlighting how their offerings align with your aspirations. And, please note in your statement: Show, don't tell!
- **Letters of Recommendation:** During your time at VinUni, apart from taking courses, participate in related academic and professional activities such as case competitions/challenges, research programs, internship ect and build rapport and professional relationships with your professors and supervisors. As part of your graduate program application, secure strong letters of recommendation from professors, employers, or mentors who can speak to your academic abilities, character, and potential for success in graduate school. Provide them with sufficient time and relevant information about your achievements and goals to write detailed, personalized letters
- **Resume/CV:** Prepare an updated resume or curriculum vitae (CV) that highlights your academic achievements, research experience, work experience, and any relevant extracurricular activities. Format it professionally and ensure it is error-free.

2.3 Application Submission

- **Application Forms:** Complete the application forms for each program carefully. Ensure that all required fields are filled accurately. Double-check for any errors before submission.
- **Transcripts:** Request official transcripts from VinUni and any other institutions you have attended. Some programs require sealed and stamped transcripts directly sent by your university, so plan accordingly.
- **Application Fees:** Be prepared to pay application fees for each program. Fee waivers may be available based on financial need. Research and apply for these waivers if applicable.



3. Finding Funding and Financial Preparation

3.1 Scholarships and Grants

- **University Scholarships:** Many universities offer scholarships and grants to graduate students. Research and apply for these opportunities early. Check both merit-based and need-based options.
- **External Scholarships:** Look for scholarships from external organizations, foundations, and government bodies that support graduate studies in your field. Use scholarship databases and consult with your academic advisors for recommendations. More information about graduate program scholarships and grants are available in the Appendix section of this Guidebook.

3.2 Assistantships and Fellowships

- **Teaching Assistantships (TA):** Many programs offer TA positions that provide a stipend and tuition waiver in exchange for teaching duties. Prepare a strong application by highlighting any teaching or tutoring experience you have.
- **Research Assistantships (RA):** RA positions offer financial support in exchange for assisting faculty with research projects. These positions are particularly common in STEM fields. Network with faculty members and express your interest in available RA opportunities.
- **Fellowships:** Fellowships are competitive funding opportunities that provide financial support without work obligations. They are often awarded based on academic merit. Research and apply for fellowships offered by universities, government agencies, and private organizations.

3.3 Financial Aid

- **Loans:** Explore options for student loans if necessary. Understand the terms and repayment plans before committing. Consult with financial aid offices for advice on managing student debt.
- **Financial Aid Office:** Consult the financial aid office of the universities you are applying to for advice on available funding options and financial planning. They can provide information on grants, loans, and work-study programs.



4. Final Preparations and Application Follow-Up

4.1 Interviews

- **Interview Preparation:** Some programs may require an interview as part of the application process. Prepare by practicing common interview questions and reviewing your application materials. Conduct mock interviews with friends, mentors, or career services.
- **Professional Presentation:** Dress professionally and be punctual for in-person or virtual interviews. Show enthusiasm for the program and articulate your goals clearly. Be ready to discuss your research interests, academic background, and career aspirations.

4.2 Decision Making

Evaluate Offers: Once you receive acceptance letters, evaluate your options carefully. Consider factors such as funding offers, program strengths, faculty, location, and personal preferences. Create a decision matrix to compare key elements of each offer.

Visit Campuses: If possible, visit the campuses of the programs you are considering. Attend open houses, talk to current students, and get a feel for the environment. This can provide valuable insights into the program culture and facilities.

4.3 Acceptance and Enrollment

Respond to Offers: Accept the offer from the program that best aligns with your goals. Notify other programs of your decision promptly and professionally.

Enrollment Steps: Complete any required enrollment steps, such as submitting a deposit, registering for classes, and attending orientation sessions. Ensure you understand and meet all deadlines.

By following these detailed steps and preparing diligently, you will be well-equipped to navigate the graduate school application process and take the next significant step in your academic and professional journey. Remember, thorough preparation and a proactive approach are key to achieving your goals and succeeding in graduate school.



Foundation to Graduate Success:

Additional considerations and preparations specific to CECS students beyond the general guidance provided

1.1 Skill and technical development

In the pursuit of higher education, particularly at the graduate level, the foundational skills students develop during their undergraduate studies play a pivotal role in shaping their academic and professional futures. VinUni CECS has currently offered 3 majors for students from Cohort 2023 backward: Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering. For these students, a deep technical proficiency coupled with the ability to engage in interdisciplinary projects is not just beneficial but essential. The following sections outline how students in these fields can develop the competencies necessary for success in complex, research-intensive environments.

► Computer Science

CS



In the rapidly evolving domain of Computer Science, students must gain a strong command of core programming languages such as Python, Java, and C++. These languages are also the programming languages that CS students will learn during core courses at VinUniversity, which could be used across various research areas, facilitating advanced algorithm development, system implementation, and data handling. Besides the programming languages and to be more specialized, students should immerse themselves in libraries and frameworks specific to their areas of interest. For instance, those drawn to Machine Learning and Data Mining might focus on TensorFlow, PyTorch, and Scikit-learn, which are crucial for building predictive models and mining data insights.

Equally important for the student that interested in Cybersecurity is the mastery of tools for cybersecurity research, such as OWASP for web security, Metasploit for network vulnerabilities, and Wireshark for traffic analysis. Students interested in Software Development should delve into software design patterns, architecture styles, and testing frameworks to enhance software quality and maintainability. Moreover, robust skills in statistical tools like R and Python's pandas are necessary for those focusing on Data Analysis, enabling effective data visualization and interpretation with tools such as Matplotlib or Seaborn.

to support these specializations, students must also be proficient in research-centric software tools. This includes a comprehensive command of SQL for data querying and big data frameworks like Apache Spark. Developing efficient algorithms tailored for specific research questions in the area is also critical. Furthermore, the application of simulation tools to recreate and study complex systems plays a crucial role in fields like network security and system optimization.

► Electrical Engineering

EE



For Electrical Engineering students, the journey begins with mastering the principles of circuit design, electrical machines, and power systems. Utilizing simulation tools such as MATLAB/Simulink, PSpice, and LTSpice is essential for designing, analyzing, and optimizing electrical circuits and systems. Specialized software like ETAP and PowerWorld is also vital for those focusing on Power Systems and Energy, crucial for research in energy distribution and renewable energy integration.

Students interested in Embedded Systems should acquire skills in programming and design with microcontrollers such as Arduino and Raspberry Pi, which are central to the Internet of Things (IoT) and automation technologies. The application of tools like LabVIEW and MATLAB for Signal Processing is vital in areas such as telecommunications, control systems, and audio/video processing.

In supporting these areas, students should utilize high-performance computing solutions to run complex simulations and develop algorithms to optimize electrical systems. This could range from improvements in FPGA programming to optimizing power grid operations. Advanced prototyping and testing, using tools like Eagle or Altium Designer and various hardware testing equipment, are also critical for validating and iterating designs.

► Mechanical Engineering (ME)

ME



Mechanical Engineering students must achieve proficiency in statics, dynamics, fluid mechanics, and thermodynamics, supported by a mastery of CAD software such as SolidWorks, AutoCAD, and CATIA. This foundation supports specialized areas such as Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) and Finite Element Analysis (FEA), using tools like ANSYS Fluent or Abaqus crucial for developing solutions in material science and structural integrity.

The skills in designing and programming robotic systems using platforms such as ROS (Robot Operating System) and MATLAB are also vital for integrating mechanical systems with electronic controls and software. Advanced manufacturing techniques, including CNC machining, 3D printing, and laser cutting, are instrumental in prototyping and manufacturing custom mechanical components.

The skills outlined for the fields of Computer Science, Mechanical Engineering, and Electrical Engineering are foundational for robust academic and professional growth. However, each of these disciplines is vast and continuously evolving, necessitating a proactive approach to learning and development. As you prepare for graduate studies, it is imperative to remain alert to emerging skills and new technologies that become pivotal in your chosen areas of research. To stay at the cutting edge, regularly engage with the latest technological advancements and methodological innovations by reviewing academic journals, attending industry conferences, and participating in relevant workshops and seminars. Such activities are crucial for staying informed about the latest research developments and trends in your field.

Moreover, actively participating in the scientific community through discussions, collaborations, and peer reviews will not only deepen your understanding and expertise but also stimulate innovative ideas for your research. This interaction is invaluable as it provides diverse perspectives and constructive feedback on your work. Adopt a mindset of lifelong learning and insatiable curiosity. Whether you are delving into the intricacies of algorithms in Computer Science, exploring new materials and manufacturing processes in Mechanical Engineering, or designing sophisticated electrical systems in Electrical Engineering, the landscape of these fields is perpetually dynamic. By continuously refreshing your knowledge base and expanding your skill set, you ensure that you remain at the forefront of your discipline, perfectly poised to make meaningful contributions to the ongoing dialogues and innovations in your area of specialization.



1.2 Academic Performance

For students in CECS maintaining a high GPA is crucial when applying to graduate programs. A strong GPA is more than just a number; it shows that you're able to handle challenging courses and are committed to your studies. This is especially important if you're looking to enter fields like artificial intelligence, robotics, or sustainable energy systems. These areas are not only competitive but also demand a high level of precision and innovation.

For students aiming for graduate programs, it's important to show that you can excel academically. Doing well in your courses proves that you're ready to take on the rigorous demands of graduate school and contribute to cutting-edge research. To improve your chances of getting into a great program, focus on studying hard, getting involved in projects related to your field, and consistently learning more about your chosen area of study. These efforts will make your graduate school application stand out.



1.3 Practical Experience and Research

Practical Skills for Graduate Success in CECS

Practical Skills for Graduate Success in CECS
As CECS students in the fields of computer science, mechanical engineering, and electrical engineering contemplate the transition to graduate studies, mastering a core set of practical skills becomes paramount. These abilities not only enhance your academic portfolio but are indispensable for navigating the complex challenges of graduate research and professional practice.

Technical Proficiency

In today's technologically driven landscape, a deep understanding of industry-standard tools and technologies is crucial. For computer science students, this might mean achieving mastery in multiple programming languages and development environments. Mechanical and electrical engineering students, on the other hand, should be proficient in using advanced simulation tools and engineering software. This technical prowess is fundamental, allowing students to transform theoretical knowledge into practical applications and innovative solutions.

Problem-Solving

The core of engineering and computational sciences is problem-solving. More than just finding answers, it is about formulating the right questions and then creatively navigating paths to solutions. Effective problem-solving demonstrates your ability to apply learned concepts in practical situations, a skill that is crucial for both academic research and real-world engineering challenges.

Project Management

Effective project management goes beyond merely keeping projects on track. It encompasses the strategic allocation of resources, team coordination, and deadline management, ensuring projects are not only completed on time but also meet desired standards. This skill is invaluable in graduate school where students often juggle multiple commitments, and in the professional world where projects become more complex and stakes are higher.

Communication

The ability to articulate ideas clearly and persuasively is essential. For engineering and computer science students, this means being able to describe complex technical processes to diverse audiences, from academic peers to non-specialist stakeholders. Excellent communication skills enhance your ability to advocate for your projects and ideas, secure funding, and publish research findings.

Research Skills That Distinguish Candidates

In the competitive arena of graduate applications, distinguishing yourself with advanced research skills can significantly enhance your profile. These skills underscore your readiness to push the boundaries of knowledge and contribute meaningfully to your field.

Critical Thinking and Analysis

Research is fundamentally about breaking new ground. To do this effectively, students must cultivate an ability to critically assess existing literature, synthesize diverse information streams, and draw nuanced conclusions. This analytical prowess is key to generating original research questions and driving innovation.

Innovation and Creativity

The capacity to think outside the box and approach scientific problems from unique angles is highly prized in graduate candidates. Creativity leads to the development of new technologies and methodologies, and it reflects a student's potential to lead rather than follow in their respective fields.

Technical Writing

Competence in documenting research findings clearly and effectively is crucial. This involves not only detailing methods and results but also articulating the implications of your research in a way that is accessible and compelling to readers, including journal reviewers and conference attendees.

Research Methodology

A solid grasp of research methods underpins all successful academic inquiries. This includes designing experiments, handling complex data sets, and applying appropriate statistical analyses. Proficiency in these areas ensures the integrity and reliability of your research findings, which are critical for advancing in graduate studies.

Why Do These Skills Matter?

These practical and research skills form the cornerstone of your academic and professional development. They not only bolster your applications for competitive graduate programs but also prepare you for a career marked by innovation and leadership in technology. By cultivating these skills, you set the stage for academic success, contribute to your fields with impactful research, and ultimately, pave the way for a promising future in engineering and technology.

Fostering these competencies during your undergraduate years will position you ideally for the challenges and opportunities of graduate school, ensuring that you not only succeed but excel in your chosen field.



| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practical Skills• Technical proficiency |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research skills• Research Methodology• Technical Writing |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical Thinking• Problem Solving• Innovation |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Management• Communication |

1.4 Cross-Disciplinary Success: Strategies for Moving Between Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering

Moving between Computer Science (CS), Electrical Engineering (EE), and Mechanical Engineering (ME) can be a great opportunity for students to broaden their skill sets and open up new career paths. Here are some practical strategies that might be helpful for making a smooth transition.

First, consider changing majors early. During your first year, take the time to evaluate your interests and career goals. This is the perfect period to explore different fields and decide if a change is right for you. Talking to academic advisors and professors can provide valuable insights into each field's curriculum and career prospects. If you decide to switch, start planning your course schedule as soon as possible to meet the prerequisites and core requirements of your new major without delaying your graduation.



Engaging in self-study and additional coursework is also crucial. Use textbooks, online courses, and other resources to teach yourself the basics of your new field. This self-directed learning can complement your formal education and help bridge any knowledge gaps. Enrolling in electives and minors related to your new field can give you a taste of discipline and help build relevant skills. Exploring the curricula of EE and ME programs can help you identify overlapping subjects and foundational courses, making it easier to transition smoothly.

Understanding graduate study requirements is essential. Graduate programs usually require a certain number of courses within the chosen field. Make sure your undergraduate courses cover these basics to prepare for grad school applications. Selecting courses that are fundamental and recognized across multiple disciplines, such as those in maths, physics, and programming, can be beneficial whether you are in CS, EE, or ME.

Interdisciplinary collaboration can also be highly beneficial. Look for common ground between your current and prospective fields. For example, areas like robotics, AI, and renewable energy often draw on concepts from CS, EE, and ME. Building relationships with professors and researchers from other fields can provide valuable interdisciplinary experience and boost your academic profile. Participating in projects that involve multiple disciplines can help you integrate knowledge from different fields and apply it to complex problems.

Switching between CS, EE, and ME can significantly broaden your horizons and equip you with a diverse skill set. By planning your coursework strategically, engaging in self-study, and collaborating across disciplines, you can make a successful transition and position yourself well for graduate school and beyond.

Embrace the opportunity to learn and innovate across different fields. Being able to move between disciplines not only enhances your academic and professional prospects but also makes you a more adaptable and versatile engineer, ready to tackle the challenges of today's world.

2. Utilization of Opportunities:

Exploring both on-campus and off-campus opportunities tailored to CECS students to enhance their preparation for graduation

Graduate studies are an opportunity to delve deeply into a specialized area within your broader academic field. The key to success in this endeavor is identifying the right subfield that aligns with your interests and career goals. Research, both on and off campus, serves as a crucial method for this exploration and specialization. Just as in computer algorithms, the approach to graduate research can be divided into two main phases: **exploration and exploitation**. This guidebook will provide a series of guideline questions and suggestions to help you seize both on-campus and off-campus research opportunities effectively.

2.1 Exploration Phase

During this initial phase, your goal is to broadly understand the diverse topics within your major, familiarize yourself with essential research skills, and explore various methodologies. This wide-ranging exploration helps you pinpoint what truly captivates you and identifies the skill sets necessary for successful research. Opportunities for such exploration can be found through immersing yourself in different research topics around your domains.

How can I identify which research fields or subjects I am interested in?

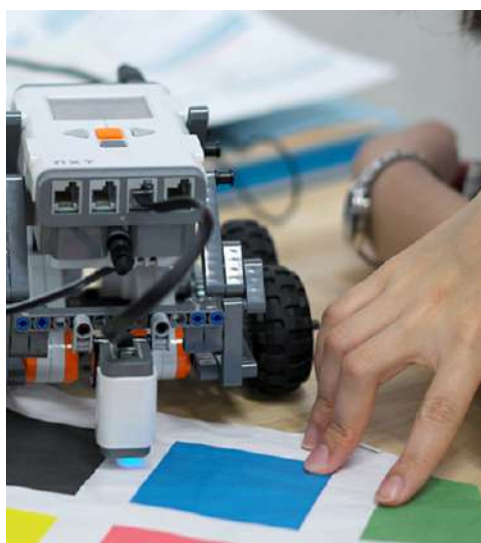
Before deciding on a research field, it's crucial to develop the essential skills outlined in the previous section. These skills will enable you to tackle more academically demanding topics with ease. It's important not to dive into specialized research papers without a foundational understanding of the field. This groundwork, particularly in essential mathematical concepts, will significantly enhance your exploration phase.

Additionally, make sure to take advantage of both on-campus and off-campus opportunities. The guideline book provided will list these opportunities, helping you to navigate and maximize your academic and research experiences effectively.



What research fields are available on my campus and how can I learn more about them?

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program



At VinUni, the CECS department offers unique opportunities designed to enhance students' research skills through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program. A key feature of this program is the presentation day, held at the beginning of each semester. During this event, labs showcase their ongoing projects and offer exclusive opportunities for VinUni students to become undergraduate research assistants. By attending this event, you'll get a firsthand look at the active research labs and projects across campus, offering a valuable opportunity to directly engage with areas that interest you.

If you're still in the process of choosing a research topic, begin by considering the underlying research questions or motivations of potential projects. This initial exploration can provide you with a broad understanding of the available options. To delve deeper into specific research areas, you should investigate what various labs and professors at your institution are focusing on. This deeper investigation can be conducted through several avenues:

Departmental Websites: Visit your department's website for comprehensive information about the research activities and specializations of different labs and faculty members.

Direct Interaction: Engage in conversations with research assistants and faculty advisors. These discussions can provide inside perspectives on the day-to-day activities of the labs and the ongoing projects.

Academic Publications: Review recent research papers published by professors within the department. This will give you insight into the current research trends and innovations that the faculty are exploring.

Networking Events: Besides the presentation day, attend other departmental gatherings, seminars, and guest lectures. These events are excellent opportunities for networking and learning more about the research culture on campus.



At VISHC, undergraduate and postgraduate students alike have access to unparalleled opportunities in healthcare innovation. Through collaboration between VinUni and UIUC, VISHC is at the forefront of biomedical sensing and informatics research, shaping the future of smart healthcare.

Undergraduate Research opportunities:

As an undergraduate researcher at VISHC, you'll be part of dynamic projects led by faculty from VinUni and UIUC. These projects address real-world healthcare challenges, offering hands-on experience in cutting-edge technology development.

Postgraduate Study opportunities at UIUC:

For postgraduate students, VISHC offers the opportunity to pursue advanced degrees at UIUC. With a focus on smart healthcare, these programs provide a unique blend of academic rigor and practical experience, preparing you for leadership roles in the field.

What You'll Gain:

Whether you're an undergraduate researcher or a postgraduate student, VISHC offers valuable opportunities for growth and development. From publishing research papers to collaborating with industry partners, you'll gain the skills and experience needed to thrive in a competitive academic and professional environment.

Integrated Program:

VinUni actively collaborates with partner universities to offer innovative dual-degree programs, providing students with accelerated pathways to complete both an undergraduate and a master's degree. These programs, commonly referred to as 3+2 and 4+1 programs, allow students to spend three years at VinUni followed by two years at a partner university, or four years at VinUni followed by one year at a partner university, respectively. These fast-track options are ideal for students who have a clear vision for their future and are committed to pursuing advanced studies.

However, it's important to note that each partner university has its own set of admission requirements which can vary significantly. These may include specific English proficiency levels, a minimum number of completed undergraduate credits, and other academic standards. Therefore, prospective students must begin preparing at least one year in advance to ensure they meet all necessary criteria. Preparation might involve enhancing English language skills, ensuring a strong academic record, and aligning with specific course prerequisites.

To navigate these requirements effectively and stay informed about deadlines, updates, and changes in program details, you are encouraged to regularly check the VinUni integrated program website. This resource is crucial for staying aligned with program expectations and making timely preparations. Additionally, you should consider engaging with academic advisors and program coordinators at VinUni to receive tailored advice and guidance on how to best prepare for these opportunities, enhancing their chances of success in these competitive programs.

Research Internship:

Recently, VinUni has expanded its offerings to include exciting opportunities for students to collaborate with prestigious laboratories worldwide, including partnerships with renowned institutions like the A* agency. Information about these opportunities is typically disseminated throughout the year via email notifications from the university.

To ensure you don't miss out on these valuable experiences, it's crucial to stay actively engaged with university communications. Regularly check your emails and any dedicated portals that may provide updates on international collaborations and research projects.

Additionally, if you have the chance, connect with peers or alumni who have previously participated in these projects. Their insights and advice can be invaluable as they can provide firsthand experience of the application process, what to expect during the collaboration, and tips on how to maximize the opportunity. Networking with experienced students can also help you better prepare and potentially strengthen your own application for these competitive positions. Engaging with faculty advisors who oversee international collaborations can further provide guidance and support tailored to your academic and professional goals.

It's important to note that these research experiences can often be integrated with internships. This arrangement allows you to gain valuable hands-on experience without having to postpone your academic progress. By strategically combining research with internships, you can enrich your educational experience while staying on track with your study plan. Always consult with your academic advisor to ensure that any credits earned align with your degree requirements and to discuss how best to structure your schedule to accommodate these opportunities.

Events on Campus: Attending seminars in your area of interest not only helps you learn more about the field but also offers a chance to connect with professors. These seminars often discuss the latest research and approaches, providing insights into the directions and trends within the field. Additionally, interacting with professors at these events can help you establish professional relationships, gain valuable advice, and perhaps find a mentor. Engaging actively in these seminars by asking questions and participating in discussions can enhance your learning and networking opportunities. Make sure to take full advantage of these events to advance both your academic knowledge and career prospects.



How can faculty and department advisors help me navigate research opportunities?

Take the initiative to engage with professors about their research, but make sure you're well-prepared first. Conduct your own research on their work and think of several questions you'd like to ask. When you're ready, reach out to them via email. Your message could include statements like, "I'm interested in [Subject A], I have done some research on [Paper B], and I would like to discuss this topic with you further."

If the research lab is small, you might have the opportunity to speak directly with the head of the lab. However, if they are busy, consider talking to their PhD students or research assistants. These individuals can offer different perspectives and valuable insights. Additionally, don't overlook your peers as resources. They can provide an overview and share insights on common areas of interest, enriching your understanding and preparation.

2.2 Exploitation Phase

Once you have a clearer understanding of your interests, the next step is to narrow your focus and invest significant time into a specific area of research. This phase involves deep diving into a chosen subfield, developing expertise, and contributing original insights.

How could I know a program for me? How can I choose which degree I want to pursue when there are many?

To effectively determine if a specific academic program is right for you, follow these structured steps:

1.Review Program Details:

Start by thoroughly reading through the program descriptions provided by the institution. Pay attention to what the program offers in terms of content and structure. Understand whether the program focuses primarily on coursework or if it includes a significant research component. This will help you assess if the program aligns with your academic and career goals.

2.Understand Costs and Financial Aid:

Investigate whether the program is tuition-based or paid, and note the total cost of the program. Additionally, research available financial aid options such as scholarships, grants, or fellowships. This information is crucial for planning your finances and understanding the total investment required.

3.Gather Feedback from Current and Former Students:

Reach out to peers and alumni who have participated in the program. Ask them for their reviews and insights. Inquire about their personal experiences, the benefits they gained, and any challenges they faced. This firsthand feedback can provide a more nuanced understanding of the program's value and whether it meets your expectations.



How can I actively participate in and make the most out of a program?

To make the most of your research experience, active participation is crucial. Take the initiative in your research program. Seek out opportunities, ask questions, and immerse yourself in continuous learning. Volunteer for additional responsibilities to broaden your understanding and showcase your commitment. Develop the ability to work independently, exploring topics that interest you and contributing your own insights to the project. Regularly seek constructive feedback from supervisors and peers to refine your research approach. Additionally, build networks within and beyond your team to enhance your professional growth and open up future collaboration opportunities.

It is essential to remember that each individual's journey is unique. While this guidebook offers structured paths and suggestions, you are encouraged to adapt these recommendations to fit your personal learning style and career objectives. Feel free to explore alternative routes and customize your approach to suit your needs and aspirations. This flexibility is key to finding a truly fulfilling and productive graduate research experience.



3. Graduate Application Project

3.1 Finding Your Path: Master's vs. PhD Programs

Finding the most suitable field of study might be quite challenging. During undergraduate study, some, but not all of us could come up with a rigid path for our future. For this reason, pursuing a Master's degree can be a chance to explore different specializations within a broader field, or even transition to a completely new area. A Master's degree offers the flexibility to delve deeper into a familiar subject, refine your skillset, or discover a new passion that fuels your intellectual curiosity and shapes your future career path. On the other hand, a PhD program demands a deep commitment to a specific research area. It's ideal for those who have already identified a burning question or problem they're passionate about solving. While a Master's program allows for exploration, a PhD is a focused journey where you'll contribute original research to your field. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for choosing the right path for your graduate studies.

3.1.1 Finding your Program

Master's:

A Master's degree can be an excellent choice for those who want to explore their academic interests further. It offers the flexibility to delve deeper into a familiar subject you already have a solid foundation in. This could involve specializing in a specific area within a broader field or focusing on coursework, research projects, or a thesis topic that builds upon your undergraduate studies.

On the other hand, a Master's degree can be a great bridge for those wanting to transition into a related field within their majors. Many programs offer foundational knowledge that can help you close the gap between your undergraduate background and your new area of interest. This flexibility allows you to develop the necessary expertise to pursue a career in an entirely new field.

Master's programs are also ideal for those with career advancement in mind. If you have a specific job path in sight that requires a Master's degree, research the industry standards and required qualifications for those positions. Aligning your Master's program with these requirements will ensure you graduate with the skills and knowledge employers are seeking. Explore job descriptions mentioning "Master's required" to solidify your understanding of how a Master's degree can unlock your desired career goals.

3.1.2 Selecting the Right Program:

Faculty Expertise:

·Master's and PhD: Finding the right faculty expertise is important for both Master's and PhD programs, but the focus differs depending on your chosen path.

Master's: Master's programs offer the advantage of exposure to a variety of professors within your chosen field. This allows you to gain diverse perspectives and expertise across a broader range of subjects within your discipline. This can also be particularly helpful if you still need to know whether you will be able to cooperate well with your supervisor.

PhD: For PhD programs, finding a faculty member whose research interests closely align with your own is crucial right from the beginning of your journey. As a PhD student, you'll be working closely with this advisor throughout your studies. Therefore, it's essential to find someone whose research aligns with your passion and goals. To identify a good advisor match, it is crucial to research faculty publications and ongoing projects beforehand. In that way, you can find someone who can match your working style and complement your research interests.

Program Structure:

The program structure of your chosen graduate program will significantly impact your learning experience. Here's a breakdown of how Master's and PhD programs typically differ:

Master's programs typically offer a mix of core and elective courses. Core courses provide a strong foundation in the core principles of your field. Elective courses, on the other hand, allow you some flexibility to tailor your studies to your specific interests. This flexibility can be particularly beneficial if you're looking to explore different areas within your chosen discipline or develop a specialized skillset.

Another important factor to consider is the program's thesis requirement. Some Master's programs require a final research project or thesis, while others focus solely on coursework. This research project during Master's programs can be an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of a subject, as well as to showcase and hone your ability to conduct independent research.

Choosing a program with or without a thesis depends on your learning style and career goals. If you're interested in gaining research experience or plan to pursue a PhD later, a thesis-based program might be a good fit. However, if you value a more coursework-heavy program, a non-thesis program could be the better option.

PhD:

In contrast to Master's programs, PhD programs are heavily research-focused. The majority of your time will be dedicated to conducting independent research under the guidance of a faculty advisor.

For direct PhD programs, coursework is typically extensive, prioritizing a deep understanding of foundational knowledge in the field. This heavy coursework load aims to provide a comprehensive academic background before focusing on intensive research efforts. Direct PhD students are advised to expedite their coursework completion, enabling them to dedicate additional time and energy to their research pursuits thereafter.

For conventional PhD programs, coursework is not as extensive and serves primarily to supplement your research endeavors by providing you with the necessary theoretical and methodological knowledge to excel in your research project.



3.2 Application Preparation

Full Package to apply:

- Passport/ID scan
- Enrollment certificate
- Degree completion certificate (to confirm that you'll be expected to graduate in the current academic year)
- CV/Resume
- Transcript
- International tests (IELTS/TOEFL, GRE/GMAT). In some cases, you have to send electrically.
- Statement of purpose/Motivation letter/Intent letter/Cover letter
- Two to three letters of recommendation (from professors/employers)
- Personal history statement (some universities require this)
- Offer letter from companies (to prove that you interned/worked)
- A document of all translated and notarized achievements/prizes/awards
- Any other document that the university requires (depending on the program)

From the package above, some important elements include a CV, statement of purpose (SoP), and letter of recommendation (LoR). To have a good preparation for the application, students must know how to polish their CV, write a holistic SoP, and connect well with professors to have good LoRs.

CV

A good CV requires applicants to show their amazing abilities and experience. One basic but formal format of a CV includes basic information at the top, a small introduction paragraph in the next part, an education section, a work/research experience/project section, an achievement section, and an extracurricular activities section (optional). You should not put your photo inside the CV because this can result in a greater risk of discrimination. Some generic features such as “good time management, communication skills, ...” should also be excluded from the CV, because they cannot reflect the applicant’s capabilities. Besides, students can link their working/research experience with a real product (a GitHub repository, a link to a research paper, ...) to demonstrate the scale of the project as well as the students’ expertise in the field. Finally, all projects/prizes/experiences have to be chronologically ordered so that the admission team can evaluate the applicant’s progress throughout their undergraduate years.

SoP

A good SoP starts with a true and great story the applicant wants to tell. That can be a long-term aspiration to become a scientist/engineer or a turning point in life that changes the applicant's view of the world. Moreover, you have to be very specific about important events mentioned in the essay. Writing 'I worked at company A for 2 years' simply does not reflect anything about you.

Being specific means that you have to tell what you learned in the company, what challenges you faced, and how you resolved that challenge. Similarly, saying 'I joined club A, club B' is extremely generic and provides no insights about the applicant. The more specific you describe what you have done, the more valuable the events are. For PhD students, another vital component of the SoP is the designation of the professors. You should take a look through the faculty of the department at a university and decide who you want to work with. In the essay, you should explain why that professor's profile aligns with your interest and what topic/field you want to work with him if you get accepted. Finally, the language tone has to be kept formal and professional throughout the essay, but you need to avoid overusing high-level words just to polish the SoP.

LoR

To receive a good LoR, you should contact a faculty that understands you and your passion/ability/skill most. That person can be a professor teaching you in a course where your excellent skills are shown or a professor who supervises you on a research project. Moreover, for CECS students, it is recommended to require a LoR from a faculty in CECS since they can evaluate your expertise from a technical and professional view, but you can look for faculty from other colleges if necessary. After reaching out, you must clarify what quality you want the professor to mention in their LoR, with specific metrics attached to that quality. Similar to SoP, the LoR should avoid generic sentences. For example, saying 'the student is good at coding' is too general, and a better way is 'the student demonstrated his great coding skills through the final project in course A and received the highest score in the class'. Finally, the admission team does not evaluate the 'rank' or 'h-index' of the professor but rather your potential from the professor's viewpoint through the LoR. Therefore, choose the faculty that truly sees and values your talent and knowledge.

3.3 Admission Navigation

Before finding programs and universities, self-understanding is necessary. Some students may gravitate towards the field of research while others pursue work in the industry. Hence, you should make sure that you aspire to pursue graduate study either to widen your knowledge as well as practical experience or to focus on a specific area of your undergraduate major. After deciding on the field, you can do a Google search based on the ranking of that field of the university, instead of the university's general ranking. This approach normally applies only to universities in the US with a reliable ranking system, but you may also find other good universities and programs in Europe, Australia, and Asia. Some good websites are U.S. News, QS Ranking, and Times Higher Education.

One big difference between the US education system and other systems is that students can apply for the Ph.D. program in the US right after finishing their undergraduate study while in Europe or Asia, a student is required to finish their master's program before applying for any Ph.D program. Moreover, universities in the US normally prefer students finishing their bachelor's degree to students finishing their master's degree. This is because when doing the Ph.D program, students will inevitably receive a master's degree in the same field after one to two years of studying. Those who have a master's degree are also expected to have published some good research papers. However, they often struggle with assignments and exams in their master's degree, which results in less amount of time dedicated to research.

One amazing pathway to do a master's in Europe is the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Program. This program allows you to study in 2 to 3 European countries with a full scholarship including the tuition fee and living expenses. Some programs also provide additional finance to buy flight tickets from Vietnam to Europe. Every year, there are around 200 programs from all fields (technology, agriculture, environment, ...) funded by the EU. To find the program that fits you most, you can search the catalog on the Erasmus website, but make sure to check the availability of the scholarship. The acceptance rate for the program is very low, around 2-4% depending on the program. On average, each program will receive around 1000 applications and select 20 students to receive the scholarship.



3.4 Funding Opportunities for Graduate Studies

Graduate studies can be a significant financial investment. Fortunately, several funding options can help alleviate the financial burden. Here's an overview to get started:

3.4.1 Types of Funding:

Fellowships: These prestigious awards are typically merit-based and provide full tuition coverage and a living stipend. They are highly competitive and often require strong academic records, research experience, and compelling proposals.

Scholarships: Scholarships are awarded based on merit (academic achievement) or need (financial hardship). They can cover full or partial tuition costs and may vary depending on the university and program. Specifically, with Vingroup Scholarships, for 11 years starting from 2019, Vingroup offers up to 100 scholarships each year for Vietnamese students to pursue Master's and Ph.D. degree programs at leading universities worldwide. The scholarships cover tuition fees, monthly living stipends, health insurance, return airfare, visa application fees, allowances, and other costs of attendance for the whole standard duration of the admitted study programs.

Assistantships: These provide financial support in exchange for work performed.

- **Research Assistantships (RAs):** Assist faculty members with ongoing research projects, gaining valuable research experience while earning a stipend.
- **Teaching Assistantships (TAs):** Assist professors with teaching duties, such as leading discussion sections or grading assignments. TAs can hone teaching skills while receiving financial support.

Tuition Waivers: Some universities offer full or partial tuition waivers based on merit, financial need, or specific programs.

3.4.2 Finding Funding Opportunities:

- University Financial Aid Websites: Review your target universities' financial aid websites for program-specific scholarships, assistantships, and tuition waiver opportunities.
- National Scholarship Databases: Utilize online resources like [Vingroup Scholarship Programs – Vingroup Scholarship Programs \(vinuni.edu.vn\)](#), or [Scholarship America](#) to search for scholarships relevant to your field of study and background.
- Professional Association Websites: Many professional associations offer scholarships and fellowships specifically for students in their field. Explore the websites of relevant associations for potential funding opportunities.

3.4.3 Additional Tips:

- Start your funding search early. Deadlines for scholarships and fellowships can vary, so begin researching well before application deadlines. The funding application process often parallels that of graduate program applications. Therefore, it's crucial to thoroughly prepare for the scholarship interview, as it provides a defining opportunity to showcase your character and qualifications.
- Apply for multiple funding opportunities to increase your chances of receiving financial support.
- Be sure to meet all application requirements and submit strong application materials, including essays, letters of recommendation, and transcripts (if required).

Note: The appendix of this guidebook will provide a more detailed listing of funding resources and scholarship opportunities.

By exploring these funding options and starting your search early, you can significantly reduce the financial burden of graduate studies.



Foundation to Graduate Success

An overview

In this section, we're discussing graduate degrees offered by business schools. For CBM students thinking about further study, it's important to understand your career goals and how graduate education fits these goals. Look at the roles you want or the professionals you wish to become, then work backward. This approach helps you figure out which graduate degrees suit you best. Career paths for CBM students would broadly fall into two streams: industry and research. Your choice of graduate program largely depends on which stream you want to pursue.

1.1 The industry stream

In the industry stream, students mostly seek a corporate job in the private sector. Motivations for further study include a higher salary, a step up the career ladder, or a successful career transition. For most industry stream followers, a master's is the terminal degree. Common business master's degrees in this stream include:

- **Specialized MSc degrees** (e.g., Master of Economics, finance, accounting, marketing, business analytics, etc.). Most programs last for one or two years and typically don't require work experience. The rigor of programs can vary from highly theoretical to highly applied. Therefore, while many business MSc programs don't demand a bachelor's degree in the same field, more rigorous programs often prefer certain backgrounds.
- **Master of Business Administration (MBA)** and its variations. MBA programs usually last for two years and do not require any specific backgrounds. However, MBA programs require applicants to have prior working experience.

The advice in subsequent sections is most applicable for admissions to specialized MSc degrees, which CBM students can apply to during their senior year and without prior full-time working experience.

1.2 Research

In the research streams, most students seek a career in academia (or non-academic jobs that involve research). For most research stream followers, a PhD is the necessary terminal degree. If you're considering a PhD, ask yourself: Are you passionate about generating new knowledge? Do you have a specific field or set of questions that intellectually captivate you, driving you to explore deeply? Can you envision yourself enjoying the job of a researcher (i.e., the job of your professors)? If your answers are "yes," the research stream might be the right path for you.

In this guidebook, PhD in business refers collectively to PhD degrees in disciplines within the business world, including marketing, management, accounting, finance, operations, strategy, and organizational behavior, among others. Business PhD programs accept applicants from diverse backgrounds, highly appreciating prior exposure to the field but not considering it mandatory. However, research in most business fields is quantitative, so programs often recommend applicants to have prior training in math, statistics, and economics. Lack of such training can significantly reduce your competitiveness. Having previous research experience in the same field, whether through research assistantships or independent projects, is also highly advantageous.

Students can apply to their PhD/MRes without prior graduate studies. However, most business PhD students already have a master's before entering their PhD, especially those who hold bachelor's degrees from outside the US and Europe, or those without rigorous undergraduate training. On one hand, you receive further training in technical skills and enrich your knowledge in the field you want to do research on; on the other hand, you get better reference letters for your PhD applications. More than anything else, good reference letters signal your potential for PhD training and a research career. Therefore, the recommended path for our CBM students considering the research stream is to pursue a master's first, prioritizing programs that are well-known and that PhD admission committees can benchmark against.

In the industry stream, you take the master's in the domain you want to work in afterward. For the research stream, this is not necessarily the best option. For example, applicants to finance or accounting PhD programs would probably benefit more from an MSc in economics or statistics than one in finance or accounting. There are no one-size-fits-all recommendations on which degree you should pursue, as it closely depends on both your goals and academic readiness. One piece of advice is to look up the profiles of current PhD students in your field of interest, often listed on the websites of PhD programs, and see which master's degrees are common PhD feeders.

When finding information about a career in business research, you will likely come across the term pre-doc. In contrast to a master's degree, a pre-doc is a full-time research assistantship employment. The most important thing you get out of a pre-doc is quality reference letters from the professors you assist. Qualities desired by pre-doc recruiters are programming skills (mostly for statistical analysis) and previous research experience. However, pre-doc is more competitive, and not all pre-doc positions provide working visa sponsorship.

The common pipeline for research stream followers is summed up by the chart below, which was borrowed from <https://predoc.org/>.

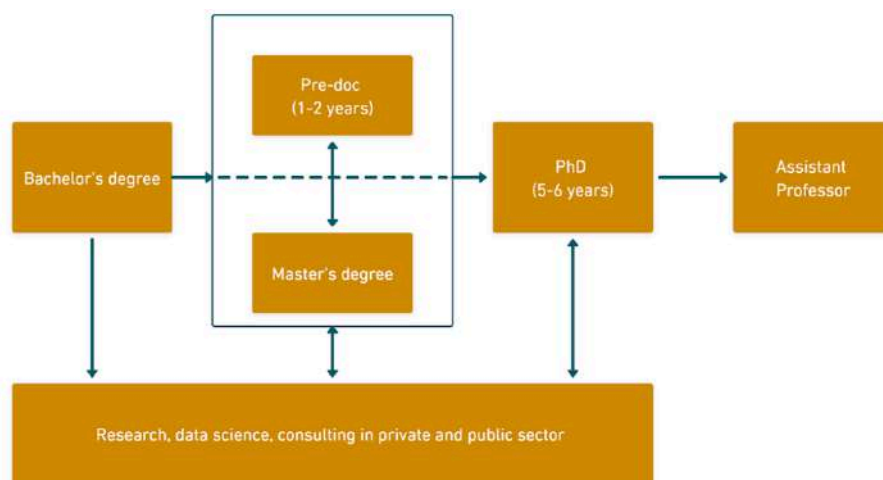


Figure 1: The common pipeline for research stream



2. Utilization of Opportunities at VinUni

As mentioned above, if you plan to start graduate school immediately after VinUni, you should consider specialized MSc degrees. This advice applies to both industry and research stream followers. Here, we suggest things you can do during your undergraduate career at VinUni to maximize your application success.

In general, admission committees at specialized MSc programs look for two things when they review your application: (i) clear purposes and (ii) competency and readiness. Each component of your application, from the personal statement to reference letters, should demonstrate that you possess these qualities.

2.1 Justified purposes

The strongest applicants are those who can speak convincingly about their goals and why they need a master's at the moment. Also, admission committees want to hear why you are applying to their programs (and not others) and how their programs will benefit you afterward. These are called your 'purposes', which you need to show and justify throughout your application. By the time you start writing your personal statement, you should already have well-defined professional and personal goals that you can passionately share with your friends, family, professors, and admission committees.

2.2 Competency and readiness

Master's programs are demanding, and admission committees want to admit academically prepared students who can make the most out of their offerings. Thus, your academic performance is the foremost factor that they consider when reading your application. If graduate school is your goal, maintaining a strong academic record at VinUni should be your primary focus. The advice is to strive for the highest possible GPA. Ideally, aim for academic honors (e.g., dean's list) as it provides a rough comparison of your performance relative to your cohort.

You should also consider which courses to take, as they are evidence of your readiness (and to some extent your competency, if you do well in challenging courses). While business master's programs welcome applicants from all backgrounds, more quantitative programs often have a list of recommended courses they expect you to have completed before entering. For example, MSc programs in economics, analytics, and operations require undergraduate math training through multivariable calculus, linear algebra, probability and statistics, and some programming. MSc programs in finance or marketing that are more theoretical or focus on data and computing techniques also require this background. Not meeting these prerequisites may not disqualify you immediately, but it will put you at a significant disadvantage against more prepared applicants, especially if you aim for funding.

To enhance your readiness and be competitive in quantitative programs, it's essential to enroll in additional courses at CECS. For those pursuing the research stream, it should be acknowledged that a BBA is not the optimal preparation for a research career. Therefore, students in the research stream should anticipate the need to undertake additional work beyond their BBA curriculum. This also applies to industry-oriented students who plan to apply to STEM-designated master's programs in finance, economics, or analytics.

"What courses should I take beyond my BBA program?"

Again, there's no one-size-fits-all answer. However, we believe that the majority of you will benefit greatly from taking the following courses. These courses are often listed as prerequisites for many business MSc programs. Moreover, these subjects are best learned through well-designed courses with instructors and peers, rather than through MOOCs or self-study.

- FINA 3050: Applied Econometrics (or econometrics course from CAS)
- MATH 1010-20: The calculus sequence, covering more topics than CBM's MATH 1040
- MATH 2050 – Linear Algebra
- MATH 2010 – Probability and Statistics, best when complemented with CBM's STAT 2020
- COMP1010 or BANA3020 - Intro to programming courses.

Our advice is to complete them early and try to get good grades. Your approach to these courses, as to any others you take, should be to really absorb the knowledge rather than simply check the "complete" box. Additionally, you can take the following optional courses if you believe they are useful for your future studies, either as prerequisites for your program or as evidence of your competency.

- MATH 2030 – Differential equation
- MATH 4010 – Advanced Probability and Statistics
- CECS and CBM courses in AI/Machine learning.

VinUni offers exchange opportunities at highly ranked universities, which you should consider joining. Firstly, international exposure is highly valued by graduate programs. Secondly, you can enrich and strengthen your transcripts with courses not available at VinUni. Thirdly, performing well at a well-known school allows you to showcase your potential. Of course, this is optional, and VinUni provides sufficient academic support for you to build a strong profile.

Another important component of your applications where you demonstrate your competency is standardized test scores, which are required by almost any MSc program. A high-test score does not guarantee acceptance and scholarship, but a low score will hurt. Having high test scores is also a way to make up for bad grades. Most specialized master's programs require a GMAT or GRE. Some programs strictly prefer one to another (e.g., economics programs prefer the GRE), but most schools are indifferent. Which exam to take depends mostly on your personal preferences. Most students take around three months to prepare for these tests. Try to start your GMAT or GRE preparation early, preferably before or during your senior summer.

Excellent professional performance can also offset subpar academic performance. This is often the case if you can secure internship/employment at well-known organizations and excellent recommendations from your supervisors. However, if you apply to MSc programs that accept fresh graduates, lacking work experience would not be a disadvantage. Significant to a lesser degree are extracurricular activities (awards at competitions, leadership experiences, start-ups, etc.). Some programs consider them seriously, while others pay little attention unless your achievements are truly impressive. The value of extracurricular activities depends mostly on your ability to sell them. Ultimately, you must conduct thorough research to determine whether professional and extracurricular achievements are important for the programs and scholarships you apply to.

One extracurricular activity crucial for the research stream is gaining research experience. It is difficult for undergraduate students to build a strong research profile before graduate school. However, by demonstrating exposure to research, you show admission committees that you are genuinely interested and have some understanding of what research looks like. The best way to gain research experience is by reaching out to professors at CBM, particularly those teaching subjects you find highly interesting or wish to pursue in graduate studies. They are active researchers with ongoing projects and often welcome students interested in research to join them. Typically, you will work as a research assistant under the work-study program. Professors also provide research skills training before you start your role, ensuring you are well-prepared. Off-campus research opportunities can be with professors at other universities or research institutions. You can also consider competitive research internships at business schools around the world (Columbia Business School's summer research internship, University of Hong Kong's summer research program, etc.). Moreover, research stream followers surely need to graduate through the thesis path to show their interest and ability in conducting research.



3. Graduate Application Process

Here we provide a sample timeline for CBM students applying to specialized MSc programs during their senior year. We also offer tips on preparing for each aspect of your application. A common question is, "Which elements are the most important?" The correct answer is that all elements are. Admission committees take a holistic approach, factoring in every component of your application. It is crucial to try your best in every component.

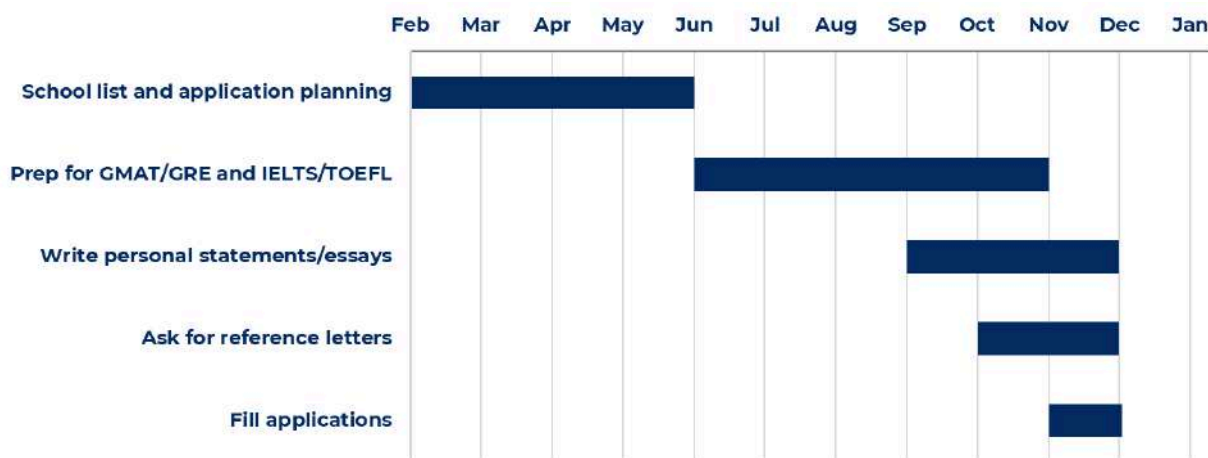


Figure 2: Sample application timelines for graduate school

The deadline for most programs is from November to February during your senior year. However, your application process should start during the Spring semester of junior year. At this time, you should determine the field(s) you wish to have a master's in and come up with a preliminary school list. The most important factors for program selection are quality and affordability. Regarding affordability, check the availability of scholarships and ensure that there is a level of funding that, if awarded, would make the remaining amount affordable for you. Quality is more challenging to assess. Rankings provide a good starting point. A reliable measure of quality is the program's placement record – check which countries and companies their graduates work for or which PhD programs they attend to ensure they align with your desired outcomes. During this period, it's also important to reflect on your academic progress thus far. Consider the courses you need to take in your senior year and see if there's room to further improve your GPA.

No later than June, start prepping for the GRE/GMAT and TOEFL/IELTS. Start early if you feel you need more time, which is likely if you also have other commitments like a summer internship. Self-studying using free, online resources is more than enough for a high score. Try to spend no more than three months prepping and taking tests so that you can focus on other elements. For GMAT/GRE, your target for quantitative components should be a perfect or near-perfect score (90th percentile recommended). For verbal and writing components, the higher the better (but no less than the 50th percentile). Your IELTS (TOEFL) should be 7.0 (100) or higher to meet the requirements of most schools; once you meet the threshold, higher English scores add zero value. After getting your test scores, finalize your school list so that your scores are satisfactory and competitive enough.

Around September, start drafting your essays. This implies spending around two to three months on essay writing. Most MSc. programs require only one personal statement of 500 to 1000 words (or one to two pages). Some schools require additional essays or short answer questions (e.g., diversity and inclusiveness, financial need). All personal statements expect you to showcase the two qualities that we discussed above: (i) justified purposes and (ii) competency and readiness. While some students prefer creative storytelling, a winning essay may also lean towards the professional and serious side. The advice is to write in the style that you are most comfortable with, as long as the essays effectively convey the two key aspects mentioned.

You can consult online writing tips and share your drafts with professors or advisors to see what they think. Here is a sample structure that you can follow and improve:

- **Introduction.** Brief introduction of your career goals and how the program can help you achieve your goals.
- **Purposes:** career goals. Discuss the experiences that sparked your interest in your chosen discipline and career path; explain why you need a master's degree now (maybe because you have unanswered questions or feel you lack certain knowledge)
- **Purposes 2:** school-specific. Clearly articulate why you believe this specific program is the right fit for your career goals. What makes this program different from other programs?
- **Competency and readiness.** Talk about your academic background; highlight relevant coursework/working experiences that prepare you for the program.
- **Conclusion (optional).** Summarize the main points and reiterate your enthusiasm for the program

The strategy is to prepare the "Purposes 1" and "Competency and Readiness" sections so that you can use them for all schools you apply to. For "Purpose 2," you must tailor your answer to each program. For instance, you may explain how specific courses or faculty members greatly interest you. Investigate any special offerings of the program and demonstrate that you have done your homework.

In October, you should start requesting reference letters. Most programs require two or three letters. Send your requests at least a month before your deadlines to give your letter writers ample time. When asking for letters, it's best if you can meet your potential referees in person. If this isn't possible, send a formal request via email. If they agree to be your referee, provide them with your unofficial transcript, CV, personal statement, and deadlines for the schools you plan to apply to.

From November to February, you'll be submitting your applications. Some programs have multiple rounds; since most admissions and funding are allocated for early rounds, it's advisable to apply as soon as you feel prepared. Another question is how many schools you should apply to. There's no definite answer: applying to more schools increases your chances but might also cost you more in application fees. Around ten applications seem manageable.

If shortlisted, you will be invited for an interview. The key to a successful interview is practice. Look up and prepare for common questions, such as self-introduction, why you are applying to this school, and what aspect of the field interests you. More importantly, practice talking about the professional or research experiences that you mention in your CV and personal statement; interviewers will likely bring them up during the interview. Make sure you can talk fluently about these experiences to prove that you own them.



Funding Opportunities

Funding for MSc degrees is more limited compared to that for research-oriented degrees. Yet, MSc scholarships are probably more common than you think. The most common are merit-based scholarships provided by the department, college, or university that you apply to. If you need funding to pursue graduate school, this will certainly be your foremost source. You typically need no separate application for these scholarships. Funding decisions often go hand in hand with admission decisions. Admission committees rank applicants based on a thorough review of all components of submitted applications and grant scholarships to applicants at the top of the list. Hence, the best way to secure a department, college, or university merit-based scholarship is to focus on preparing the strongest application possible.

You can also explore external funding sources. Eligibility and requirements for these scholarships vary. Some external scholarships look for not only academic excellence but also leadership potential or community engagement, so be prepared to highlight evidence of your extracurricular achievements if you aim for such scholarships. There are governmental scholarships, such as France's Eiffel scholarship, Japan's MEXT scholarship, the Danish State Scholarship, etc. There are also scholarships from non-government organizations, ranging from non-profits (such as Erasmus Mundus, Bai Xian Asia Institute's AFLSP, etc.) to private firms (e.g., Vingroup Scholarship Program, CIMB ASEAN Scholarship, etc.).



1. Foundation to Graduate Success

In this section, we will discuss major foundations to graduate success in a health care career. Imagine you are in the middle of the Old Quarter. There are so many destinations ready to be visited: nice coffee shops, restaurants, green spaces, architecture, ancient shops, etc. You will be in town for a week, and your family asked you to be a tour guide. How would you plan the itinerary for this small trip?

The thought process from scratch to having a tentative agenda may vary in detail, but generally would be like:

- Know what you want,
- Read up and gather relevant information,
- Identify alternatives (possible options),
- Prioritize them (weighing pros and cons),
- Draft an itinerary and hit the ground running!

Life rarely unfolds exactly as planned. Family members might impulsively stop at a charming flower shop or a souvenir stall, adding fifteen minutes to your journey. Your intended destination could be closed or full for the day. The key, however, is to have a flexible itinerary with built-in alternatives. This way, if detours arise, you will have a sense of where to go next and options to keep your trip moving smoothly, even if it deviates slightly from the initial plan.

There are similar points in your family trip in the Old Quarter with your life journey at the undergraduate college. How funny, not all students have this roadmap ready during matriculating their degree. Many students are grade-oriented, and they should be, because it represents how hard they work and commit during school. However, your degree or GPA alone does not guarantee your success. The recipe requires more flavors than that, but let's jot down a few key things:

- **Academic Performance:** A strong academic record is required. This includes a high GPA from undergraduate studies and, if applicable, strong performance in relevant coursework. Some programs may also require specific standardized test scores, such as the GRE, GMAT, IELTS, TOEFL, etc.
- **Research Experience:** Relevant work or research experience can be a significant advantage. It demonstrates practical application of knowledge and skills, and shows that the candidate is prepared for the advanced study and challenges of graduate school.
- **Personal Statement and Letters of Recommendation:** These provide insight into the candidate's motivations, goals, and character. A well-crafted personal statement can showcase the candidate's passion and suitability for the field, while strong letters of recommendation can attest to their abilities and potential from credible sources.

- **Funding:** let's say the graduate school accepted to take you in. Now what – how will you afford the degree? Most of students will self-fund with support from their parents or secure an external funding from a scholarship. A few may take a loan, or ask for a top-up scholarship (a lesser amount of money) just to reduce the financial burden. A high GPA is like a fancy sports car – impressive, but funding is the gas that gets you to graduation.

Getting yourself into a prestigious graduate program that matches your interests is difficult but extremely rewarding. In this section, we will examine fundamental principles that will help you get closer to graduate success, with a focus on preparation and the application process. While you may believe that graduate success and postgraduate application readiness can be ignored until your final year of college, preparing yourself for this journey can begin the moment you arrive on campus with a roadmap in hand.

First, let's get the ball rolling with five principles that will help you build a solid foundation for success from the moment you start at VinUniversity.



1.1 Understand yourself

The journey to becoming a healthcare professional is as much about personal discovery as it is about academic achievement. Having a sense of purpose is the bedrock upon which your medical career is built. It is not just about knowing your academic strengths and weaknesses; it's about understanding what drives you, what you're passionate about, and how you can contribute to the healthcare field in a way that satisfies both your personal aspirations and the industry's needs. When you apply to graduate programs, it is your unique selling point that will enable you to articulate your goals and vision, making you a standout candidate.

The perfect Old Quarter itinerary depends on the family visiting. Interests, priorities, and budget all play a role. An eco-friendly family might seek green spaces, while coffeeholic can prioritize charming cafes. History enthusiast will gravitate towards museums and ancient shops, and foodies will be drawn to delicious restaurants. No matter their preference, a compelling itinerary showcases intentionality. Just like that, an admissions committee seeks a clear, thoughtful, and well-crafted purpose in your application.

1.2 Strategize early

Success in graduate school begins with a well-thought-out strategy. “Early” is a relative term, but it doesn’t necessarily mean the first year of your undergraduate studies. It is more about avoiding the panic that comes with last-minute decision-making. By strategizing early, you give yourself the luxury of time—time to explore different paths, time to weigh your options, and time to build a solid plan that aligns with your long-term goals. Our brain is not good at differentiating what is important versus what is urgent. Strategizing early helps you avoid last-minute decisions fueled by urgency. This proactive approach ensures that when you do make decisions, they are informed, deliberate, and in service of your ultimate objectives.

1.3 Find teammates

The path to a medical degree, and then graduate application, is not one you walk alone. Collaboration is not just beneficial; it is essential. Engaging with peers, seeking mentorship, and contributing to study groups are all activities that enrich your educational experience. Joining clubs and professional networks opens doors to opportunities and fosters a sense of community. As a medical student, you are part of an ecosystem of future healthcare leaders, all working together to advance the field and improve patient outcomes.

VinUni is a talent hub, and even better, it is close-knit. It means you can comfortably talk with the leaders, professors, faculty, and staff through not only a formally personal meeting, but also a lunch or a cup of coffee. This is a tremendous advantage that the College of Health Sciences is offering: you can receive personalized input from seasoned professors in the field and decide on your own. It is smart to ask your professors for career-related insights before making any decisions on graduate application. Sometimes, your professors are likely to know someone who knows someone, who share the interests and will be your supervisor.

1.4 Show up

Being physically present in classes and events is just the beginning. You will be surprised how many successes in life are just about showing up and engaging. True engagement means participating actively – asking questions, contributing to discussions, and immersing yourself in the learning experience. It is through this active participation that you will gain a deeper understanding of the material, develop critical thinking skills, and forge meaningful connections with instructors and classmates. You never know how an opportunity will appear for a class session and then vanish, or how a distinguished professor you meet today in the Peace Room will become your supervisor in the next five years.

1.5 Live the Knowledge

Don't just passively absorb information from textbooks. Theoretical knowledge is fundamental, but its true value is realized when it is applied in practical settings. Seek out opportunities to put what you have learned into practice, whether through part-time work, internships, or volunteer positions. These experiences allow you to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, giving you a taste of what your future career will entail and preparing you for the challenges and rewards of working in healthcare.

In conclusion, these five principles form a holistic approach to graduate success in the medical field. By knowing yourself, strategizing early, teaming up, being present, and living the knowledge, you set the stage for a fulfilling and impactful career in healthcare. Embrace these principles, and you'll not only excel in your studies but also lay the groundwork for a lifetime of service and achievement in the medical profession.



2. Utilization of Opportunities at VinUniversity

In short, applying to a graduate program comprises of two cornerstones: having a non-conditional offer from Admissions and securing a source of funding for the study. Three major factors that decide your admission status are academic performance, working/research experience, and recommendations from supervisors and professionals

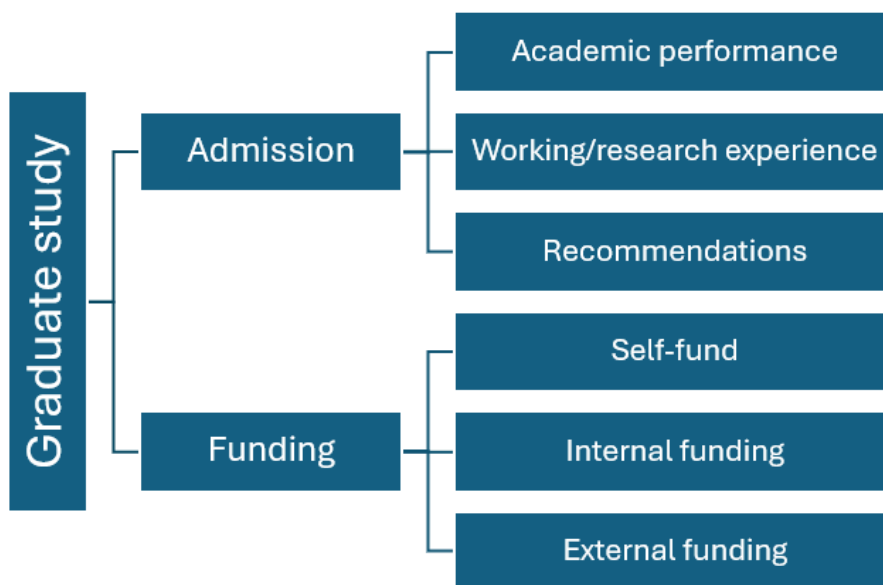


Figure 3: What admission committee seeks in a compelling graduate candidate

Each student at the College of Health Sciences (VinUniversity) has major advantages over other health care students from Vietnam as well as countries across the world, which will be discussed below. This is not an exhaustive list, and we appreciate your input in keeping this list relevant and updated year after year.

2.1 Academic performance

- **The strategic collaboration** with top-tier universities like Cornell and notably the University of Pennsylvania ensures a rigorous and high-quality curriculum that is recognized globally.
- **The accredited program** and curriculum design allows students to be well-prepared for standardized tests like the GRE, GMAT, or the USMLE, required by many graduate programs.
- **VinUni's** focus on research and innovation provides students with a strong academic foundation, which is often favored by graduate programs abroad.

2.2 Working/research experience

Professionalism: Students at VinUniversity develop a sense of accountability through early exposure to the professional environment. Engaging with professionals teaches them the value of work etiquette and ethics, which are not typically found among undergraduate students.

Research Skills & Publications: Several research centers (Smart Health Center, Center for Environmental Intelligence, etc) and the close-knit environment allows students to have early exposure to research at VinUni. The opportunities can lead to research experience and potentially even publications before graduation, which are highly valued by graduate programs.

Industry & Work Readiness: Work-study programs can equip students with valuable soft skills like time management, communication, and teamwork, all essential for success in graduate studies and research.

International exposure: The partnerships between CHS with many renowned institutions globally offer students opportunities for international research exchanges, enhancing their global experience and exposure.

2.3 Recommendations

- **Internationally Recognized Faculty:** Recommendations from professors with global expertise at VinUni can hold significant weight with admissions committees abroad.
- **Strong Recommendation Letters:** Smaller class sizes and close relationships with professors at VinUni can lead to stronger and more personalized recommendation letters.
- **Strong network:** faculty connections, alumni network, and VinUni's partnerships with corporations and universities can further benefit students applying for graduate studies abroad.

2.4 Funding

- **Scholarship Opportunities:** VinUni students may be eligible for scholarships from Vingroup and other sources that cover tuition, living expenses, and travel for graduate studies abroad.
- **Scholarship Leverage:** The university's network and reputation can also assist students in securing financial aid and scholarships from externally international institutions.



3. Graduate Application Process

3.1 Target List of Graduate Programs

Selecting a graduate program should start with your interest. By the time writing this graduation application guidebook, we assume that each applicant has already had a (few) interests in mind. Even so, deciding what makes an ideal graduate program may still be exhaustive.

In general, a strong graduate program should consist of four elements: a high-quality academic curriculum, a supportive and helpful advisor, a welcoming environment and network of lab mates, and the research they do (Figure 4). After you have determined your interests, start searching around, asking instructors and mentors, attending conferences, and so on to compile a list of suitable graduate programs to which you will apply.

All these potential programs should be managed in an MS Excel file. The next step is to narrow down the list (i.e., prioritizing). There are two elements to consider: the quantity and quality of the list. In terms of number, it is not advisable to apply to 100 graduate programs using a single application package. Applicants may choose to tailor it to the school and program they are applying to, focusing on what characteristics do they seek. In many situations, each program may also charge an application cost of approximately \$100, limiting the number of institutions on your list. There is no one-size-fits-all guideline, and the quantity varies greatly, but we would propose a list of approximately 10 - 15 graduate programs for each application round for an average student.

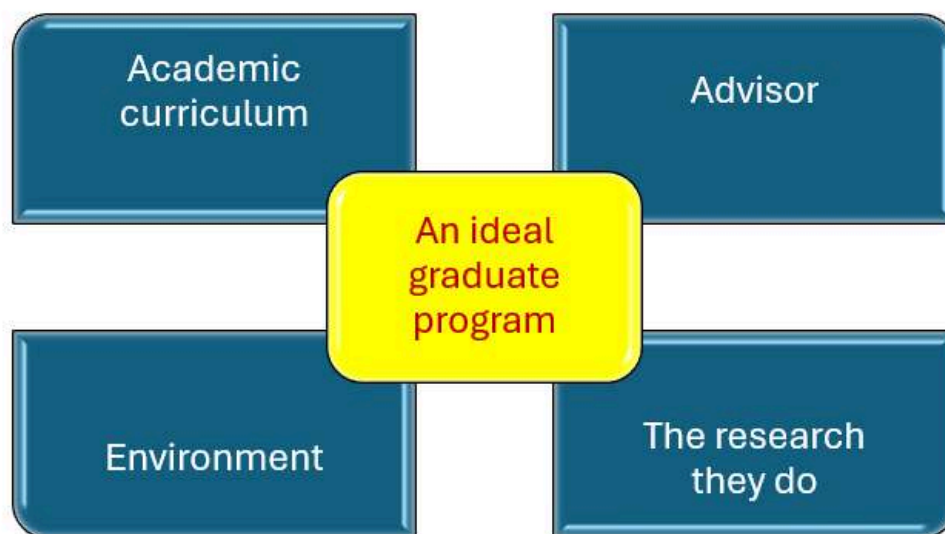


Figure 4: Four elements of a strong graduate program

In terms of quality (or ranking), we recommend sorting programs into three categories: dream, match, and safe. The "dream" programs offer the finest quality (and usually highest rank), but the competition is fierce. "Match" are those that match the applicants' profiles after thorough examination and good self-awareness. "Safe" programs instill confidence in applicants that they will receive an offer even if they fail all Dream and Match programs. Again, there is no one-size-fits-all guideline but having 3-5 programs in each category is a balanced approach. The actual number may differ from applicant to applicant.

Again, let's keep in mind that a good graduate program should strike a balance between the academic curriculum, helpful advisors, supportive environment, and research they conduct.

3.2 How admission does the admission committee usually make the decision?

Admission committees for graduate programs operate as recruiters, carefully selecting individuals with the ability to succeed. Strong academic success is expected, as evidenced by outstanding grades, high standardized test scores, and admission to a prominent undergraduate college. These characteristics offer a basic, rapid way to compare applications. Because these are rule-out criteria, which means the application will be (automatically) excluded if these are not met, we strongly advise applicants to contact admission officers to have a manual screening on their application if they have any concerns (e.g., low GPA, borderline standardized test scores).

Beyond baseline requirements, committees look for evidence of a good fit between student and program. Faculty advisors play a big role. If a professor has funding to support a student and sees a strong research fit, that applicant is much more likely to be admitted. It also means that you are strongly recommended to contact the potential professors and have an informal meeting before applying to the program. Moreover, a strong letter of recommendation from professors who know the applicant well are also highly valued.#

The ideal candidate has additional strengths that signal promise. Prior teaching experience is a plus, as many PhD students become teaching assistants. Independent research experience, scientific awards, and participation in study abroad programs demonstrate initiative and research potential. Finally, well-rounded applicants who participate in community activities showcase well-developed leadership and social skills are also bonuses.



3.3 Application materials

Usually, a full application package requires:

- A CV/Resume,
- Your **degree** and **official transcript** (in English, sometimes require to be verified by a third entity),
- **Statement of Purposes** (SoP, almost every program will require this letter), primarily focuses on academic and professional aspects,
- **Personal statement** (a few programs require this letter), delves into who you are as an individual,
- **2 – 3 Letters of Recommendations** (LoR), at least one from an academic who has taught you,
- Proof of **English proficiency** (TOEFL, IELTS, or equivalence)
- Proof of **standardized tests** (e.g., GMAT, GRE), optional depending on the program and country you are applying to.
- A writing sample, optional

We dedicate this section to discuss on preparing three essential documents: the CV/resume, the SoP, and LoRs. A few general rules but usually being violated by applicants are:

- Focus on facts and scientific thinking, and
- Be very concise and specific, and
- Avoid cliché

There will be examples to help you get the hang of what these are. Let's dive in!

Document 1: The CV/resume

The CV/resume is the first impression of the admission committee about who you are. Graduate programs often prefer a CV, which is a more detailed document encompassing your entire academic and professional history. Resumes are typically shorter and focus on work experience. To make your CV stands out, make sure these points are checked before submitting your CV to any graduate program.

Tailor it to the Program:

- Highlight relevant skills: Research the program's focus area and tailor your CV to showcase skills directly related to it. For instance, if you are applying to a degree in Biostatistics, then highlight your quantitative skills and experience.
- Keywords: Identify keywords used in the graduate program call for application, and naturally integrate them throughout your CV.

Structure and Content:

- Focus on Academics: Prioritize your educational background. List your degree(s), relevant coursework, GPA, and any academic honors or awards.
- Research Experience: Highlight research experiences, including lab work, independent projects, participation in research studies, or publications if you have any. Quantify your achievements whenever possible (e.g., number of participants recruited).
- Professional Experience: Include relevant work experience, even if not directly in healthcare. Focus on experiences that demonstrate transferable skills like teamwork, communication, data analysis, or problem-solving.
- Additional Sections: Consider including sections for presentations, publications (even if co-authored), volunteer work related to health sciences, or relevant certifications

Presentation matters:

- Clear and concise: aim for a two-page document (more is fine but avoid wordiness). Use a professional, easy-to-read format. Maintain consistency in font and structure throughout. The screening committee must look through hundreds of CVs throughout each application round. If you can describe anything in five words, do not use fifty.
- Proofread carefully: typos and grammatical problems leave an unfavorable impression. Proofread carefully and consider having someone else check your CV as well. It's ridiculous to claim that you have an eye for detail when the CV contains five unintentional typos.

Additional Tips:

- Quantify Achievements: Use numbers to quantify your accomplishments whenever possible (months/years of experience, hours of teaching, number of publications, etc). This adds impact and demonstrates the scale of your contributions.
- Action Verbs: Use strong action verbs to describe your experiences.
- If the school has a template, use it. For instance, here are [templates](#) from the Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts & Sciences Resources.

Document 2: The Statement of Purposes (SoP)

There are a lot of cases where applicants with outstanding academic performance were not accepted due to an inadequate SoP. In combination with your CV and LoRs, the SoP portrays who you are professionally. Among a large pool of candidate, a good SoP helps distinguish you between this pool of excellent students.

A good SoP portrays you as a compelling candidate. An outstanding SoP Here are a few tips accompanying by examples that may help you with the thought process. Please keep in mind that these are tips, not one-size-fit-all rules, and therefore you should start with something about you that immediately attract attention of readers, in this case the admission committee. Usually, they read your SoP to understand why you pursue the field/the program and what are your relevant experience.

Compare the two openings below:

Opening 1: "In the longer run and for wide-reaching issues, more creative solutions tend to come from *imaginative interdisciplinary collaboration*" – Robert Shiller, Jr. *This remark expresses my desire to become an interdisciplinary researcher, with a focus on infectious diseases and an expansion into education and public health.*" (45 words)

Opening 2: "Since COVID-19, I kept asking how to harvest currently underused observational health data to make the most impact on human health. I am a math-built medical graduate skilled in quantitative concepts, pursuing a PhD in Epidemiology at Harvard to address this concern." (42 words)

Which one do you think is the better?

Tip: Don't repeat details from your CVs

The SoP is an important document that reveals more about your academic and professional identity. The word count is limited, so do not repeat information that has previously been included in your CVs. You are, however, welcome to elaborate on them and show how good they fit in. If you mention in your CV that you spent a year volunteering, you might want to include in your SoP what skills you learned, how the experience shaped your interests, and how the previous experience relates to the current program.

For example, you may tie volunteer experience to your commitment to resolving global inequities, which could help you stand out as a candidate for global health or public health

Tip: Be concise and straightforward

As discussed above, each graduate program may receive hundreds to thousands of applications per round. It means they are up to their neck with documents. Don't add more work for them unless it is a must. For instance, the applicant wrote Opening 1 may see it touching, but think about it twice: do you have time to be touched if you have to read 100 letters a day?

In contrast, Opening 2 provide a lot of information in just two sentences: the applicant is interested in Epidemiology at Harvard, s/he aims to harvest observational data to improve human health, the interest was inspired by COVID-19, s/he is able to pursue this dream because s/he had a mathematical and a medical degree, with certain experience in quantitative concepts.

Tip: Show, don't tell (avoid cliché)

In fact, Opening 1 may appears in variations in many essays that submitted to the graduate program. It is a cliché that every applicant should avoid. Let's take another example, where a part of an SoP reads: *"The fire of passion burns brightly within me to safeguard the health and well-being of every Vietnamese citizen. Together, we can build a wall of immunity, a fortress against the tides of future outbreaks"* (34 words). We can consider something like: *"I plan to build a research center for emerging diseases and outbreaks, working with the CDC and OUCRU, Woolcock, to make Vietnam a hub for infectious illnesses in Southeast Asia"* (30 words).

Perhaps it is a little braggy, but you have every right to dream big. And with only 30 words, you just demonstrated to the admissions committee that you do not dream at all. You have a plan and goals.

Tip: Tailoring your SoP to each program

In your SoP, if you can change the name of the graduate program/school by another one that in the same tier but it still makes sense, then it is not tailored at all.

Consider the example below:

"The King's College London is obviously one of the best universities in the world and well-known for its priority in supporting the needs of students, as well as its access to encouraging mentorship from senior roles. I am heavily into the King's College London because it has such a major strength in infection and mechanism of diseases research utilizing a multidisciplinary perspective with bench-to-bedside development."

That sounds wonderful. Now let's try to replace King's College London (KCL) with Imperial College London. You'll notice that it still fits in extremely well. Now, alter that to Harvard; is it still correct? Actually, we believe that replacing KCL with VinUni in the example will still make sense, but in the near future. This is another cliché that should be avoided.

This is a good example that may help you get a sense of it:

"I chose the ScM in Biostatistics at Brown University because modern data scientists are nurtured here. The engaging network with a small cohort size create a close-knit environment. It is worth noting the reasonable 4 required courses and the flexibility of choosing one elective component in either statistics, epidemiology, or data science after completing three essential courses in the first year. Moreover, I am enthusiastic about activities like the lunch-and-learn "Take Out Thursdays" and kayaking in the nearby river at SPH. These elements contribute to the holistic learning and living experience I am seeking."

Document 3: Two to Three Letter of Recommendations

A resource that will be very helpful is a book by Paul Bodine entitled Perfect Phrases for Letters of Recommendation. We strongly recommend you to draft a strategy early based on the requirement of quantity and quality of recommendations from each program. A few things should be considered.

Choosing Referees

A solid letter of reference usually comes from someone who can personally attest to your abilities and efforts. With a close working relationship, the writer may provide instances of your abilities and accomplishments. Focus on developing relationships with teachers or supervisors who can make informative and enthusiastic recommendations. While a high-ranking title can be important, a letter from your line manager, who has seen your daily work ethic and accomplishments, is likely to be more valuable to potential employers or programs.

- Make sure the referees will provide a strong letter tailoring to you.
- Ask professors who know you well: Ideally, choose professors you have had classes with, especially those where you excelled or did research projects.
- Consider expert in the field: If possible, select professors whose area of expertise aligns with your desired graduate program.
- Students at VinUni who intend to apply to graduate schools in the future typically do not face this situation. Rather than working professionals, all your referees will likely to be academics.

Content for the Recommendation Letter

It is important to strategically approach the content of your 2-3 recommendation letters, because they offer an objective perspective on your skills from trusted individuals. These letters hold significant weight, so ensuring they effectively showcase your strengths and reinforces your SoP.

- Referees' background and relationship: Professors should introduce themselves and their connection to you.
- Your strengths and achievements: Specific examples showcasing your academic abilities, research aptitude, or relevant work skills are crucial. You should discuss, and perhaps, send out a list of a few skills that you want the referee to focus on.
- Your fit for the program: The referees should explain why they believe you'd be successful in the graduate program.

Providing information to Referees

- Ask for letters early: give your referees ample time to write a decent letter. A common mistake is due to lack of preparation, and the applicant only ask for the letters a few days ahead of time.
- Give them context: Provide your recommenders with a copy of your transcript, resume/CV, personal statement, and a list of programs you're applying to.
- Highlight specific achievements: Remind them of your accomplishments in their class, research projects, or professional work.
- Set deadlines and provide instructions: Clearly communicate submission deadlines and any specific instructions the programs have for recommendation letters.
- Follow-up politely if deadlines approach. Referees are usually up to their neck with daily work, and this is your application. As a result, you are responsible for following-up and providing a gently reminder without being pushy.

Application season for PhD programs in the US typically runs from November to January each year. In the UK and Australia, the seasons usually last until June or even year-round. Some schools have rolling admissions, meaning they review applications as they are received, while others have two or three application cycles per year. It is crucial to initiate your application early, securing enough time for filling in information, verifying your degree and transcript, refining your CV, asking for LoRs, writing draft, and revising SoP, etc. In general, many PhD programs in Public Health in the US use SOPHAS to verify applications. This means that you will need to submit your application through SOPHAS. A few programs also have their own application gates.

One last piece of advice: having a companion who is also applying to graduate school along for the ride. The application process can be time-consuming and tedious on its own. While proofreading documents and sharing thoughts and second opinions, you can encourage and support each other intellectually and mentally.

Resources

One last piece of advice: having a companion who is also applying to graduate school along for the ride. The application process can be time-consuming and tedious on its own. While proofreading documents and sharing thoughts and second opinions, you can encourage and support each other intellectually and mentally. Please keep in mind that you are not alone in this journey. Whenever you feel drained out, it is totally fine to take one or two days off, recharge, and revive: Graduate admission is challenging, don't push it.

Here are some forums that will be tremendously helpful for applicants:

- **The GradCafe Forums:** This is a popular forum specifically for graduate school applicants. Besides health sciences, it has sections dedicated to various programs (architecture, business, law, etc.) where you can find discussions on application requirements, admissions experiences, and advice from current students and alumni.
- **College Confidential Forums - Graduate School:** This forum offers conversations on college admissions, decisions, applications, and much more. It's a great place to get advice and learn from the experiences of others.
- **The Student Room** is indeed another popular forum that can be very helpful for graduate students during the application process. It's a UK-based student community that covers a wide range of topics, including postgraduate studies.
- **Reddit's r/GradSchool:** This subreddit is another great resource for grad school hopefuls. Here you can find discussions on a variety of topics related to applications, as well as general advice about navigating graduate studies.

In addition to these forums, some universities and programs may also have their own online forums or social media groups for prospective students. These can be a great way to get program-specific advice and connect with current students or faculty.

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Sharing by successful VinUni student applicants



By the end of June 2024, even before their graduation, 36 VinUni students (25%) of the founding Cohort have been admitted to prestigious master's and Ph.D. programs at some of the world's leading universities. The majority of them (64%) are on scholarship support. These institutions include the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), Cornell University, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), the University of Queensland (UQ), the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), or Singapore Management University (SMU) to name just a few. Below are some practical insights, sharing, and tips from some of these accomplished students.

College of Engineering and Computer Science



Nguyễn Đại Nghĩa

Ph.D. Candidate in Computer Science at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)



Thank you for taking the time to read this short guide. What I write here is to partially reflect on my experience but also to give you a sense of what might work and what might not. By no means this is exhaustive and suitable for your goals. My general advice on seeking “advice” is to ask several people and synthesize the answer yourself.

I assume that you are probably a third-year or sooner undergraduate student at VinUni seeking higher education opportunities. In the ideal case, what you should have by now to be a competitive candidate is good academic performance (GPA, Dean’s Lists), good technical background (projects, internships), good research experience, and a clear domain of interest. However, in the actual scenario, only a very few of us could fully fulfill all these requirements. Therefore, my first advice is to re-evaluate your profile, decide your domain of interest, and choose the key priorities you should improve for the remaining time. Having a theme for your application with a clear reason for current strengths, weaknesses, direction, and potential for improvement is probably more important than being a better-than-average student in several aspects.

A question that could be a good guiding direction to building skill/knowledge, and in return, a better profile is: Could you actually build a project by yourself in your domain of interest? The project mentioned could be an industry or research project, depending on your direction. No great project is one man's effort, but the point here is that you have gained a strong enough foundation to cover most aspects of related topics while being skilled in a narrow domain to carry out the heavy work.

A "straightforward" strategy that you could do is taking risks in your course or undergraduate research project, try aiming for something more relevant to your direction and put in the work, instead of taking the easy way of choosing projects that you would get high grades. This way, you can optimize your time to improve your skills in the domain of interest while building a strong personal foundation.



Nguyễn Dương Tùng

Master of Science in Computer Science
(Artificial Intelligence) at University of
Southern California (USC)



"When you're thinking about going to grad school, it's really important to figure out what you want early on. Do you want to go for a Master's or a Ph.D.? Are you leaning towards a professional Master's degree or a research-focused one? Sorting these things out before you start applying will make the whole process a lot easier and help you make better decisions.

If you're in the early years of your undergrad and still unsure about your future plans, just focus on keeping your GPA high. A strong GPA is super important for any grad school application. Also, try to get involved in research opportunities whenever you can. Doing research not only helps you understand your field better but also looks great on your resume. Plus, if you can get some research papers published, that will really boost your applications.

Speaking from my experience in engineering and computer science, having a good GPA and some research experience is a solid base for applying to graduate studies. This combination is helpful not only for research programs but can also be a plus for professional Master's degrees.

If you're still not sure about your specific path, don't worry. Use the resources available to you, like guidebooks and counseling services, to help you make informed decisions. This guidebook, for example, is a great place to start.

In short, stay focused, keep your grades up, get involved in research, and use the resources available to you. These steps will help you build a strong foundation for whatever further studies path you decide to take."



Trần Hương Lan

Master of Science in Computer Science at
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology
Lausanne (EPFL)



It's okay to feel lost; we've all been there, even those of us who chose higher education. During your Bachelor's, you might wonder, "Should I go for a Master's right away or work first?" My friends, whether they are pursuing a Master's, working in the industry, or doing a PhD, are still grappling with big decisions like whether to go into academia, which domains to work in, or what to do after their PhD. In your 20s and 30s, life is a continuous journey, and there will be moments when you don't know what to do or how to make decisions (I know it might sound unconvincing coming from a 22-year-old, but trust me on this).

So, how do you navigate this? Honestly, I don't have the answer either. Lately, I've been questioning if I'm a good-fit for pursuing PhD and academia, and if so, in which field.

I recently read some notes I wrote when I decided to apply to VinUni, and they still resonate with me. Back then, I was struggling with choosing a university and forced myself to explore different opportunities, attend online courses, meet new people, and seek their advice. That led me to choose VinUni. Looking at where I am now, I believe everything will work out by the end of my Master's as long as I actively explore during this time. One thing I suggest when you feel lost is to learn new things, reach out, and meet new people. This will enrich your perspective and hopefully help you decide what you want to do.

Good luck to both of us on our future career paths!



Lê Đình Nam

Erasmus Mundus Masters Scholar - IPCVai -
Image Processing and Computer Vision



When choosing graduate study, listen to what your heart tells you."

At the moment, I am extremely proud to be one of the few people to go to Europe to do graduate study.

Back to one year ago, I applied for both Master's programs in Europe and Ph.D programs in the US, and after several months, I fortunately got some offers from both sides. When I shared my achievements with my family, friends, and professors, they tended to 'force' me to go to the US with so many reasons such as "US education is much better" or "US is more developed", ... Nevertheless, I still chose Europe because I knew deep down, that's where my heart belongs.

Being the 'odd' one makes everybody a little annoyed, and I received so many questions "Why?" with that decision. The basic answer, in my opinion, is because people don't see the world the same way I do. They often impose their perception and experience, or sometimes what they hear from others, to change my points of view and, eventually, me. And I know they do that to you too.

But I believe that when you are 'yourself' in a good way, you'll find your own community. You'll find people who accept and love you, who care for you, and who accompany you on your self-development journey. I believe when you love yourself, you'll find happiness, success, and real friends. I believe when you listen to your heart instead of what people in your life tell you, you'll find peace, freedom, and your true potential.

I used to be afraid of being myself and I tried to please everybody. But I came to the realization that life is very short. It's too short to not be the biggest version of yourself. Just choose what's right for you, and everything will turn out perfect. Choose the program that you love. Choose the country that you want to go to. Live your life, and you'll never regret it!



Bùi Khánh Nam

Ph.D Candidate in Civil Engineering at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)



Determining whether academia or industry is the right pathway can be challenging for a freshman. This was a question I constantly grappled with during my first two years in university. As a mechanical engineering student, I had no clear idea of the specific field I wanted to pursue. Therefore, I engaged in research with my professors, regardless of the outcomes.

Through this process, I began to discover areas within mechanical engineering that fascinated me. Each research project, whether successful or not, deepened my understanding of different subfields and helped narrow my interests. Even though I published no paper, the hands-on experience and the insights gained were incredibly valuable. Engaging in research also provided me with knowledge and experiences that I only now realize are invaluable in my chosen field.

A required internship further clarified my path, as I realized that industry was not for me. By my final year, I had a clearer vision of my future career path. My passion for CFD led me to decide to pursue a PhD in this field. This decision required significant self-reflection and exploration, but the journey was immensely rewarding.

Looking back, I realized that there is no need to rush into a decision about your future. Allow yourself to explore different opportunities, and the right path will reveal itself naturally.



Võ Minh Quân

Master of Science in Engineering in Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mechanics at University of Pennsylvania (UPenn)



The graduate study at Penn has been an unforgettable and fruitful journey for me. Academically, the amount of knowledge that I have had a chance to learn is undoubtedly more advanced and specialized. I have got a chance to learn from many talented and dedicated professors, other Masters and PhDs. Beyond that, it is also an excellent opportunity for me to experience a new culture that I have only known through movies and stories. Everything that I have only seen on media, including biggest cities in the world, international concerts, and most advanced technologies, have become more accessible than ever.

Studying abroad at different stages of your life will also definitely give you different experiences. While going abroad for undergraduate study as a teenager is a challenging but exciting journey that you get to live significantly far away from your parents, the graduate study journey is slightly different as you have to focus on your career from the beginning and deal with more pressures as a grown adult, but at the same time, you have already equipped yourself with soft skills, survival tips, and pressure tolerance to deal with such difficulties.

Either way, it is a life-changing journey that I believe we will always be grateful for. I am proud to be one of the first VinUni students to have a chance to do my graduate study abroad and I cannot wait to welcome you onboard.



Phạm Phước Minh Quang

Master of Science in Robotics at Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI)



During my third year at VinUni, my GPA was 3.3—not particularly competitive. I faced several setbacks: I failed the 3+2 programs with Cornell and UPenn, secured an offer from UIUC but missed out on the VinGroup scholarship. This period was tough; I felt depressed, unconfident, and doubted myself.

Reflecting on My Application:

- Lack of Effort: I realized I hadn't put in enough effort into my applications.
- Lightweight Essays: My essays, generated with minimal input, didn't convey my true potential.
- Interview Preparation: I was not well-prepared for the interviews.
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Unique Value Proposition: I failed to highlight my unique experiences and passion—like founding the first robotics lab, raising significant funds, and connecting with professors from HUST, UIUC, and Cornell. I also had a 4.0 GPA in graduate courses related to robotics.

My Journey in Year 4:

Determined to improve, I continued to work hard and sought advice from VinUni professors. I also engaged in meaningful activities, like being a tour guide for visiting professors. For instance, I spent a week showing Professor Geir Dullerud, the Director of the Center of Autonomy at UIUC, around Hanoi. This gave me the opportunity to discuss my journey, from building a lab to writing papers and seeking collaborations. He even visited my lab and attended a weekly seminar.

Applying for Graduate Programs:

This time, I applied for a PhD and a Master's in Robotics at UIUC, and a Master's in Robotics at MBZUAI, and got accepted into all three programs. Here's what I did differently:

- Effort on Essays: I put more effort into my essays. Professor Geir advised, "A 4.0 GPA means a lot. However, a low GPA doesn't give much information about you and is not necessarily a reason for rejection. You have to represent yourself and provide information in other ways."
- Focus on Background and Passion: My essays focused on my background and passion, clearly stating how each program aligned with my future career goals. I researched the programs thoroughly to understand how they would benefit my career.
- PhD Essays: I chose two professors whose research interests aligned with mine. It's crucial to research deeply and even contact current PhD students of the professors to understand their work environment. Your statement of purpose (SOP) should outline a clear research plan and how you intend to collaborate with your chosen professors.

- Pre-Connection with Professors: Having prior connections with professors can be beneficial. I had worked with both supervisors I chose before applying.

Honesty in Applications: For SOPs, CVs, and interviews, it's essential to be truthful about your accomplishments. Don't exaggerate or fabricate; instead, provide depth and detail.

- VinScholarship Interviews: Be prepared for technical questions related to your projects. If Professor Minh Do is your interviewer, expect mathematical questions and review your knowledge of linear algebra and calculus.
- MBZUAI Application: The entry test is significant. It assesses your true abilities in mathematics, programming, machine learning, and your specialization. A safe score is around 38-39/40, with a shortlist score of about 33/40. The test is not overly difficult but requires thorough preparation.
- Exchange Semester Recommendation: If possible, I highly recommend participating in an exchange semester at a top university. This offers the opportunity to delve deeper into your research topic through well-designed graduate courses, enhancing your academic and research experience.

By reflecting on my previous failures and making these adjustments, I was able to succeed in my graduate applications. I hope my experiences and advice help you in your own journey.

Good luck!



Lại Đặc Tiến

PhD Candidate in Electrical and Computer Engineering at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)



“Trust the process”. This is a quote from my peers who applied for jobs in software development firms. However, I found it more than suitable to describe the application process for graduation studies. Undeniably, you have to create a clear plan for building your CV from your first days of university with excellent GPAs, research projects, publications, etc. The key point, nevertheless, lies in the effort you spent on your application and the motivation you could keep after constantly applying for those programs.

VinUni is a special university since it offers students a wide range of opportunities, especially graduation studies at famous universities. Acknowledging these chances, I applied for all of the programs that match my career orientation of being a researcher. This is when “Trust the process” applies. To be specific, this “process” does not imply the application process to a program or a university, it consists of the whole journey you are traveling to gain knowledge, skills, and even money to get that ultimate offer. Therefore, applying for multiple programs, multiple universities, and multiple scholarships, and doing it multiple times, is vital. When you try enough, the result will surely come.

As an applicant who experienced VinGroup scholarship interviews 3 times, I do think that I developed after every interview. The disappointment after the failed attempts is inevitable, but it is also required as my motivation during the process.

So, trust the process.



Ngô An Hà Trang

Master of Engineering in Electrical and Computer Engineering at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)



Remember to carefully check the time frame for submissions and, if possible, aim to submit documents at least one day prior to the deadline. If you are applying to schools in different countries (such as European, American, and Australian institutions), ensure you convert the time zones correctly. I have a friend who mistakenly converted the deadline from a European time zone to an American time zone, causing him to miss the deadline for his most promising university.

For interviews and statements of purpose (SOP) for graduate programs and scholarships, focus your research topics and study interests as precisely as possible. Avoid mentioning multiple experiences across different fields (such as robotics, blockchain, and energy). Instead, concentrate on a single area of study. In both the SOP and interview, articulate why this particular research interest is important to you and how it aligns with the goals of the program you are applying to. Provide examples of past experiences, such as relevant coursework, projects, or research endeavors, that have shaped your interests and prepared you for advanced study. Highlight specific faculty members or resources at the institution that attract you to their program, emphasizing how they will help you achieve your academic and professional goals. This focused approach will demonstrate your commitment and ability in your chosen career path.

After receiving your admission letter and completing your VISA application, it is important to pay attention to the immunization requirements of the university you will attend. These requirements vary between states and countries, so make sure to check them carefully and fulfill them as soon as possible. Some vaccines require 2-3 doses over several months, so early action is crucial.



Phạm Lê Nam Khánh

Master of Engineering Business
Management at University of Exeter



Applying to the University of Exeter was one of the most exciting yet challenging experiences I've had. Here's what I learned along the way and some advice to help you through the process.

Firstly, Research thoroughly. I spent hours on the University of Exeter's website, reading about the courses, faculty, and campus life. This research not only helped me decide that Exeter was the right fit for me but also allowed me to tailor my application to show my genuine interest.

Meeting the Admission Requirements is crucial. I made sure to check the specific academic and English language requirements for my course early on. This gave me enough time to prepare and ensure that I met all the criteria.

An essential step is to prepare your language testing certification. Depending on your course requirements, you might need to take the IELTS, Duolingo, TOEFL, or TOEIC. Make sure to schedule your test in advance and give yourself plenty of time to study.

Writing my personal statement was probably the most challenging part. My advice is to start early and be yourself. I highlighted my passion for the subject, my relevant experiences, and how Exeter aligned with my future aspirations. It's important to be authentic and reflective in your writing.

For your UK visa application, it's necessary to get a TB Test from a clinic approved by the Home Office. One of my recommendations is the Family Medical Practice - International Clinic in Hanoi. Note that your TB test is valid for 6 months from the date of your X-Ray.

Securing a strong Letter of Recommendations is also essential. I asked my professors and industry supervisors who knew me well and could speak to my strengths and suitability for the course. Their support played a significant role in my application.

Applying early gave me a head start. It allowed me to gather all necessary documents and avoid any last-minute stress. Lastly, utilize resources. I attended university fairs and webinars and spoke with current students and alumnus. Their insights were invaluable and gave me a clearer picture of what to expect.

In the end, my efforts paid off, and I'm now part of the vibrant community at the University of Exeter. Good luck with your application – it's a journey worth taking



Nguyễn Quang Hùng

Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering at
University of Queensland



Pursuing graduate studies can be daunting, especially when you're unsure where to start. My journey to graduate school was filled with ups and downs, and I was once in your shoes, not knowing when or where to begin.

There were many sleepless nights where I constantly asked myself, "How do I...?" because there were so many things to consider and no clear starting point. These questions, though general at first, helped shape my thinking and planted a seed in my mind. I didn't get all the answers right away, but persistently thinking about these questions drove me to seek help. Our university is full of brilliant minds. I used my well-formulated questions to seek advice and insights from professors and peers. This helped me gradually formulate a clear path for myself. Over time, this approach transformed my uncertainty into a structured plan for my Master's degree. What seemed like a mountain of uncertainty turned into a path of discovery and growth.

Looking back, it's surprising how those small steps and persistent questioning led me to where I am today. So, embrace the questions, seek advice, and take it one step at a time. You'll be amazed at how far you can go.



◆ College of Business and Management



Nguyễn Mai Phương

ASEAN Development Scholar - Master of Accountancy (Data Analytics Track) at Nanyang Business School (Singapore)



Hi there! I'm happy to share some perspectives on navigating the graduate application process.

First, I would encourage you to reflect on why you want to pursue further studies, as this self-awareness will be crucial as you choose the right program and direction. You need to decide whether you want to pursue a taught master's program or a research-based one, as they have different focuses and requirements.

Once you've determined your goals, I suggest thoroughly researching the universities and programs that align with them. If possible, try to find a peer who is also applying and collaborate to crowdsource information and build a database of scholarships together. It is also a good idea to look into the visa policies for working in the country after graduation if that's something you are interested in.

During your study period at VinUniversity, maintaining a strong GPA is essential to demonstrate your commitment and responsibility to academic studies. Additionally, try to do an exchange program at a top-ranked university, as this can be a valuable experience. Be sure to study diligently, seek out office hours with professors, and stay in touch with them even after the exchange.

When it comes to the application itself, I would advise you to nail your personal story. Showcase the unique experiences and accomplishments that make you a compelling candidate. For business school applications, you'll want to highlight not just your academic successes, but also interesting aspects of your personality and background. Choose references who know you best - professors, supervisors, or mentors who can speak in-depth about your strengths and potential. Additionally, reach out to Vietnamese scholars who have attained the scholarship beforehand and ask about their experience. Also, try to schedule a coffee chat with the admissions team to impress them with your questions and show your genuine interest.

I can't stress enough the importance of preparing early for the GMAT/GRE. The website GMAT - Zero to Hero has great resources to help you approach this challenging exam, so be sure to visit: <https://gmatzerotohero.com/>

When it comes to the interview round, remember to research common interview questions beforehand and do mock interviews with your friends. Use the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) method to structure your answers. Be sure to have thoroughly researched the business school and your faculty interests before the "Ask me anything" session.

Finally, don't get disheartened by setbacks - failure is a natural part of any ambitious journey. Just keep pushing forward, and I'm confident you'll achieve your graduate study goals. I hope the above is useful to you. Should you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via 20phuong.nm@vinuni.edu.vn.



Phùng Trọng Nghĩa

Master of Economics at National University of Singapore (NUS)



Applying to graduate schools is all about showcasing your experiences to advertise yourself. To do this, you need to build those experiences first. Hence, the obvious but most important advice is to try to make the most of your time at VinUni to enrich your experiences. Reach out to the AID department for internships and fantastic career services. If you're interested in research, talk to your professors. VinUni has the resources to help you build a strong profile. From my perspective, the key is having the will to take action.

If you notice a gap in your profile, don't let it hold you back. Roll up your sleeves, get to work, and take meaningful steps to improve the situation. Sometimes, all it takes is a little extra effort.

Good luck on your graduate applications!



Đỗ Quỳnh Trang

Master of IT in Business (MITB) Student at
Singapore Management University (SMU)



The decision to pursue higher studies or enter the workforce after graduation is a crucial one that many business students face. While it's often advised that business graduates should prioritize gaining work experience, I've chosen a different path – one that aligns with my passion and long-term goals.

During my third and fourth years of undergraduate studies, I enrolled in the Business Analytics concentration. This exposure ignited my interest in the data analytics field and opened my eyes to the possibilities within the technology sector. Thus, despite a tempting offer from a top multinational company, I opted for a Master's degree to leverage my technical skills and fully “break into tech”.

As technology advances, new jobs are emerging every day. As a business student, don't restrict yourself to traditional business roles. Instead, leverage your business skills and mindset while remaining open to exploring various fields and industries. Remember, neither working nor pursuing higher education immediately after graduation is universally the best choice. The optimal path depends on your individual goals and circumstances. And your four years in college are the perfect time to gain diverse experiences. Talk to people from different fields and industries, join multiple internships, participate in hackathons & case competitions, do volunteering, allow yourself to try different things and you will find what truly excites you. Once you've identified your passion and needs, don't hesitate to seek support for applications and preparation. Many resources (including us) are available to help you on your chosen path. Ultimately, the key is to believe in yourself and your choices. Your unique experiences and aspirations should guide your decision. Good luck on your journey!



Lâm Nguyễn Thanh Thảo

Master of IT in Business (MITB) Student at
Singapore Management University (SMU)



As Business students, the struggle can be real when applying for Master's programs in a technical field like CS/ AI. However, I'd like to assure you that a lack of a traditional technical background need not be a barrier to pursuing these fields.

Firstly, the key to successfully transitioning lies in proactive self-learning. A strategic approach involves building foundational knowledge in programming and CS (consider the classic CS50's Introduction to Computer Science course) and core mathematical concepts like linear algebra and calculus through platforms like Coursera or MIT OpenCourseWare. If you're particularly interested in AI/ML, Andrew Ng's Machine Learning Specialization is highly recommended. Instructors like Professor David Malan and Professor Andrew Ng do an excellent job in explaining complex technical concepts in an absolutely intuitive and understandable way.

Once you grasp the fundamentals, consider enriching your journey by applying your newly acquired skills to real-world projects. Engaging in practical problem-solving not only solidifies your understanding but also provides valuable hands-on experience. Don't hesitate to reach out to professors in your field of interest (such as those in the CECS or at your exchange university) to inquire about potential research opportunities or industry-partnered projects. They often have some very cool projects and opportunities that might not be publicly advertised. If you aspire to work in their fields, simply send an email to schedule a brief meeting with them to discuss your interest. They're usually happy to chat and see if there's a good fit!

By taking the initiative to learn, actively engage in projects, and seek guidance from professors, you will gradually bridge the gap between your current background and a thrilling journey in the CS/AI field. This entire journey also acts as a double-check for yourself to see if you are genuinely interested and a good fit for these fields. If you find that the more you learn, the more excited and curious you feel, then making this transition is definitely the right choice.

With that, you can easily show the Admissions and Scholarship Committee team that you're fully committed to the transition and that you're more than ready to take on the specialized courses offered in the technical Master's programs. Good luck!





College of Health Sciences



Nguyễn Lê Mỹ Anh

PhD Nutrition, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities



I would suggest two key things for your application: start early and have a friend. You should start looking at programs as soon as you know what country/area and field you that want to pursue. Use sites such as FindAPhD, country-specific rating systems, and QS World Rankings to narrow down your options to about 10 schools. Also, don't forget to order or renew your passport and begin transcript translation or conversion to the relevant grading scheme (if necessary). These administrative tasks will take a long time, so you should get started as soon as possible. You should share your plans with a friend, partner, or someone you trust. They will be your mental support (which you will undoubtedly require! Applying is a bit exhausting). This person could also review your personal statement and CV to ensure that they are compelling and easy to grasp, as well as double-check your grammar. You might think that your documents are perfect, but another reader may point out something fascinating. It would be a great bonus if they knew something about your field too!



Lê Đức Huy

Teaching Assistant, PhD in Epidemiology, Vanderbilt University, US



It is an honor and delight to share my journey to Vanderbilt. Though everyone's journey is unique, I hope that my story offers you insight and confidence in attaining your own targets. Here are three primary strategies based on my experience:

1. Find Good Mentors: Mentors provide vital support during the application process. I was extremely fortunate to meet seniors who had extensive experience gaining scholarships and studying at the most prestigious US universities. They were a huge source of inspiration for me, assisting me in recognizing my flaws and guiding my progress.

2. Develop Research Competency: During interviews, professors normally want us to show and share our experience in our previous works. Developing research skills takes time, so do not hesitate to join several research groups and broaden your network as an undergraduate. Vinunians have exceptional opportunities to collaborate and learn from talented faculty and peers.

3. Build Connections with Potential Supervisors: This is the key to my PhD application. I normally spend time researching the guest speakers at Vinuni to see how their work relates to my research interests before their talk. Following their discussions, I proactively shared my interests and aspirations with these professors. Fortunately, I found one who supported me on my PhD application journey.

Finally, I wish you continued success in achieving your goals after graduation from Vinuni. I am really looking forward to hearing your success story in the next year!



Nguyễn Đỗ Thu Phương

Master of Medical Sciences in Global Health
Delivery, Harvard University



A minimum of two months to craft a top-notch essay

Applying to top universities can be a daunting process, especially when you're pressed for time. With just a few months to prepare your application, it's difficult to make significant improvements to your GPA, research publications, academic achievements, or extracurricular activities. Instead, focusing your efforts on crafting compelling essays can significantly boost your chances of admission.

Allow at least two months between coming up with your essay ideas and the application deadline. During this period, your essay drafts should undergo continuous refinement. The first draft is your opportunity to brainstorm and freely write down all the valuable and relevant ideas you have for your essay. Don't worry about word count at this stage.

Take 1-2 weeks between revisions. If you revise too soon after the initial draft, you won't have enough time to gain perspective and improve your thoughts on the issues you've raised. Dedicate 1-2 weeks to gather feedback and refine your ideas. Seek perspectives from trusted teachers or mentors. This will help you gain valuable insights and strengthen your arguments.

Reread your previous drafts, challenge your own perspectives, identify inconsistencies, and refine your writing.

Remember, every sentence in your essay should serve a purpose. Eliminate unnecessary details to maintain a strong and engaging tone throughout your writing.



Nguyễn Khởi Quân, MD

VinCohort project, CHS
Master in Public Health (MPH), Johns Hopkins
Bloomberg School of Public Health



Dr. Quan K Nguyen earned his MD from Hue University in 2021. He is driven by a passion to improve the health of his community. During his time in medical school, he has worked with the NGO Community Medicine (Y Hoc Cong Dong) to address the knowledge gap and provide primary care to underserved populations in Vietnam. Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, his team successfully secured a \$130,000 grant "Healing Saigon," providing essential medical supplies like masks, PPEs, HFNCs, etc. to hospitals, directly aiding in patient care. He has also been a working group leader at ORC (Nagasaki University, Japan) with interests in systematic reviews/meta-analysis, infectious diseases, and medical education. He was awarded the Vingroup Scholarship while working on the VinCohort project and having published 23 articles with an h-index of 6. He appreciates R&B, nonfiction & classics, hiking & ecotourism, and blogging.



Resources for graduate scholarships and grants

Below are some typical scholarship programs offered for students to pursue Master's and doctoral degrees overseas. You can also look for scholarship and grant resources from each of the intended universities.

| # | Name (in alphabet order) | Field | Eligible student year/ Degree | Grant/Benefits | Scholarship Provider | Website |
|--|--|---|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---|
| Scholarship for various countries | | | | | | |
| 1 | Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Program (For students to study in Europe) | For various fields | Master's | Full scholarship | Erasmus | https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals/students/erasmus-mundus-joint-masters |
| 2 | Vingroup Science and Technology Scholarship Program for Overseas Study for Master's and Doctoral Degrees | For Science and Technology fields | Master's and PhD | Full scholarship | Vingroup | Vingroup Scholarship Programs – Vingroup Scholarship Programs (vinuni.edu.vn) |
| Australia | | | | | | |
| 3 | Australia Awards Scholarships | Economic Development, Transportation and Infrastructure, Education, Equality, Climate Change, IT Security ... | Master's | Full scholarship | Australian Government | https://australiaawardsvietnam.org/vi/ |
| 4 | Macquarie Vice-Chancellor's International Scholarships | For various fields | Master's | The scholarship amount varies up to AUD\$10,000 and will be applied towards your tuition fee. It is not renewable. | University of Macquarie | https://www.mq.edu.au/study/admissions-and-entry/scholarships/international/vice-chancellor-s-international-scholarship |
| 5 | University of Sydney International Scholarship | For various fields | Master's and PhD | For 2023 awards, the scholarship is valued at \$37,207 per annum | University of Sydney | https://www.sydnevedu.au/scholarships/e/uni-versity-sydney-international-scholarship.html |
| Canada | | | | | | |
| 6 | Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (Vanier CGS) | Health and natural science or engineering | PhD | Valued at \$50,000 per year for three years during doctoral studies | Canadian government | https://vanier.gc.ca/en/home-accueil.html |
| China | | | | | | |
| 7 | Schwarzman Scholars Program | One-year master's in global affairs at Tsinghua University | Master's | Full Scholarship | Various Donors | https://www.schwarzmanscholars.org/ |

| # | Name (in alphabet order) | Field | Eligible student year/ Degree | Grant/Benefits | Scholarship Provider | Website |
|------------------|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| Germany | | | | | | |
| 8 | DAAD Scholarships in Germany for Development-Related Postgraduate Courses | For various fields | Master's or PhD courses | Full scholarship | the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) | https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/scholarships/daad-scholarships/ |
| Hong Kong | | | | | | |
| 9 | Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme for International Students | Sciences, Medicine, Engineering and Technology Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies | PhD | The Fellowship provides an annual stipend of HK\$ 325,200 (approximately US\$41,690) and a conference and research-related travel allowance of HK\$ 13,600 (approximately US\$1,740) per year for each awardee for a period up to three years. | Research Grants Council (RGC) of Hong Kong | https://cerg1.ucg.edu.hk/hkpfs/index.html |
| Ireland | | | | | | |
| 10 | Ireland Fellows Programme (IFP) – Vietnam | Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), International Development, and International Education Strategy. | Master's | Full scholarship | Irish Government | https://www.irelandinvietnam.com/all-posts/2022/6/30/ireland-fellows-programme-20232024 |
| Japan | | | | | | |
| 11 | Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship Students | For various fields | Master's and Ph.D. | Full scholarship | Japanese Government | https://jasso.org.vn/hoc-bong-chinh-phu-nhat-ban-mext/ |
| Korea | | | | | | |
| 12 | Korean Government Scholarship Program (Global Korea Scholarship) | For various fields | Master's and Ph.D. | Full scholarship | The Korean Government and NIIED | Study.in.Korea.Comprehensive.Study.Aboard.System.(Study.in.Korea)Study.in.Korea/run.by.Korean.Government |
| 13 | POSCO Asia Fellowship | | Asian students who are applying for Masters or Doctoral Degree | Full scholarship | POSCO TJ Park Foundation | https://www.postf.org/en/main.do |

| # | Name (in alphabet order) | Field | Eligible student year/ Degree | Grant/Benefits | Scholarship Provider | Website |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|--|---------------------------------|---|
| Netherlands | | | | | | |
| 14 | Justus & Louise van Effen Excellence Scholarships for International Students at TU Delft | Many | Master's | Full tuition fees per year for a TU Delft MSc programme based on the statutory fee or institutional rate, according to the registered nationality, AND contribution for the living expenses. | Delft | https://www.tudelft.nl/en/education/practical-matters/scholarships/justus-louise-van-effen-excellence-scholarships/ |
| New Zealand | | | | | | |
| 15 | Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship | Environment and Climate Change, Food Security and Agriculture, Renewable Resource, Public Service | Master's and Ph.D. | Full scholarship | New Zealand Government | https://www.nzscholarships.govt.nz/ |
| Singapore | | | | | | |
| 16 | ASEAN Scholarship | Any field | All level | Fully funded | Ministry of Education Singapore | https://www.moe.gov.sg/financial-matters/awards-scholarships/asean-scholarship |
| 17 | A*STAR | STEM related fields | All years for undergraduate, Master's and PhD | Fully funded | A*STAR | https://www.a-star.edu.sg/Scholarships/overview |
| United Kingdom | | | | | | |
| 18 | Chevening UK Government Scholarship | For Various Fields | Post Graduate Students with 2 years of working environment | Full scholarship | UK Government | https://www.chevening.org/about/contact-us/ |
| 19 | Clarendon | For Various Fields | Masters and Dphil. | Full scholarship | Oxford University | https://www.ox.ac.uk/clarendon |
| 20 | Gates Cambridge Scholarships for International Students | For Various Fields | Master's and PhD | Full scholarship | Cambridge University | http://www.gatescambridge.org/ |
| 21 | UCL Global Masters Scholarships for International Students | In any subject offered at the University | Master's | The scholarship is worth £15,000 and is tenable for one year only unless the full-time programme is 2yrs in length. In that case the scholarship will be paid 50% in each year. | UCL | https://www.ucl.ac.uk/scholarships/ucl-global-masters-scholarship |

| # | Name (in alphabet order) | Field | Eligible student year/ Degree | Grant/Benefits | Scholarship Provider | Website |
|----------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|
| United States | | | | | | |
| 22 | Fulbright US Student Program for Study Abroad | Various fields | Master's | Full scholarship | The U.S. Department of State | https://foreign.fulbrightonline.org/about/foreign-student-program |
| 23 | Harvard University MBA Scholarship | Business Administration | MBA | Tuition fees, travel, and accommodation expenses | Boustany Foundation | Boustany MBA Harvard Scholarship |
| 24 | East-West Center Graduate Degree Fellowship | Various fields, focused on Asia-Pacific | Master's and Ph.D. Degrees | Tuition, stipend, housing, and health insurance | East-West Center | East-West Center |
| 25 | Knight-Hennessy Scholars Program | Any field offered at Stanford | Master's and Ph.D. Degrees | Tuition, stipend, graduate program and related academic expenses | Stanford University | Knight-Hennessy Scholars |
| 26 | New York University Wagner Scholarships | Public Service Leadership | Master's Degree | Partial to full tuition coverage | NYU Wagner | NYU Wagner Scholarships |
| 27 | Yale University Scholarships | Various fields | Master's and Ph.D. Degrees | Full scholarship | Yale University | Yale Financial Aid |



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