



**Habib University**  
shaping futures

# GUIDE TO GRADUATE SCHOOL PLANNING

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**Habib University's step by step guide to graduate school  
planning**

This document is intended for internal use only. Kindly use it as a guideline for your research.

## Contents

HU's Guide to Graduate School Planning .....	1
A stepwise guide to gaining admission for further studies ..	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Introduction .....	3
Timeline.....	3
Deciding on Graduate School .....	5
Tool for Self Evaluation.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Selecting a Region .....	8
Finding programs .....	11
Finding Universities .....	11
Shortlisting Process .....	12
Preparing your Documents .....	13
Transcripts/Degree .....	13
Letter of Motivation.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Thesis Proposal .....	13
Letter of Recommendations.....	14
CV.....	15
Appearing for Standardized Tests .....	15
GRE.....	15
GMAT .....	16
IELTS .....	16
TOEFL.....	16
Actual Application Process .....	17
Frequent Thoughts .....	18
Should I go to graduate school? .....	18
What things matter the most in my application? .....	19
How can the Office of Career Services help me? .....	19
Scholarship Database .....	19

## Introduction

It is completely understandable to feel anxious and nervous about going through another round of applications. There are many factors that need to be considered, many hours need to go into the process and you may be confused about how to approach the whole process. In this guide, we will hope to walk you through the process and what steps you should take to ensure smooth sailing.

Let's approach this in a systematic manner. First, we will outline the timeline that you should vaguely be following, and then we will go through each stage of the process in detail.

**Note: The timeline being created is for students looking for graduate school placement immediately after graduating Habib. If you plan to work for a while, simply follow the same timeline as they are based on time from enrollment date.**

## Timeline

### *Spring of Junior Year*

In your spring semester of junior year, you should start ideating where and what you want to study. This should be followed by perusing specific university options, so that if certain universities have any requirements, you are able to give them in the summer, instead of in your hectic final year.

One of the key things to pay attention to is specific undergraduate requirements, if you are looking to apply for programs that are not entirely building upon your undergraduate degree, then you should plan what courses to take to try to fulfill this requirement. For example, if an SDP graduate wants to do a Masters in Economics, they will need to take a minimum number of courses in mathematics, statistics and economic theory to be eligible. It is ideal that you note these things in the summer so that you are able to take the right courses in your senior year to guarantee admission.

### *Summer before Senior Year*

This is a crucial summer for your preparation. Not only should you be looking at preparing for your GRE/GMAT/IELTS/TOEFL or any other exams, but you should also be looking to do a relevant internship so that you have a stronger profile in your application. This would also help you figure out exactly what you want to do a Master's in. There are Frequent Thoughts at the end and our advice for each of these are given.

### *Fall Semester of Senior Year*

You should have shortlisted 5-6 programs by now. The best way to do this is explained in detail under the shortlisting process below. In certain cases, your application deadlines for many scholarships and programs may be in this semester, be sure that you do not miss any deadlines. Regardless of deadline dates, make sure to have everything ready on your end. The most commonly asked documents are Letter of Recommendations, Motivation Letter, Thesis Proposal, a Writing Sample and Transcript Records. Aside from this, for visa applications, make sure your financial records are in good standing as well.

### *Spring Semester of Senior Year*

A big chunk of your applications would be due in this semester. As there is quite a lot going on in this semester, we advise that everything is sorted before and nothing except for the actual application process should be left to this period. You should start receiving admission offers towards the end of this semester as well and should start planning your visa application.

Here is a timeline of events that the office of career services does in order to better prepare you for graduation school applications.

# GRADUATE STUDIES FACILITATION PROGRAM

## JUNIOR YEAR

LAUNCH OF THE GRADUATE STUDIES FACILITATION PROGRAM	CANADIAN VISA POLICY	US SOUTH ASIAN RECRUITMENT TOUR BRITISH COUNCIL'S STUDY UK WEEK	AEO PAKISTAN AUSTRALIAN OPPORTUNITIES	IELTS INTRODUCTORY SESSION	<b>FALL SEMESTER</b> Experiment new things and gain as much information as possible.
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<b>SPRING SEMESTER</b> Streamline the path of your desired career options.	FACULTY PANEL DISCUSSION ON SCHOLARSHIPS	GEARING UP FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL NEED ASSESSMENT MEETINGS	MENTOR MAPPING FOR GRADUATE STUDIES	COUNSELING MEETINGS FOR ACTION PLANNING	GRE PREPARATION CLASSES
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## SENIOR YEAR

REVIEW YOUR ACTION PLAN	USEFP FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP	PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHOP	FACULTY MENTORING FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS	SUPPORT IN APPLICATION PROCESS	<b>FALL SEMESTER</b> Execute the required steps.
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<b>SPRING SEMESTER</b> Review and finalize your decisions.	GRE /IELTS	INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT IN APPLICATION SUBMISSION	FINALIZING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS	SUPPORT IN DECISION MAKING
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Note: This is not a definitive timeline and may or may not change based on the different factors every year.

## Deciding on Graduate School

The first question you need to ask yourself is; do I know why I want to go for further studies? In most cases, we have, from a young age decided that we would like to do a master's simply to have that added qualification, while that is a good start, you need to figure out whether right now is the right time.

Fore mostly, committing to higher education is a huge investment, in terms of money, time, effort and opportunity cost. Before you embark on this arduous process, you should be sure of what to expect and what you want from graduate school.

**The first question** most students are unsure about is whether they should start graduate school immediately after completing their undergraduate or after working for a few years. Well, there is no clear-cut answer however, the general advice is, if you plan on going into academia, then unless you are working as a research associate, your work experience may not be too relevant. If you are looking to work, then some work experience can be very handy for once you graduate from further studies. Work experience may also be an admission requirement for some graduate school programs.

**The second question** you should think about is, are you completely sure that this is the degree you want to study? This is again, imperative. Since your undergraduate was a liberal arts experience, you may have been exposed to certain things that seem very interesting, and that may have convinced you that this is the degree you want to pursue. What you have to bear in mind is that a graduate studies program leads to a great deal of specialization and rarely will you have the opportunity to work in fields that are significantly separate to your master's degree, unlike your undergraduate. Our advice is, try to do an internship in this field, see if this field is actually, what you believe it to be. Also, try to network with people that hold your ideal job designation, ask them what their responsibilities look like. You can also look up many job descriptions for job postings online; they will often tell you about what key deliverables that future may entail.

So in short, unless you are very confident and driven to go to graduate school, it may be worthwhile to spend some time working beforehand to be better placed to make a decision. Do not simply apply to graduate school as an escape plan.

Perhaps carrying out the following self-evaluation might assist you in identifying where you currently stand and what things you would require more guidance on.

## Tool to Assess your Readiness for Graduate School

Ask yourself the following questions and as per the answers, sort them into the columns given below:

Have I decided what region to go to? want to apply to?	Have I made a shortlist of Universities I
What do I plan to major in? recommendations required?	Are
What are my prospects after graduating? recommendations?	Who will I nominate for my
Do I need to apply for a scholarship? deadlines?	What are the scholarship
What is the application deadline? agreed?	Have my recommenders
Do I need to give any tests? GRE? GMAT?	When do I intend to appear for it?

<b><u>ALREADY CLEAR</u></b>	<b><u>NEED MORE RESEARCH</u></b>	<b><u>HAD NO IDEA THIS WAS REQUIRED</u></b>

Now that you have clearly identified which areas you need to address, you can proceed with specific research. To be in a position to make an informed decision, all these questions should be clear to you. Approaching a counsellor may be beneficial if you are struggling.

## Selecting a Region

In this section, we will outline the various factors you should consider when selecting a region, and how each compares across some of the most popular choices. Specifically, we will be looking at costs, accommodation, education structure, visa and options for staying back as well as working possibilities. In terms of countries, we will be comparing options for UK, US, Canada, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands.



The table is laid out in the next two pages.



	<b>UK</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>
<b>Top 5 Universities</b>	<i>Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, UCL, LSE</i>	<i>Caltech, Stanford, MIT, Princeton, Harvard</i>	<i>U of T, UBC, McGill, McMaster, Montreal</i>	<i>LMU, TUM, Heidelberg, Humboldt, Freiburg</i>	<i>Melbourne, Australian National University, Sydney, Queensland, UNSW</i>	<i>Wageningen, Uni of Amsterdam, Delft, Leiden, Rotterdam</i>
<b>Tuition Costs</b>	30-40 lacs a year. MBA closer to 40.	40-80 lacs, varies largely with university.	Variance by region, from 4 lacs to 60.	Public Universities in all regions except Baden-Wurttemberg charge 40K to 3 lacs a year. BW universities charge 8, private may charge up to 40.	30-50 lacs roughly.	15-40 lacs, some may be up to 60 lacs.
<b>Estimated Living Costs</b>	\$1100 for outside of London. \$1500 roughly for London.	Roughly \$1000	Roughly \$1000	South and West regions will be closer to \$1200, other regions will be cheaper.	Roughly \$1200	Roughly \$1200
<b>Accommodation</b>	Usually require student housing found by self.	Campus housing still offered in less Urban settings	Campus for rural, private option in Urban.	Will have to find by self.	University Accommodations or Private	Campus for rural, private option in Urban.
<b>Education Structure</b>	1-2 years for Masters, 3-4 for Doctoral.	2 year masters, 4-6 for post doc	1-2 year Masters, 3-5 PhDs	2 year masters, 3-5 for PhD.	1-2 Masters, 3-4 PhD.	1-3 years Masters, approx. 4 for PhD
<b>Visa options</b>	Tier 4 Visa.	Requires F-1 Visa.	Study Permit	Student Schengen Visa, later to be converted to residence permit.	Subclass 500 Visa	Student Schengen Visa, later converted to a MVV.
<b>Financing Options</b>	Chevening and Commonwealth are popular. University	Fullbright scholarship. Specific	University or province specific	Daad Scholarship but low likelihood.	Endeavour Scholarship as well as university specific	Holland Scholarship

	specific scholarships exist but tend to be insubstantial.	university-based scholarships.				
<b>Ability to work</b>	Some universities can allow up to 20 hours of work.	Up to 20 hours weekly but usually only on campus.	Off-campus work permit can get up to 20 hours a week.	120 full days or 240 half days.	20 hours a week	16 hours a week
<b>After Graduation</b>	Law currently being changed, expected to be 1 year.	Possibly up to 1 year.	3 months after graduation unless work sponsor is found.	18 months to find job after graduation.	Could stay up to 1.5 years in some cases.	3 months. Could possibly extend for 1 year.
<b>Link for more information</b>	<a href="http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/UK-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf">http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/UK-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf</a>	<a href="http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/USA-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf">http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/USA-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf</a>	<a href="http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Canada-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf">http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Canada-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf</a>	<a href="http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Germany-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf">http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Germany-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf</a>	<a href="http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Australia-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf">http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Australia-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf</a>	<a href="http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Netherlands-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf">http://shaheenpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Netherlands-Country-Profile-TO-UPLOAD.pdf</a>

Ideally, through this table, you would have a better idea of what regions are suitable to you. Remember, you do not need to limit yourself to just one region, however, working with different regions may mean separate timelines, documents, etc. So do not be discouraged, rather be prepared to put in slightly more effort.

It is worth noting that political situations are ever changing, and the ability to work while studying or the ability to stay back after graduation is never a given. Therefore, it is always worth contacting your HU Career Counsellor for updated information about this.

Certain other countries are popular destinations for Pakistani students. Austria and Finland both have none to a negligible tuition fee. Italy and Spain may be more expensive than the earlier two, but are becoming increasingly popular as a quality education can be sought from there, at a fraction of the cost of most Anglo-Saxon regions. Japan and South Korea also boast some top engineering schools. Again, seeing a counsellor can help you gain more information about these regions.

## Finding programs



Once you have decided on a region, the next step is to start identifying what universities and specific programs you would like to do. Let us tackle the first question here: What if I am not sure about what program to study?

This is completely understandable, especially with a degree in Liberal Arts; you would have been exposed to many different areas that you have found interesting. It is completely natural to have maybe up to 2 quite closely related programs that interest you, for example wanting to do a Masters in Finance or a Masters in International Economics. However, if you have more interests or if they are significantly varied, we highly suggest you to work in the field for a little while. This will give you a lot of clarity about what you want to, or just as importantly, what you definitely do not want to do.

The next thing you should do is, think long and hard about whether you know enough about this subject. Maybe you have only taken 3-4 courses in this field; this is generally not enough to be able to commit to this as your future. Do you know what occupations people with this degree undertake? Luckily, most programs will mention this on their own websites. Are these occupations a good fit for you?

Once you know what occupations, the best way of determining whether this is the right choice is reaching out to professionals or other people in your network that have already completed this degree and work in this field. Does this match your expectations and interest?

It is also worth noting, if you are planning to take a hard turn after your undergraduate and pursue further education in something completely different, this may simply not be possible. Remember that when you join a master's program, they expect you to have a relevant undergraduate degree and expect you to already possess a level of mastery over the subject. In many cases, you will simply not fulfill the entrance criteria and may be rejected. In other cases, you may be asked to take some bridging courses to help solidify your learnings on the course. Be sure to pay extra attention to entry requirements if you are planning to go towards a different field.

Once you are able to identify the specific areas that you would be interested in undertaking further studies in, you can start identifying the right universities.

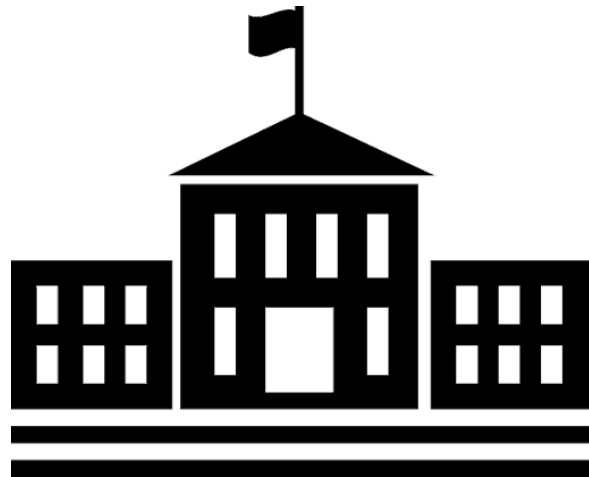
## Finding Universities

Once you have specific programs and regions, this bit becomes a whole lot easier. One of the best tools that you can use for this is *Times' Higher Education's* World University Rankings 2020 ([https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2020/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/stats](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2020/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats)). This will allow you

to explore how your subject ranks in the world, as well as filter by region. This would be a great starting place for you.

Also remember, when applying, think of having a Reach University- one that you probably only have a 25% change to get into. Also, have at least 3 Match Universities- universities that your profile is definitely strong enough to gain admission into. Lastly, you should also have about two Safety Universities, schools that you have very little chance of being rejected by.

If you have managed to fill this by now, then that is very good. However, finding a Safety school might become quite difficult; you will need to get creative while exploring programs. Many of the smaller European countries have only a few dozens of schools offering higher education, so it becomes quite easy. This becomes quite complicated when exploring options in bigger countries like the USA or Germany. In such cases, simply googling your program and the region with the term list can greatly help you. Specific tools for finding schools are also provided below:



USA- <https://www.petersons.com/>

Germany- <https://www.daad.de/deutschland/studienangebote/international-programmes/en/>

European Region- <https://www.mastersportal.com/>

## Shortlisting Process

Throughout this process, it is very useful to be organized. It could become incredibly complicated to follow multiple application requirements with varying deadlines in multiple regions. Therefore, we highly recommend meeting with an HU counselor to declare your intention to apply for a masters. They will then share a google sheet and an action plan with you, where you can start filling in the relevant sections for each program. This will automatically make the whole process systematic, telling you how many recommendations you need, when you need them by, etc. all in one space. At the same time, your counselor would also have access to these so they can check up on your progress as well as ensure accuracy. When filling the sheet, be extra cautious of filling out the deadline dates in a uniform manner, so that you are able to sort your list accordingly, knowing how far each application deadline is from you.

Once all the universities are on the list, going through each specific program's admission requirements you would be able to identify whether you are eligible for these programs. At the same time, you would be able to categorize which of the programs

are at Reach, Match and Safety Universities. Once you have whittled down the list, you can start with preparing the documents you would need for each application.

## Preparing your Documents



Once your shortlisting has been complete, you just need to prepare your documents so that everything is ready to go once the deadlines are near. Let's walk through some of the most commonly asked documents in an application.

### *Transcripts/Degree*

The Registrar Office at HU prepares this. It is worth noting, that in certain scenarios you may be required to get your degrees attested from the relevant government bodies. Please be sure to factor that in when preparing your documents and timelines.

### *Personal Statement*

This is perhaps the document that creates the most anguish for applicants; however, this needs not be the case. A letter of motivation simply states why it is that you are applying to this specific program at this specific university. You should use this opportunity to explain what motivated you to pick this program, that is, how this program helps you achieve your future goals and how you are well qualified to be attending this program. Also, include why in particular this university or faculty motivated you to apply. In order to do this, definitely go through the course catalogue of the program, identifying which courses are of particularly high interest to you, and how undertaking those will help you achieve your professional or academic goals. Look for what elements of the program set it apart, maybe it requires a capstone, maybe the delivery of teaching is different, etc. Try to research published work from different faculty members from that university as well. The more knowledgeable and motivated you appear in this document, the better.

In the simplest of terms, your introduction is where you should try to hook the reader. After that, your first main paragraph should speak about what attracted you to this program, and how it ties in to your academic and professional achievements thus far. The next paragraph should focus on the facilities, faculty, university, etc. The paragraph after that should focus on the specific curriculum of the program, and demonstrate how you are well qualified to be excelling at those classes. Finally, tie the successful completion of your program with your aspirations of what to do once you graduate and then neatly sum this all up in a conclusion.

There are certain pitfalls to avoid. Remember, being verbose is not always a good thing, try to always be near the word count assigned to this section, but do not force it. It is also very important to not simply state facts about the university, or mention finances in this section, or personal beliefs and motivations. Avoid stating stuff like I want to go to this university because it is ranked 12th in the world, or sentences like I am

applying to ETH Zurich because I visited Switzerland as a child. Especially avoid saying I am applying to this German University because it is affordable, or to this Canadian/Australian University because I want to immigrate there afterwards.

Once you have prepared this document, you have quite a few checks and reviews that can be done to fine-tune your work. Firstly, have friends and family review it, see what they think of the document. After that, you can get feedback from counsellors, faculty members and from the writing center as well. Be sure not to implement all the feedback you receive, maintain your authenticity whilst ensuring the advice of professionals is best taken forward.

### *Thesis Proposal*

The thesis proposal is once again, an opportunity to strengthen your application when asked for one. This document simply asks for a proposal of what you think your Master's thesis would be, and this can be non-binding; which is to say that you may later change your Thesis idea entirely, however in very elite schools in the UK this may be binding.

The structure of this document should be as follows: Outline an important issue that you are motivated to investigate, within this; you should present your hypothesis and highlight what anecdotal evidence there is to this hypothesis. Once you have adequately highlighted why this deserves academic attention, cite specific academic papers that discuss this issue- in this case, you may be arguing against those papers by highlighting assumptions that could be invalidated, or you are extrapolating from their idea. Next, you should outline your methodology, how you intend to carry out the relevant research to have sufficient data for proof. You can at this point, suggest what you expect your result to be and why. Most Thesis Proposals tend to be about two pages in length. Make sure you keep sufficient time for this, try discussing your hypothesis with relevant academics, and do not hesitate to email authors of different academic papers with questions.

### *Letter of Recommendations*

The letter of recommendation is not as straightforward as one would imagine. First, decide the right people that would be able to provide this document. If you have held down a full time job, you can also consider getting a professional Letter of Recommendation along with your Academic Letters of recommendation. It is completely common to be asked for between one to three letters of recommendation. When selecting professors, try to pick one that has taught you a higher-level course than a lower level one, that is to say, try to pick someone that taught you an advanced course rather than a freshman one. If possible, pick a professor that has taught you more than one course and knows you personally. If the professor is unable to remember you specifically, then avoid asking them for a letter of recommendation as a vague document defeats the purpose. Finally, make sure that the professor is from a related field to the one you are applying for. Avoid asking your Economics professor for a recommendation for admission to design school.

## Curriculum Vitae (CV)

In certain cases, you could be asked for your CV. Over the course of the Road2Graduation program, we hope that you would have quite a competent CV by now. You have counselors at your disposal to assist you in making your CV more impactful. It is worth noting that if you are applying to Europe, in most cases you will be expected to submit your CV in Europass format (<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/documents/curriculum-vitae>).

## Appearing for Standardized Tests

The other elements of your application will be the submission of certain standardized tests. In this section, we will very briefly go through what tests you may need to appear for and a primer on what they entail.



### GRE

The Graduate Record Exam is perhaps the most popular standardized for competitive entrance examinations at the Graduate Level. This tends to be a requirement for many scholarship programs as well as programs that are more mathematical. Be sure to check your admission requirement to make sure you have appeared for it.

The exam has 3 sections- **Quantitative Reasoning, Verbal Reasoning and Analytical Writing**. The quantitative reasoning and verbal reasoning are graded on a scale of 130-170, while analytical writing is out of 6.

The **Quantitative Reasoning** is basically a math section, similar to about a 101 level mathematics course at most universities. In most cases, a score above 160 should be good enough, however percentile is also a factor, so you should aim for a mid to high 160 score. You can usually find a bandwidth or interquartile range for what scores are accepted by each program.

The **Verbal Reasoning** is similar to the English section of the SATs, but perhaps slightly more advanced. A score in this is usually not as important as the score in the Quantitative section.

Finally, **Analytical Writing** judges an individual's ability to argue and critique arguments. This section is quite difficult, and getting a score above 4 may seem challenging, but could be quite important especially since most graduate programs would require the submission of a thesis.

The test is held almost every working day, so finding a seat is not usually difficult. It is held at two branches when giving the computer based one, of which the one near I. I. Chundrigarh Road is more popular. The GRE test costs \$205 currently and it is valid for 5 years but, before your scores are displayed, you can cancel the test if you feel you have done poorly, and reappear for the test after a period of 16 days, up to a

maximum of 5 times in a year. Once you cancel your test, you will not be told your score and will not have the option of going back to. Many students will cancel a test simply because they feel they have not done well enough, this can often be a mistake.

## GMAT

The Graduate Management Assessment Test is quite similar to the GRE, however, more focused towards people going for Business Schools. A good score at the GMAT will definitely go a long way in your application; given HU students do not have the option of taking too many Business Related Courses.

The test sections are similar to that of the GRE, with Analytical Writing being scored out of 6, Quantitative Reasoning with a scaled score of between 200 and 800, and Verbal Reasoning with the same scaled score. There is one additional section here, Integrated Reasoning, which tests your graphical and table interpretation skills, scored out of 8.

This time round, all sections, specially the Integrated Reasoning one is quite important. A score above 600 in both sections is considered above average, with a score of 4 and 6 in Analytical Writing and Integrated Reasoning quite decent.

The test is valid for five years from the date you took the test. The test center for the GMAT is conveniently in Gulistan-e-Jauhar, with the test available on all working days, and costs \$250 currently. Also worth noting is that you can cancel your score within 2 minutes of receiving it, and would have the opportunity to appear for the exam again after at least 16 days for free (as per rules on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019, subject to change). If you have the luxury of time, you could possibly consider cancelling your scores, however, once cancelled you may not be able to retrieve these scores.

## IELTS

The International English Language Testing System is one of the ways of proving proficiency in the English Language to Universities where the language of instruction is in English. The IELTS is usually preferred as opposed to TOEFL in Canada, UK and Ireland, although most places will accept both.

The IELTS has 4 sections, Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing, with each section being scored out of a 9. You will also be given an overall score based on your performance in each of these sections. Most universities would want you to have a score of about 7 overall, with no section getting below a 7 individually either.

The IELTS currently costs about Rs.30,290 currently (prices change) and can be given either paper-based or computer based. You can choose to give it at AEO in Clifton which will have your scores ready in about a week, or alternatively at the British Council which can take about 3 weeks. Be sure to register for the Academic Test instead of the General one. The score will remain valid for 2 years.

## TOEFL

The Test of English as a Foreign Language is the other popular option for English Proficiency. It tends to be more popular in the US, mainland Europe and the Antipodes.



The TOEFL also has the same 4 sections as the IELTS, however, is scored out of 30, giving a total score of 120. Most universities would want a score above 80 to prove proficiency.

The TOEFL costs \$195 currently and is administered at two locations (same as GRE as they are both owned by ETS), one in Tariq Road and the other near I.I. Chundrigarh road. The test is held almost every Saturday, and a few extra seatings may be held on other days of a month too. The results are available about 2 weeks after appearance, and will be valid for 2 years.

## Actual Application Process



As difficult as it may seem, once you have all the documents ready, actually applying is as easy as sending a letter in the post or filling out details when online shopping. You will likely encounter 4 different possibilities of the application process: **postal, centralized online, specific online and a hybrid.**

By **postal**, it is meant that the entire application process needs to be sent through post. In such cases, you will need to print out your application form, fill it by hand, and send it by post alongside your supporting documents. This may seem historic, but traditional universities such as the University of Heidelberg still adopt this mechanism. The clear disadvantage of this method is you would need a whole set of copies for each application, as well as postal charges. At this point, based on experience, we would recommend avoiding Pakistan Post, despite it being considerably cheaper. Yes, they do have a tracking system and yes, people say that their systems have improved, but their tracking system only operates until it reaches their partner and will often disappear after that. Further, it is still slower and less reliable than private options such as TCS, DHL, Leopards, OCS and all other logistic services.

The second type of system is a **centralized online application portal**. This means that you can apply to numerous programs at different universities from one portal. Examples of this is Uni-assist for applying to Germany and universityadmissions.se for Sweden. The notable advantage of this is that you can apply to many programs by simply uploading your documents at one place. However, you should be prepared with your credit card to pay for each additional application and that you may possibly be asked to rank your preferences.

The next type of system is a **specific online portal**. One that is created by an individual university, specifically to apply to them. This type is most commonplace across the world. The greatest advantage is that you may customize your application, and make your letter of motivation very specific. However, this obviously requires a lot more effort of getting familiar with each separate university website.

Finally, a **hybrid system** is one that is partially completed online, with the other part submitted through post. Often, you will need to print a confirmation and submit the rest of your packet through post, which may prove to be the most expensive method.

Beyond the different methods of applying, there is no real advice that can be given at this point. Most of the applications are quite straightforward, clearly asking for specific answers. If at any point you are struggling, please visit your counsellor. Similarly, each university would have given the contact address of a program coordinator, who would be more than willing to assist you along your application. Do not hesitate to use these resources. Try to fill out your application as honestly as possible, as failure to do so may result in your application being voided.

You can peruse some of the videos created by the Office of Career Services that walk you through some of these application processes for further details. You can also request a counselor to accompany you while you fill out an application to ensure accuracy.

## Frequent Thoughts

### *Should I go to graduate school?*

Before you apply to a graduate program, ask yourself why you want to go. Postgraduate education is not an alternative to getting a job, nor can you be certain that your advanced degree will increase your earning power. It's much easier to write a resume and get a job than you might think. In fact, if you fear that the real world is going to be difficult and terrifying, the best thing you can do for yourself is jump right in and get an internship or some other kind of work experience. If you need assistance, ask a Career Counselor for help. If you do not need a graduate or professional education to reach your eventual career goal, why spend the time and money required to earn it when you'd be better served by obtaining hands-on work experience?

Graduate schools will want to know that you are focused and serious about the field. Delaying graduate school for a year or two while you gain related experience is a great way to demonstrate your commitment. Let your passion for learning more about a subject drive your decision to apply.

On the other hand, if your career goal requires you to study a particular field in greater depth than an undergraduate education allows, or you need an advanced degree to reach your eventual career goal, then a graduate program it is. Also, if you are driven to attain an advanced degree simply for the joy of learning, go for it!

### Reasons Not to Go to Graduate School

- You do not know what else to do.
- People whom you respect went, so it seems like a good idea.
- You have only a general idea of your field of interest.
- Pressure from family, friends, peers or others.

### *What things matter the most in my application?*

Although this will vary across different institutions or programs, the following are the most important:

Typically, the criteria for admission into a graduate program are as follows:

1. Satisfactory undergraduate GPA and success in relevant courses (varies);
2. High admission test scores (varies);
3. Detailed letters of recommendation (2-3);
4. A well-written admissions essay or personal statement;
5. A strong personal interview (required by some programs).

### *How can the Office of Career Services help me?*

Throughout your application process, counsellors at the Office of Career Services are readily available at your disposal. At any stage, feel free to reach out to them for guidance, advice, review of documents or assistance in filling out the applications themselves. You are also encouraged to attend any of the specific events hosted by the OCS for those interested in graduate school. You can see a layout of the events the OCS carries out for graduate school preparation in the appendix.

Aside from the OCS, you have other resources to assist you as well. Remember, our faculty members have very diverse academic backgrounds, graduating from different regions having studied many different subjects. You can always request for an appointment to ask them for help or possibly get them to mentor you through the Faculty Mentoring Program.

The OCS is developing many tools and resources as well, such as the guide that you are currently reading. These tools are intended to guide you and assist you. You can find numerous other tools online as well as on the Office of Career Services' website.

## **Scholarship Database**

The scholarship database is available at the Office of Career Services and was compiled by Mr. Rizwan Ahmed, Registrar of Barrett Hodgson University. All rights and credits are to him. This work has simply been reproduced as a guideline for further research.