

Faculty Perspective: Graduate Admissions

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Disclaimer: the following presentation is based on my perspective as a member of the admissions committee in MSE and AS&T at Berkeley.

Graduate Admissions: the review process

Admissions committee goals

- **Maintain highest standards of scholarship**
- **Admit applicants who will succeed in grad school**
- **Meet research needs of faculty and department**
- **Recruit for potential added value (fellowships)**
- **Diversify student body**

Graduate Admissions: the review process

Application review

- **Identify "strongest candidates"**
 - academic record (grades, GRE scores)
 - letters
 - research, publications, other activities (statements)
- **Rank applications based on strength**
- **Perform full review of applications**
- **Admit "top" applicants—keeping balanced pool**

Graduate Application

- **Grades—upper division, major, junior year**
higher is better
- **Exam scores—impact is no longer clear**
- **Letters of recommendation—a key intangible**
- **Statement(s)—can't make but can break**

Graduate Admissions: setting the record straight

- **Admission to Univ. A does not mean admission to Univ. B**
- **Admissions process differs even within Univ. A**
- **Academic excellence does not guarantee admission—reviewers seek the best matches**
- **Research experience rarely trumps academic excellence**
- **Money/funding can make a difference—having a fellowship is a major plus**
- **Hardship does not justify underperformance**

Don't take it personally!

Graduate Admissions: some recommendations

- **Plan ahead (prepare for exams, investigate programs, seek advice)**
- **Write to your audience (e.g., faculty reviewers at Univ. A)**
- **Choose your letter writers wisely**
- **Apply for fellowships**
- **Apply to a wide range of programs (tiers 1 and 2)**
- **Be responsive even if we may not be**
- **Visit schools**