

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## **What is the deadline for submitting an application?**

The deadline for applications for all students is December 15. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their materials well in advance of the deadline. Late applications will not be considered.

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## **How do I know if my application is complete?**

Go to the [Application Status Check](#) to manage your application materials.

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## **How high do my GPA and GRE scores need to be?**

Students admitted to our program generally have high GPAs and GRE scores, but we have no minimum requirement for either measurement. The admissions committee evaluates each application on its total merits, and GPA and GRE scores are only two of several factors that are considered. Low GPA and/or GRE scores will not automatically disqualify applicants from admission. Likewise, high marks on either or both does not guarantee a successful application.

As a guide, applicants admitted to graduate programs in Liberal Arts at UT-Austin in 2009 averaged a 3.76 GPA and a 610 verbal GRE score. The Graduate School does not admit students with a GPA below 3.0 in upper-division work (junior- and senior-level courses) and in any graduate work already completed. The Department requires only the standard GRE, not any specific subject test. GRE scores should not be more than 5 years old.

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## **Is a prior degree in Religious Studies (B.A. or M.A.) required to apply to the program?**

No. The interdisciplinary nature of Religious Studies attracts students with diverse intellectual backgrounds and academic training. Although a B.A. or M.A. in Religious Studies is of obvious benefit, many qualified applicants will have studied topics or themes in religion through degree programs in related disciplines such as History, Classics, Anthropology, English, Sociology, Art History, or one of the area studies such as American Studies, Asian Studies, Islamic Studies, Latin American Studies, Jewish Studies, etc. In general, prior study at the undergraduate or graduate level on topics within the applicant's area of concentration (regardless of specific degree) is preferred.

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## **What foreign language skills are required for admission?**

Foreign language requirements vary according to the area of concentration. In general, it is expected that applicants be well on their way to proficiency in one or more of the languages required for research in their area. Please read carefully the language requirements for your specific area of concentration.

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**Does the Department offer a terminal M.A.?**

We do not admit students for a terminal M.A. It is expected that all students admitted to the program will work towards doctoral degrees. Students admitted to the Ph.D. program with only a Bachelor's degree will obtain the M.A. as the first step towards completion of the Ph.D.

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**I already have an M.A. from another institution. How many hours will transfer towards the Ph.D.?**

Students entering the Ph.D. program with an M.A. from another institution can petition to have a maximum of six hours transferred toward the Ph.D. Transfer coursework cannot be used to substitute for the following courses: R S 383M Theory and Method in the Study of Religion and R S 384D Doctoral Seminar in Religious Studies.

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**What should I include in the Statement of Purpose?**

The Statement of Purpose provides you with the opportunity to introduce your intellectual interests to us. We would like to know about your past academic work and the topics and problems you wish to investigate in graduate school. We want to see that you write well and think clearly, and that your interests are a good fit for our department. A statement of one to two pages in length (approximately 700 words) is considered normal.

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**What should the topic of the writing sample be?**

There are no restrictions or specifications on the topic of your writing sample, though an academic paper on a topic in Religious Studies or a related field in the Humanities is preferred. The sample should reflect favorably on your writing and analytical skills and demonstrate the intellectual capacity to do excellent scholarly work. It should be no longer than 20 pages double-spaced.

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**What funding possibilities are available?**

Funding opportunities in the form of fellowships, Teaching Assistant positions, and Graduate Research Assistant positions are available for graduate students. Each applicant is automatically considered for all applicable funding available through our department and the University. We expect to give most students multi-year award packages. Funding offers are made along with offers of admission. No separate application for funding is required.

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**When will I be notified of the decision on my application?**

Admissions decisions are released in late February or early March. As soon as a decision is reached, it will appear on the Application Status Check.

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