

Demystifying Clinical Admissions: Factors that Drive Admissions Decisions and Tips for Success

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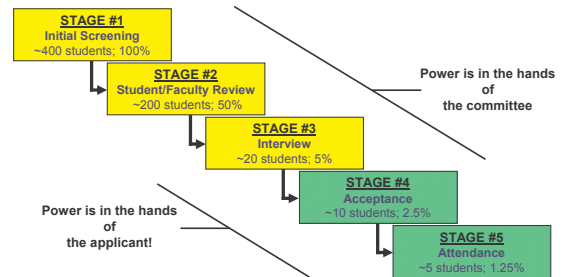
Admissions Criteria

- GPA and GRE Scores
- Research Experience
- Recommendation Letters
- Personal Statement
- Congruence of Application Package
- Goodness of Fit with Program
- Level of Motivation
- Personal Maturity (especially important for clinical area)

Take-Away Message

- **Most common question:**
 - “What is the most important element in the admissions process?”
- **My answer:**
 - Admissions criteria are differentially important as a function of the stages in the admissions process

Stages of the Admissions Process



STAGE #1 Initial Screening ~400 students; 100%

Linear Cutoff Approach

- Sum of applicant's GRE scores is divided by the number of GRE scores. This figure is then divided by 100. Finally, the resulting number is added to the overall undergrad GPA to create a linear combination (LC).

Example

GPA: 3.50; GREs: 660, 720, and 720

$$LC = GPA + \left(\frac{GRE_V + GRE_Q + GRE_A}{3} \right) / 100$$

$$LC = 3.50 + \left(\frac{660 + 720 + 720}{3} \right) / 100$$

$$LC = 3.50 + 7.00$$

$$LC = 10.50 \text{ (so this student passes Stage \#1)}$$

Cutoff Criteria

- 10.0 for Clinical Applicants
- 9.5 for Other Applicants

Order of Importance

1. GPA and GRE Scores

Irrelevant Criteria

- Research Experience
- Recommendation Letters
- Personal Statement
- Congruence of Application Package
- Goodness of Fit with Program
- Level of Motivation
- Personal Maturity

STAGE #2 Student/Faculty Review ~200 students; 50%

- Applications reviewed by the primary faculty member and by two grad students

- All apps ranked on 1-5 scale:

1. Future Nobel Prize Winner
2. Really Exceptional
3. Very Good
4. Fair/Good
5. Not Suitable for Grad School

- Rankings then averaged across the three readers to see which applicants advance to the interview stage of the process

Order of Importance

1. Goodness of Fit with Program
2. Personal Statement
3. Research Experience
4. Recommendation Letters
5. GPA and GRE Scores
6. Level of Motivation
7. Personal Maturity

Irrelevant Criteria

- None

STAGE #2
Student/Faculty Review
~200 students; 50%

“Congruence of the Application Package”

- **Elements of the Application Package**
 - Personal statement, stated goals/interests within the personal statement, courses taken, research experience, publications/presentations, reference letters, and statement of with whom you want to work
- **Statement of Purpose**
 - Provides the reader with a framework that he/she will use to interpret all other information
 - Chance to convey your story
- **Goals for Packaging Yourself and Spinning Your Story**
 - Make sure the elements in your application package come together to form a coherent story about your academic history, your strengths, and your current professional interests
 - Make sure all of the elements help to corroborate your story

STAGE #3
Interview
~20 students; 5%

- Applicants meet with two faculty members and one grad student
- Applicants rated on a 1-5 scale, from *Inadequate* to *Outstanding*, on the following characteristics:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Level of Motivation – Clinical Training Potential – Scientific Curiosity – Realistic Expectations – Goodness of Fit – Interest in Program – Professional Compatibility – Overall Rating 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goodness of Fit with Program 2. Personal Maturity 3. Research Experience 4. Level of Motivation 5. Congruence of Application Package 6. Personal Statement 7. Recommendation Letters 8. GPA and GRE Scores
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Order of Importance

- **Irrelevant Criteria**
 - None

STAGE #4
Acceptance
~10 students; 2.5%

- Committee aims to maximize successful bids by offering admissions to those likely to accept
- After distributing admissions offers, power transfers from the admissions committee to the applicant
- Faculty and their graduate students court applicants
 - Campus visits, emails, and phone calls
- Individuals on the waiting list may be sent offers if initial offers decline

STAGE #5
Attendance
~5 students; 1.25%

- Decisions to attend a particular school may depend on:
 - Perceived match with faculty advisor
 - Perceived match with grad students
 - Perceived match with culture of the department and/or university
 - Geographical preference
 - Other personal factors (e.g., partner’s plans)

Are You a Competitive Applicant?

Ranges for top 15 Ph.D. programs in Clinical Psychology:

GPA Range
3.60-3.75

GRE Range
Verbal: 600-675; Quantitative: 690-730; Analytic: 700-740

Years of Research Experience
2.5-4.0 years (within proposed area of study)

Top Five Pitfalls!

- 5) GPA + GRE don't make the linear cutoff
- 4) Poor program / applicant match
- 3) Unclear or incoherent statement of purpose
... or, the “personal, clinical history” essay
- 2) “Skimpy” reference letters (i.e., limited scope)
- 1) Appearing unserious and/or immature

Top Five Tips for Getting in!

5. Maximize number of applications, but don't overextend
4. Maintain a strong GPA; score well on the GRE
3. Gain hands-on experience conducting research; show that you have contributed significantly to projects
2. Secure strong recommendation letters that will speak broadly to your many strengths and skills
1. NETWORK!! Contact professors you want to work with, contact their friends, contact their graduate students!!



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