Frequently Asked Questions

**GENERAL FAQ for Master of Science Students**

**Q:** When will you begin offering a Master of Science (MS) degree in Biomedical & Translational Science?

**A:** Beginning with this upcoming year (2012/13 academic year), we will begin accepting applications for MS academic research degree students who wish to enroll during Fall 2012. UC Irvine also currently offers a number of other Master of Science degrees in number of related medical and biological science disciplines. For more info on available UC Irvine MS degree programs, click here.

**Q:** What are your minimum requirements for my GPA?

**A:** All ten campuses of the University of California require that applicants to our graduate degree program have a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA upon completing their undergraduate degree. If a student subsequently completes graduate level work with a higher GPA, exceptions may be considered.

**Q:** What standardized test scores are required to be submitted as part of my application?

**A:** The Admission Committee will accept test scores from either the Graduate Records Exam® (GRE®) exam or the Medical College Admission Test® (MCAT®). Any similar standardized graduate school exam MAY be accepted, but only with prior exceptional approval from the MS-BATS Program Administrator. This exception must be obtained by the applicant prior to submitting their application.
Q: What are the minimum scores necessary for my GRE General Test and Subject Test?

A: There are NO minimum GRE, MCAT or related scores that represent a ‘cut-off’ whereby an applicant would automatically be denied admission by the Admission Committee. Also, the GRE scores of other applicants applying for the same enrollment date as you can vary from year to year. Obviously scores need to be competitive with others in your applicant cohort, but all scores are considered by the Admission Committee. We will not know how this year’s applicant cohort performed on their exams until late January. Reminder: Application files are evaluated by our faculty with a holistic review and assessment approach.

A GRE subject test is NOT required for application. However, if you have a level of proficiency in a particular subject that you would like to demonstrate via GRE Subject Test(s), then your score will certainly be considered as part of your application file is provided.

Q: Do I need to select a faculty advisor before I can apply to your program?

A: NO, you do not have to find a UCI faculty advisor in order to apply to our program. This would indeed be problematic for most applicants. However, it is important that you've reviewed the research interest of our faculty (See: http://www.som.uci.edu/departments_programs.asp) so you can ascertain whether or not your interests line up with the expertise of our existing faculty. If you have specific questions for a particular faculty person in the program regarding the overlap of your SPECIFIC research interest and theirs, you should send them an email to clarify. Most of our individual faculty are very responsive. Please do NOT contact individual faculty regarding funding matters, admission status or other general issues related to your application.

Q: How many applicants do you expect to admit for this upcoming academic year?

A: There is no ‘quota’ for admits per se. The faculty is looking to admit the highest caliber of students who are prepared to meet the high standards for graduate studies at the University of California.
Q: When should I inform your program of my intention to apply to your program?

A: It is very helpful if we can begin the communication process between the university and the applicant in parallel with your efforts in completing UCI’s online application requirements and process. This allows us to know of your interest, send you any additional information or updates that might arise, tell you which documents we have received and/or which are still missing, address any issues specific to your background, etc. To indicate your initial interest, we ask that you email or US Mail a copy of your CV to Francine Jeffrey at the address located at the bottom of this FAQ document. Also, if you are from out of the area, but have plans to visit southern California in the next few months, please let us know.

Q: What do I need to do to submit an application to your MS degree program?

A: Full information about the Biomedical & Translational Science MS degree program, including instructions for submitting a complete application, is detailed on our website here.

Q: What is the application deadline for those expecting to enroll during Fall Quarter, 2012?

A: There are two admission cycles for students expecting to enroll during the Fall Quarter of 2012. The first application deadline for the MS program in Biomedical & Translational Science is Noon (PST) on Tuesday - January 17, 2012. The completed application, payment of the application fee and all supporting documents are required to be submitted by this date. If you are having a problem meeting this first deadline, you should contact Francine Jeffrey before Jan 10th to discuss the problem. Applicants who meet this first January 17th deadline will be notified of their admission status prior to April 10th.

The second application deadline for the MS program in Biomedical & Translational Science is Noon (PST) on March 15th, 2012. The completed application, payment of the application fee and all supporting documents are required to be submitted by this date. If you are unable to meet this deadline, you should contact Francine Jeffrey before March 10th to discuss the problem. Applicants who missed the first application deadline, but meet this second deadline of March 15th, will be notified of their admission status prior to June 1st.

Special note: The traditional January 15th deadline will be extended to January 17th for 2012 only as University Offices will be closed January 14th, 15th and 16th.
Q: I noticed that the online application provides an option for either full-time study or part-time study. Can I apply for part-time study?

A: NO. The MS program in Biomedical & Translational Science is a full-time program. Part-time study is not an option for the MS Program in Biomedical & Translational Science at this time.

Q: When I create my online application account, will I be required to complete the full application during that one session?

A: NO! It would be almost impossible to complete the application in one sitting. We strongly recommended that you go ahead and set up an application account now. This has many advantages. You will be able to see firsthand what information is required of you, what documents you may need to order or otherwise request, what information you may need to collect, etc. You can also work on it at your convenience, as the system is designed to save any info you have entered. You can access your application, logout and login to access your online application again and as many times as you wish. The application will remain unprocessed until you feel you have completed it, PAID the application fee and hit the submit button.

Q: Which elements of the application are most important?

A: Application files are evaluated by our faculty with a holistic review and assessment approach. A broad diversity of applicant backgrounds is quite common and thus, all applications and associated elements of their applications are carefully reviewed. Thus, ALL the elements of your application are very important. The core features of our students is that they have strong academic records, have earned the respect of other faculty/post-doc researchers as demonstrated through their letters of recommendation, and have expressed a clear vision via their personal statement & statement of purpose.
Q: Where should I tell others to send my original transcripts and letters of recommendations if my recommenders do not want to use UCI’s on-line option to submit letters?

A: Please mail (e.g., USPS, FedEx or Intercampus) all paper documents such as official transcripts, paper letters of recommendation, test scores, publications and the like. Any ‘Paper’ documents should be sent directly to Francine Jeffrey (address at bottom of this FAQ document) as soon as they become available to you. Official transcripts may only be sent to us directly from the granting institution. We will create an applicant file on you and we will retain any documents received prior to the completion and transmittal of your on-line application. If your letter writers do plan to send us a paper letter, then you MUST provide them with the 2-page paper waiver form that you will download, complete, sign and provide to each of your letter writers as they must attach this waiver form to their original letter of recommendation printed on their institutional letterhead with their original signature.

For students who received a graduate degree from UC Irvine, your transcripts or letters may already be on file. If you believe this to be you situation, then you may contact the program office for a determination of which of these two types of documents may or may not be required.

Q: Can I just wait to have my supporting documents sent in after I have completed my on-line application?

A: This is not a good tactic and this approach is not in your best interest! In fact, we strongly encourage you not to wait until you submit your completed application. By waiting to submit supporting documents, you run the risk of depending on someone else to do their part in a timely manner so that you meet the strict January 17th deadline (a Tuesday for 2012) to ensure you have a completed application including all required supporting documents. It is unfortunate when some needed document gets to us too late to consider; e.g., letters from faculty recommenders who may need large lead times to fulfill your request of them, missing college transcripts, etc. Common sense would suggest that if you are dependent on someone else to complete their part of your application materials, the prudent approach would be to ask them early and often. Consider requesting that others submit any required paper documents to UC Irvine BEFORE the end-of-year holidays since many faculty become less available between mid-December and mid-January. Some applicants have sent requests to four (4) LOR writers to be safe. This is acceptable if you desire, although only three (3) LORs can be submitted on-line. Any others would need to be submitted by mail with UCI’s LOR form attached This ‘extra letter’ approach is taken by some applicants to provide them with a safeguard should one of their writers fail to get their letter submitted and received by UC Irvine before the application deadline.

Of course, if you choose to apply by the secondary ‘late-notification’ deadline in mid-March, then all of your supporting documents would need to be received by the date of this secondary deadline.
Q: Should I request the testing organizer to send my GRE, MCAT or other similar graduate exam scores to the Biomedical & Translational Science office or to the central UCI Graduate Division?

A: For those tests that are given by Educational Testing Service (ETS), please request to have your test scores, TOEFL and/or TSE scores to be electronically transmitted directly by the testing service (ETS) to UC Irvine’s Graduate Division. To send an official ETS test score to UCI, please select UC Irvine’s institution code R 4859 and department code 0609 if requested. Minimum TOEFL and TSE scores are provided in Appendix I. There are no minimum GRE, MCAT, etc. scores per se, but applicants need to be competitive.

Q: What if I took the IELTS administered test instead of the ETS administered test?

A: For applicants taking exams in foreign countries, there is no problem with you submitting to us your International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores instead of ETS’ TOEFL and/or TSE scores. They are similar English proficiency exams administered by different organizations and UC Irvine accepts both equally. If you are able to request that your scores to be transmitted to UC Irvine electronically, you may do so. If you cannot make this request to IELTS for whatever reasons, you can request IELTS to directly mail your official results to us at the address given at the end of this FAQ document. UC Irvine is a registered institution with IELTS and, using identification information on your report; we will access their online verification service to verify scores on your report. Minimum IELTS band scores are provided in Appendix I.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Q: One of the individuals who I requested a letter of recommendation from does not want to submit his/her letter via your on-line procedure. Is there another option?

A: YES. Letter writers may submit ‘paper’ letters of recommendation (LOR). However, they must complete and return the requisite 2-page UCI LOR form (which you will need to complete and provide them) along with their written recommendation on their institutional letterhead. Otherwise, the letter will not be forwarded to the admission committee. Complete instructions are on the downloadable form. Instructions and the necessary forms can be downloaded directly from our website at: http://www.grad.uci.edu/admissions/applying-to-uci/letters-recommendation.html. In cases of paper letters, MAKE CERTAIN that you provide the writer with a signed waiver form to be attached to their letter before they mail it to us.
Q: The online application instructions state that LOR writers cannot access the online LOR system and submit their LOR until I've completed and submitted my sections of the online application, which is also when my “Application Number” is assigned to me. How can I have LOR writers submit online letters before I complete my application? Is there a way to get around this in light of the above FAQ answer?

A: Yes and No. Technically, LOR writers cannot submit their recommendations via the online LOR system until you have officially submitted your application, paid your application fee and received confirmation that will include your personal application number that you will need to provide your writers for online submission of your LOR. You have two good options:

1) You can ask your letter writers to go ahead and write their letters in parallel to your completion of your online application. With this approach, they will be prepared to quickly authenticate their identity and upload their letter quickly as soon as you notify them of your application number. FYI, if they intend to submit their letter via the online LOR system, there is no need for them to take time to format a formal letter on their letterhead since the online LOR submission system they access only has a section (plain text box) where they will cut and paste the narrative of their LOR. Unlike some online LOR systems, the UCI system does not accept actual document file uploads, e.g., a .pdf or .doc file; only ‘plain text’ is available. The other parts of the online LOR information requested of your LOR writers mirrors the paper LOR form that must accompany any paper letters (see below) an applicant’s LOR writer might submit.

OR.

2) You can supply each of your LOR writers with a printout of UC Irvine’s LOR Form available on the Grad Division website and have them submit their paper LOR along with the completed paper LOR form previously mentioned above. Both you and then your LOR writer must complete and sign this 2-page form with the paper LOR writer to returning the documents directly to the BATS Program Director at the address provided at the end of this FAQ document. You might seriously consider this option if the LOR writer is expected to be out-of-town or they are otherwise unable to submit an LOR via the online LOR system. Paper letters can be mailed directly to the department at any time (prior to 01/17/2012) since we will match it up to your departmental file by your name and not your application #. The MS-BATS Admission Committee has no preference as to the format of LORs they receive. Both paper and online submissions are equally fine.

Q: My Letters of Recommendation are on file with my school’s LOR repository service or with a confidential third party credential file management (dossier) service. What should I do? They say they cannot do online submissions?

A: In this particular situation, the batch of paper LORs, waiver notification and the service’s cover letter must be physically mailed (e.g., USPS, FedEx, etc.) by the service directly to the UCI Biomedical and Translational Science program at the physical address below. It is important to double-check that the service will provide us with your signed waiver of LOR access as part of your letters file. A standard waiver form from the service will likely be acceptable only if the waiver language is roughly the same as the UC Irvine waiver form. However, if a non-UC Irvine waiver form is sent to us by your service, then you must complete and sign your section of the UCI LOR form, specify the name, etc. of the service you are using and then submit the completed form directly to the BATS program ASAP.
Q: What is the purpose of the 3 required “Letters of Recommendation (LOR)”?  

**A**: With LOR’s, our faculty want to read what other faculty candidly think of a student’s potential for doctoral studies at a major research university like UC Irvine. Therefore, it is important that the faculty recommender, or researcher, has worked somewhat closely with you and can comment as to your potential as an academic researcher as well as attest as to your character as a person. A faculty letter simply stating that they had you in a class and stating the grade you got in that class would be an example of a redundant and relatively unhelpful letter. Courses taken and grades are already available via your transcripts.

Q: Should I sign the LOR waiver section? Do I have the choice of not signing the waiver?  

**A**: Please review the LOR waiver form located on the UCI Graduate Division website for the university’s official guidance which provides more detail. Briefly, the section you reference is a legally binding waiver addressing your individual rights. You are making a personal choice as to whether you do or do not wish to waive your legal right to view a particular LOR after it is submitted by your LOR writer. The choice is solely yours to decide. When an Admission Committee receives a LOR where the applicant has specifically waived their right to review a LOR, and the LOR writer was informed of this decision, then the committee can be reasonably certain that the writer felt free to express whatever they deemed pertinent to the Admission Committee’s confidential deliberations.

**IMPORTANT**: Regardless of whether you waive your right of access to a particular letter of recommendation or not, YOU MUST ALWAYS SIGN, and forward the 2-page LOR form, to your letter writers who will complete their part and forward all documents directly to us.

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**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FAQ**

Q: What is the purpose of the required personal “Statement of Purpose”?  

**A**: The Statement of Purpose should ideally be 1 - 3 pages, single spaced, in length. It is expected to provide important guidance to the MS-BATS Admission Committee when making decisions. This essay is your creation and needs to convey to the faculty of the admission committee your academic background, where you are headed and how this degree program is expected to get you there. It is very important! You should have some vision as to what you are trying to accomplish and as much focus in that vision as possible. For example, you should address questions like "How the strengths of the MS-BATS program faculty (by name if possible) at UCI match your specific academic plan and/or research interests?"
Additional items you may want to consider addressing if appropriate are:

- Your overall purpose in pursuing this advanced degree.
- Any area of study in which you wish to specialize, if known.
- Your intended future use of your graduate education.
- Any special preparation and fitness for study you possess in a related field such as: medicine, biostatistics, healthcare and the basic sciences.
- State any special conditions that are not revealed elsewhere in the application, such as a significant workload outside of school that would make it difficult to pursue full-time studies.
- Any problems or inconsistencies in your records or scores, such as a bad quarter reflected on your transcript, that you would like to add additional information to be considered during its evaluation.
- Any information about you as a person that would be helpful for us to know.
- Your reasons for wanting to attend UC and the Irvine campus in particular?

Also, if you do a Google search, you can find links to various sources that may provide useful advice when writing a clear statement of your purpose for grad schools.

**PERSONAL HISTORY FAQ**

Q: What is the purpose of the “Personal History” section? How is it different from the “Statement of Purpose” section?

A: The Personal History essay provides information to the Admission Committee that you believe is important for the committee to be aware of, but not otherwise obvious and not addressed in your Statement of Purpose essay. The length of this personal essay should ideally be one or two single spaced, 12pt. pages at most. Think of the Personal History statement as providing the link between one’s "personal life and past" with their “career and future” as addressed in the Statement of Purpose essay. It is your creation and should address, as appropriate, anything in your life that is integral to your course of studies in the MS degree program in biomedical & translational science and/or attendance at UC Irvine specifically. The following are provided merely as examples of the type of information that may be relevant to your Personal History statement:

- An applicant may want to discuss how your personal background informs your current decision to pursue this graduate degree. This might include any educational, cultural, economic, family or other social experiences, challenges, or opportunities relevant to your academic journey.

- An applicant may want to briefly discuss any academic rough areas reflected in their past quantitative measurements of their academic performance. As examples only, an applicant may have had an especially rough semester where there was a break in their student status; their GPA was poor or a GRE score that might be unusual.

- Applicants may want to share how your scholarly interests intersect with your personal history.
• An applicant may wish to describe how they might contribute to social or cultural diversity within their chosen field and/or how they might serve educationally underrepresented segments of society with their degree.

• An applicant may want to disclose any special financial arrangements they have made in preparation of their graduate studies here at UC Irvine; i.e., a fellowship/scholarship they have been awarded, their participation in a program sponsored by their home country that is to provide all or part of the funds they will need to study and live here, pre-arranged housing while studying at UC Irvine, etc.

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**FINANCIAL ($$) FAQ**

**Q:** How is funding handled in your program? Which funding opportunities should I check on the application?

**A:** In most cases, MS-BATS students will be expected to pay for their education from personal resources, student financial aid or extramural fellowships that the student may individually apply for and be awarded. You may want to review the information located on the campus’ Grad Division Website about funding your graduate education to make sure you understand the basics. Students who are employed at UCI (e.g., MD Fellows, Residents, etc.) should check with their program or department to determine if any funding is available to offset the expense of university tuition or fees. Similarly, those employed externally should check with their employer to make this determination.

For U.S. Citizens only: Applicants who are U.S. Citizens should also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online and review the information hosted on the university’s website. FAFSA is administered by Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education, and ensures that all eligible individuals can benefit from federally funded financial assistance for education beyond high school. Once you have completed your FAFSA, a summary analysis of your financial need will be calculated and forwarded to UC Irvine’s Financial Aid Office for the university’s consideration.

**Q:** I have been awarded a fellowship to support my enrollment at your institution in biomedical & translational science. Should I list this fellowship somewhere on the application?

**A:** YES, an applicant should disclose any special financial arrangements they have made in preparation for their graduate studies here at UC Irvine; i.e., a non-UC Irvine fellowship/scholarship they have already been awarded or expecting to be awarded, their participation in any programs sponsored by their home country, or otherwise, that can provide all or part of the funds they will need to study and live here, any pre-arranged housing plans while living near UC Irvine or other matters related to your education tenure at UC Irvine. Depending upon the nature of any support you may receive, you can describe it in your “Statement of Purpose” or your “Personal History” sections of the application.

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Q: How can I learn more about graduate student financial support matters?

A: The UCI Graduate Division provides an excellent primer on Financing Your Graduate Education for those applicants new to graduate education or those just needing a refresher course.

As necessary, Mail ALL ‘paper’ documents to:

Francine Jeffrey | Biomedical & Translational Science MS Prgm.
100 Theory Bldg.; Suite # 110
School of Medicine
University of California
Irvine, CA  92697-5800

*: fjeffrey@hs.uci.edu

🌟 Appendices begin starting with Page 12 below
APPENDIX I: Minimum English Proficiency Score Requirements for Admission to the University of California, Irvine (International Applicants Only)

TOEFL Minimum Score Requirements

- A minimum score of 213 on the computer-based test version, OR
- A minimum score of 550 on the paper-based test version

TOEFL iBT Minimum Score Requirement

- A minimum overall score of 80 AND
- A minimum score of 26 on the “speaking” component

Notes:

1. The TOEFL iBT (Internet Based Testing), represents the newest generation of ETS’ TOEFL exam. The TOEFL iBT was first administered in the U.S.A. on 9/25/2005 and has been subsequently phased into other countries. This newer test includes an important speaking component that was missing from earlier TOEFL exams.
2. TOEFL and TOEFL iBT scores that are more than two years old will not be accepted for consideration and the test must be taken again before applying.
3. TOEFL or TOEFL iBT scores you may receive from “institutional (non-ETS) administrations” will not be accepted.

IELTS Minimum Band Score Requirements

- A minimum overall band score of 7, AND
- A minimum band score of 7 on the “Speaking” module, AND
- A minimum band score of 6 on each of the other modules; i.e., English “Listening”, “Reading” and “Writing”

Notes:

1. IELTS scores that are more than two years old will not be accepted for consideration and the test must be taken again before applying.
2. Any IELTS scores you may receive from “institutional (non-ETS) administrations” will not be accepted.

Updated 01/11/2012, D Green