



The i-Scholar Guide has been designed as a compass to help **prospective** graduate school applicants navigate the **cardinals** of the graduate school **admission process**.



The i-Scholar Guide **YOUR GRAD SCHOOL JOURNEY COMPASS**

FOREWORD

i-Scholar Initiative(iSI) is a non-profit organisation that seeks to mentor and empower young African students in fulfilling their dreams to pursue graduate studies via access to fully-funded scholarships in world-class foreign universities by leveraging the networks of partnering members.

Many students aspire to pursue their higher education in world-class institutions, but they do not have the requisite knowledge of the process required to receive fully-funded admissions. As individuals who have passed through the various stages to fully-funded graduate school opportunities, we decided to share the knowledge gained on our respective experiences, which would be helpful to prospective graduate school applicants.

Based on our experiences, we have highlighted different points and strategies that helped us achieve our goals, and we believe that this guide could also support you on your journey. The guide's purpose is to complement resources you have, not to take the place of other resources that could help you, such as Official University admission or recruitment guides, mentors, etc.,

The journey is a daunting one, but always remember why you started, keep the energy and never give up. We would appreciate you sharing your success stories with us as we cannot wait to celebrate you

Cheers to the many wins coming your way

Your scholarship buddies,

The iSI Team

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The selfless individuals at the i-Scholar Initiative who have made significant contributions in different forms beyond financial support to ensure every youth has a chance at graduate school applications have been our source of inspiration to develop this book. We believe this could serve as a guide to prospective graduate school applicants. We greatly acknowledge the efforts of the following scholars who contributed to the parts of this book.

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Ayomide Akande

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Damilola Petinrin

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Solomon Adelowo

Victor Awosiji

Victor Fakeye

Our review team has worked assiduously to identify gaps and errors. If you identify any error, we would appreciate you reaching out to us via email: info@ischolarinitiative.org to help us prepare an updated or revised version.

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PART I: SELECTING THE RIGHT SCHOOLS

"You do not have to be great to get started; you have to get started to be great – Les Brown."

Selecting the right schools (to apply to) is one of the most important decisions you would need to make in your quest for international graduate study. Among other things, the acceptance rate of the program at the University you apply to, in no small way, will determine whether you would get the admission or not. It also determines the overall experience during your studies and the opportunities you attract after graduation.



So, this is an essential decision in your pursuit of world-class education; you need to know that there is a university that perfectly suits you and would bring out the best in you – but the onus is on you to find out what and where that University is

Below are five top factors you must consider in selecting the right schools to study abroad

Application requirements

Visit your prospective program/department website to understand the application requirements. Some of the requirements may include the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), Official transcripts, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), IELTS, etc. The best way to get this information is through your department or graduate school website. Pay attention to any other special requirements that each program may have.

Faculty, relevance, and prospects of their research areas

If you plan to apply to a Ph.D. program, this point is quite important. Many universities in the USA and Canada would require you to contact a supervisor before submitting your application. However, your chances of getting a Professor to agree to supervise your Ph.D. would depend on your ability to show how the Professor's research interests align with yours and how you can add value to that research, laboratory, program, or University. Interestingly, the essential information you need to do this is always on the department's website.

Costs and Scholarships

For graduate programs you are considering, obtain as much information as you can about departmental financial aid for the potential maximum term of funding, levels of financial support, summer coverage, whether out-of-state differentials are waived, and what you must do to stay in good standing for continued support.

Check out what scholarships the school and the department has on offer. Are there scholarships, assistantships, fellowships, etc., that you can apply for at the department or University? The higher the school's ranking, the stiffer the competition and the more realistic you should be with your chances!

City, Country (weather, friendliness)

If there is an assumption that you know the country or state you wish to study in, you should research on

- the city in which the University is located.
- the weather and cost of living
- perception of the residents of the city and how they relate to strangers and visitors
- interesting places in the city
- opportunities available to students in the city

This information would also help you prepare for the journey and tasks ahead.

Student Support and Post-Studentship Opportunities

Many often overlook this point, yet it is a major determinant of your experience during and after studies.

First, make inquiries about the support programs the University has in place for current students. Does the University have career counseling services, student representatives, student support services, etc.?



Secondly, be wary of universities without post-graduation plans for the graduates. So, before you apply, ensure you Google or ask if the University has robust alumni associations? How strong are these associations? What is the level of support that the University's alumni bodies provide to current or former students of the university community?

Other Factors to Consider when Selecting a School

- Think about the big picture of what you want to attain by going to graduate school. There may be multiple routes to that end -- with some being a better match for what you want to do than others, given your interests, background, length of time you are willing to commit to graduate education, and long-run goals. You can be flexible with your choice of a graduate program.
- Know whether you want to go into a Ph.D. program directly or if you want a Master's degree. You should do entirely different types of searches based on your answer to this question. If you want a Master's degree, for now, it is best to apply to a school with a terminal Master's degree program as you would likely get better financial aid and have an experience that better fits your desires.
- Carefully check out the prerequisites for identified graduate programs and compare them to the background you expect to have when starting graduate school.
- Be careful in the interpretation of departmental rankings. Some departmental rankings are based on previous publications of faculty members who are no longer associated with a given university. Also, some departments rank higher in some specialty areas than their overall ranking. That can matter.

- Check out the current faculty of the departments you are considering and their research interests and output. Also, try to determine if important faculty members are on multi-year leaves of absence.
- Try to check out the placement record of graduates of the departments you are considering. Many departments have information about this on their web pages.
- Apply to multiple schools - not all of which may be similarly ranked. Not all of the programs you apply to need to be at the same degree level or in the same department, but there should be a clear focus in your search.
- A popular way of selecting schools is to divide into Target, Reach, Safe. Target Schools are schools that will be quite competitive for you based on your profile; reach schools are schools in which your profile is excellent enough for the competition, and safe schools are schools that you can be the first selected candidate in the application pool. It is advised to apply to at least five schools which can be 1T: 3R: 2S or 1T: 2R: 2S
- In making your decisions, remember that what you think you may want to specialize in could change over time.
- Try to meet or talk to graduate students currently at your schools of interest.
- Investigate graduate level syllabus and past prelim questions of schools of interest, if available.
- What recent changes have occurred at the different departments you are considering, and why?
- Consider the acceptance rate of the University. Some schools have a track record of not taking students from a particular region or certificates from a region.
- You can also ask yourself if you will go to a reputable university over a reputable supervisor(lab). But consider the fact that the chance of getting a reputable supervisor is higher than a reputable university. Note that any R1 or R2 school is fit for STEM research.

However, a combination of your profile such as GRE, Research experience, CGPA, and recommendations will help you choose better.

PART II: EMAILING PROSPECTIVE SUPERVISORS

"When you feel like quitting, think about why you started"

It has become common to email faculties/professors before applying to any institution; however, many seem not to understand the need for this process. This write-up hopes to shed more light on why this should be done and how.

For clarity, there is no written rule that you 'must' email a faculty before applying to a program. However, in recent times, admission guidelines of some programs encourage applicants to reach out to prospective faculty advisors ahead of application.

In some programs, faculties play a considerable role in selecting students who would be admitted and/or offered funding. This is sometimes because

- the funds are attached to a specific research lab, purpose, or a specific faculty member.
- the faculty may be seeking particular students who meet the requirements of such a fund or qualify to be part of the lab.

Although many students are accepted into graduate programs without emailing faculty before submitting applications to the programs, there are many good reasons to do so. Writing a faculty member gives you the following benefits:

- You can find out whether or no they are planning to take new students.
- Know if there is any available space/funding opportunity in their lab.
- Valuable information about what the faculty is interested in or a referral to other faculties before applying. You may get information like

"I am not taking any new students, but we have just hired a new faculty member in the same area, and you might consider working with him/her." or "When you apply, make sure that you check the XXX box, which will make you eligible for a fellowship that is specifically for people from your background."

- Faculties are more likely to follow up on your applications if you have contacted them in advance.

You do not want to apply to a given program to find out that the one faculty member whose research aligns with your interest is not taking students that particular year (or he/she is about to move to another university, take a job in the industry, etc.)

How to Construct Emails to Professors or Faculty Coordinators?

First off, it is worth noting that Professors are busy people and get tons of unsolicited mail. They are used to skimming and delaying response to a lot of it. It is important to send emails that

would pique their interest. Generic emails that say, "Are you accepting students" are likely to be ignored. We provide you some advice on how to approach faculty members.

- You need to make sure that your email is brief but has vital information to get their interest. We recommend an email subject line "***Inquiry from potential graduate applicant***" or "***Prospective Graduate Student.***"
- For the main body of the email, your goals are to
 - Introduce yourself
 - Inquire about whether they are taking students
 - Make it clear why you are interested in that particular faculty member (it is usually necessary to find a link between the faculty's interest and yours)
 - Get any advice they might offer

- It is helpful to include some details about yourself – where you got or are getting your degree, what kind of research experience you have had, and/or what you have been doing since you graduated (if you have graduated). Even if your research experience is not directly related to what you want to do, it is a good idea to include at least a phrase about what you have been doing (example, "***I did internships in a neuroscience lab working with rodents and a social psychology lab administering questionnaires***"). But, if this experience is very different from the intended



faculty's research, you need to make it clear that you plan to move in a different direction for your graduate work.

- Professors also pay more attention to emails from students who seem to know something about them. Mention a paper or research project you saw on the Professor's website. You do not need too many details; show that you have done your homework and are genuinely interested in that individual

It is a good idea to attach a CV. That is an excellent place to provide some more details about your skills and experience. Your goal is to stand out from the crowd, so you should include relevant experiences that will be impressive. If you're a member of an underrepresented/disadvantaged group, you can make this clear in your email or CV if you are comfortable doing so (although this may depend on your field).

You could also attach your academic transcript to the email. This could give the Professor an overview of your courses, grades and determine whether you would be a good fit for the program.

On a final note, do not be afraid to send an email. The worst thing that will happen is that the faculty member doesn't read it. The best thing that can happen is that the email leads to a

conversation that helps you get accepted into the program of your dreams. If you send an email and get a response – positive or negative, it shows you are doing something right.

The negative responses do not mean you did not do the right thing; it only tells the professors do not have enough funding at that particular time to take on new students. So, keep up the efforts until you get a YES!

Also, note that some professors may reply within a few hours, some may take days, and some, weeks. Do not give up when you keep getting negative responses. It's part of the process. Keep in mind that applying to graduate school requires hard work, and each stage of the process requires conscientious efforts.

SAMPLE FIRST EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE SUPERVISOR

Dear [Prof/Dr] [First Name] [Last Name],

My name is [First Name][Last Name] and I am a prospective [MSc/MPhil/PhD] applicant from [country] who passionately wants to pursue research in the field of [your field of interest] at the [University Name].

I obtained my [Degree Name] in [Course Name] with [Class of Degree – CGPA XX on a XX] Scale from the [University Name].

Upon going through the list of faculty on the department website, I can see you are making great strides in the area of [describe prospective supervisor's research area].

After perusing your research page on google scholar, I read through your 20XX publication on *[mention the name of the paper you read]*. I was excited to learn about *[mention the major point in the paper that interests you]*. *[Give additional point on the importance of this research in the field of science or the world, this shows your vast knowledge of that research area and your interest in the area]*

[Describe how you have been preparing yourself for research in this area, for example, a paper you have worked on, MOOCs you have taken, term papers you have written, reseach project etc]

As an avid researcher, [mention your career/research goal]. A placement in your lab will get me started on this path.

I wish to inquire if you will be accepting [MSc/MA/MPhil/PhD] students and humbly request that you give me the privilege of becoming a student researcher in your lab. [If you have documents to attach, you can mention it].

I understand you have a tight schedule but will greatly appreciate a favourable response soon.

Sincerely,
[First Name][Last Name]

PART III: ACING THE GRE

"Our greatest glory is not in falling, but in rising every time we fall" - Confucius

What is the GRE?

The Graduate Record Examinations, popularly called the GRE, is a standardized test required by many graduate schools in the USA and Canada for admissions into masters and doctoral programs. The GRE is owned and administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS). The candidate's abilities are tested in the following sections:

- 1) Analytical Writing Assessment – Here, the candidate is tested on the ability to produce precise, cohesive, and well-thought-out writing under time constraints.
- 2) Quantitative Reasoning – Here, the candidate is tested on the ability to apply basic mathematical concepts in solving real and abstract numerical problems
- 3) Verbal Reasoning – Here, the candidate is tested on the ability to comprehend and follow the logic of sentences and paragraphs written with academic style

The GRE comprises **one** Analytical Writing Assessment section, **two** Quantitative Reasoning sections, **two** Verbal Reasoning sections, and **one** ungraded section that could either be a Verbal or Quantitative Reasoning section. This makes a total of 6 sections in one sitting of the GRE. A brief overview of each section is given below.

Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA)

The AWA section of the GRE comprises two subsections: "**Analyse an Issue**" and "**Analyse an Argument**." Each section is timed 30 minutes and graded a score in the range of 0 – 6 with an increment of 0.5 points. The final score given to a candidate is the average of the candidate's scores in each of the subsections. Thus, a 4.0 in the first subsection and 5.0 in the second one gives the candidate a total score of 4.5 in the AWA section.

Quantitative Reasoning (Q.R.)

Each of the Quantitative Reasoning sections of the GRE comprises 20 questions, timed 35 minutes, set to test the understanding of concepts on Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, and Data Analysis. This section is graded overall with a score in the range of 130 – 170, in an increment of 1 point. The score is a reflection of the performance of the candidate in the two graded Quantitative Reasoning sections.

However, the total score obtained by a candidate in this section is not a direct sum of the number of questions answered correctly, as the scoring algorithm employed by ETS is based on the level of difficulty of the questions answered rightly. Thus, it is important to state here that the Quantitative Reasoning section of the GRE is section-adaptive. This means that a candidate's performance on the first graded Quantitative Reasoning section determines the difficulty of the questions presented to the candidate in the second section. This explains why answering ten questions in the first section correctly and rightly answering 10 questions in the second section may not translate to a score of 150 on the Q.R. section of the GRE.

Verbal Reasoning (V.R.)

Each of the Verbal Reasoning sections of the GRE comprises 20 questions, timed 30 minutes, set to test the candidate's ability to comprehend and interpret chunks of text written in academic style with complex sentence structure and moderate to high-level vocabulary. Each section comprises questions on Text Completion, Sentence Equivalence, and Reading Comprehension passages, and both sections are graded an overall score in the range of 130 – 170, in an increment of 1 point.

As with the Quantitative Reasoning section of the GRE, the obtained score is a reflection of the performance of the candidate in the two graded Verbal Reasoning sections, and this total score is not a direct sum of the number of questions answered correctly by the candidate, as the scoring algorithm employed by ETS is based on the level of difficulty of the questions answered rightly in both sections. Thus, the V.R. portion of the GRE is also section-adaptive.

With 30 minutes allotted to each of the AWA subsections, 35 minutes assigned to each Q.R. section, and 30 minutes for each V.R. section, the GRE lasts for roughly 3hrs 45mins or 3hrs 40mins (depending on what type of ungraded section is presented to the candidate). A 10-minute break is given to the candidate after the first four sections, during which the candidate can take some snacks and refreshment and afterward return to complete the remaining two sections.

Acing the Analytical Writing Assessment Section of the GRE

According to ETS, analytical writing measures the ability to articulate and support complex ideas, examine claims and accompanying evidence, sustain a focused and coherent discussion, and control the elements of standard written English. The Analytical Writing section requires you to provide focused responses based on the tasks presented to demonstrate your skill in directly responding to a task accurately. The analytical writing is the first section of the test; it consists of two tasks: First, Analyze an issue then, Analyze an argument.

Issue Essay task

According to ETS, the issue essay measures your critical reasoning ability about a general topic of interest according to specific instructions and how you put your thoughts down in writing under a specified duration. There is no rule of thumb to writing the issue essay; it is based on your perception regarding the topic. You should support or criticize this topic. Below is a typical Issue essay prompt which consists of two sections: The general topic sentence and the question prompt.

It is a grave mistake to theorize before one has data. Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing your position, you should consider how the statement might or might not hold and explain how these considerations shape your position.

Necessary steps to adopt while writing an issue essay:

- Think: Consider a position to take by carefully thinking about the issue from several viewpoints. It is also great to write out the points you have to either support or criticize, that aids in deciding your position on the task.
- Organize: Organize your thoughts into Introduction, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusion
- Write: Start putting your thoughts in writing

How to Structure your Issue Essay

This is not a general rule that every test taker must adopt, but it is a practical approach.

Introduction

- Start your sentence with a hook. This can be a generalization, definition, anecdote, fact, or quote
- Use transition words to shift to the prompt in question, e.g., however, in addition, although e.t.c.
- Present your thesis.

Sample thesis:

After weighing the evidence, I strongly agree that it is a big mistake to theorize before one has data for some reasons which I will explore in the following essay (From the sample question above)

Body Paragraphs (at least two body paragraphs)

- Start with a topic sentence that introduces your supporting idea
- Present an example (personal examples are not allowed; you can give hypothetical examples)
- Explain how your example supports your thesis.

Here is an example below:

Data provides conclusion and generalizations regarding a research. For instance, consider a final year university student expected to carry out a project. This project will involve him to conduct research based on a hypothesis and provide data in order to make a theory. An engineering student conducting a research on the causes of building failure in a particular region cannot just come up with conclusions without carrying out investigations and providing necessary data. The student will have to investigate the soil type, carry out experiments on the soil in the laboratory to get data needed to make desired conclusion. The data obtained from the experiments can be used to deduce the causes of building failure in that particular region and solutions can be recommend mitigating the effect of causes of building failure. Research says that data if well garner provide accurate and reliable information on what is needed. The example above illustrate that a sound theory can be made only after a data has been gotten and analysed.

Conclusion

- Make the reader aware that the essay is ending
- Summarize and rephrase the main points of the essay

Here is an example below:

From the aforementioned examples, it is evident that the importance of data cannot be overemphasized and a grave mistake can occur when one theorize before one have data. I strongly hold the position that theorizing after analysing data is more accurate and more reliable. Don't you think so?

Tips to Getting a High Score on the Issue Essay

- Read widely; history, politics, sport, art. This gives you a variety of knowledge and enough background to support your point of views

- Practice a lot of issue essays. There is an issue essay prompt question pool available online; you can practice various prompt from there before your test day
- Learn how to type fast and accurately. A standard issue essay varies between 450-750 words

Argument Essay Task

According to ETS, the argument essay measures your ability to analyze, understand and evaluate an argument according to specific instructions and to put your thoughts down in writing under a specified duration. A prompt is given in which the author makes a case for some course of action and presents reasons and evidence to back up his claims. Your task is to critique the author's argument and **address the logical flaws, and not provide your personal opinion on the subject**. Below is a typical Argument essay prompt; it consists of two sections: A brief and a question prompt.

In surveys Mason City residents rank water sports (swimming, boating, and fishing) among their favorite recreational activities. The Mason River flowing through the city is rarely used for these pursuits, however, and the city park department devotes little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities. For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell. In response, the state has recently announced plans to clean up Mason River. Use of the river for water sports is, therefore, sure to increase. The city government should for that reason devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.

Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

Necessary steps to adopt while writing and issue essay:

- Read the passage and identify the conclusion or assertions, the premises, or evidence stated by the author
- Identify the assumptions; these are not stated but necessarily follow

from the information the evidence provides. Brainstorm many assumptions.

- Put down your thoughts in a preferred template that allow you to attack the assumptions in an organized way

How to Structure your Argument Essay

Introduction

- Rephrase the main conclusion of the argument.
- Identify and state the author's evidence.
- Declare your thesis (this is important as it would state what you are about to explain in the essay).

Body Paragraphs (3 body paragraphs is okay)

State your supporting idea (assumption 1), then give examples to support this idea (It is good to make use of the phrase "Perhaps" "Maybe" while stating examples). Then conclude each paragraph by showing the effect of your supporting idea on the author's conclusion.

Conclusion

State how the argument is entirely flawed, request more evidence from the author to back up their conclusion and then state how more evidence will help you better evaluate the argument.

Tips to getting a high score on the argument essay:

- Carefully read the argument and the specific instructions
- Think of additional evidence that might weaken or support the claims
- Be careful while interpreting Numbers, percentages, and statistics in an argument
- Practice a lot of argument essays. There is an argument essay prompt question pool available online; you can practice various prompt from there before your test day
- Learn how to type fast. A standard argument essay varies between 400-600 words.

Recommended texts: ETS official guide, Princeton review, GREGMAT resources.

Acing the Quantitative Reasoning Section of the GRE

This section is relatively easy, and you need to develop confidence in yourself after you are honed with the skills and concepts required. The primary skills required are speed and perceptiveness. For instance, you can spend 1-2 minutes on a question that requires just 30-45 seconds to solve because you are not familiar with the appropriate concept and technique. In other words, before you start laying hands on quant questions, make sure you are familiar with the accurate techniques. The Quants section consists of four question types:

Quantitative comparison (Q.C.), Multiple choice question (MCQ) - Select one answer choice, Multiple answer question (MAQ) - Select one or more answer choice and Numeric entry question
 Note: Always read instructions carefully; there is always a trap answer in every question.

Q.C. questions

Typical QC question from ETS:

Tips for answering Q.C. questions:

- Avoid unnecessary calculations. Most QC questions can be solved within 30 to 45 seconds.
- Familiarize yourself with the answer choices and never choose option D only if you are sure that both quantities comparison cannot be determined.
- Note that geometric shapes are not drawn to scale
- Make use of plug-in Numbers: Unless otherwise stated, always plug in zero, large and small numbers (these can be positive and negative real numbers or integers)

Quantity A	Quantity B	
4. The number of two-digit positive integers for which the units digit is not equal to the tens digit	80	Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ

Multiple Choice Questions

Tips for answering Multiple Choice Questions:

- Read the questions carefully and always try to solve these questions using the appropriate techniques. Most questions can be completed in 45-60 seconds or less.

12. For a certain distribution, the measurement 12.1 is 1.5 standard deviations below the mean, and the measurement 17.5 is 3.0 standard deviations above the mean. What is the mean of the distribution?
Ⓐ 13.8
Ⓑ 13.9
Ⓒ 14.0
Ⓓ 14.1
Ⓔ 14.2

Do not be determined to use a traditional approach to solve this problem. ETS doesn't need your calculation sheet.

- Be careful with approximations and avoid calculation errors
- Adopt the backward solving method, which involves substituting the options into the questions. This approach works faster for some question types

Multiple Answer Questions

18. The distribution of the numbers of hours that students at a certain college studied for final exams has a mean of 12 hours and a standard deviation of 3 hours. Which of the following numbers of hours are within 2 standard deviations of the mean of the distribution?

Indicate all such numbers.

- A 2
- B 5
- C 10
- D 14
- E 16
- F 20

Tips for answering Multiple Answer Questions:

- Read the instructions carefully. You may be asked to select a specific number of answers among the options.
- Always check trends on this type of question to avoid continuous numerical calculations.

Numerical Entry

When the decimal point of a certain positive decimal number is moved six places to the right, the resulting number is 9 times the reciprocal of the original number. What is the original number?

Tips for answering Numeric entry questions:

- Read the instructions carefully; you may be asked to round your answer to a specified degree of accuracy.
- Do not spend too much time on Numeric entry questions; most questions can be solved within 30 – 90 seconds
- Enter only digits and try to double-check your answer

Data Interpretation (DI)

Questions are asked from tables, charts, or graphs. There will be at least three questions from this section, and DI questions are always grouped. The questions can be of MAQ, MCQ, or numeric entry.

Tips for answering DI questions:

- Skip the DI questions and answer them last, as most DI questions are time-consuming
- Before answering the questions, scan the data presented correctly
- All charts and graphs scaled, which makes it easier to read approximate values from the chart or graph
- Answers should be based only on the information provided by the data

Acing the Verbal Reasoning Section of the GRE

The Verbal Reasoning section is arguably the most challenging part of the GRE. Both native and non-native English Language speakers struggle to obtain a decent score on this portion of the test. This difficulty is because the Verbal Reasoning section contains academic-styled text with high-level vocabulary that only appears in academic publications that those unfamiliar with academia may not read. However, it is not unusual to find several candidates getting perfect

scores on the Verbal Reasoning section of the GRE. Here, we provide helpful tips and suggestions that will aid you in acing this portion of the GRE. These are provided in the following outlines for better understanding.

The Verbal Reasoning section contains the following question types:

- Text Completion (one blank, two blanks, three blanks)
- Sentence Equivalence
- Reading Comprehension (Multiple choice, multiple answers, text-in-passage)

How to answer Text Completion Questions?

One blank T.C.'s

Below is an example of a one-blank T.C.

Unenlightened authoritarian managers rarely recognize a crucial reason for the low levels of serious conflict among members of democratically run work groups: a modicum of tolerance for dissent often prevents _____.

- | |
|----------------------|
| (A) demur |
| (B) schism |
| (C) cooperation |
| (D) compliance |
| (E) shortsightedness |

In answering this type of questions, the candidate is best advised to:

- Read the entire text without stopping at the blank, and try to get an impression of what story the text is telling.
- Try and guess a word that, when put into

the blank, completes the story in the most logical way

- Check the options for the word that is closest to your guess-word.
- Be sure that the selected word completes the story in the most logical way.

Two- and Three-blank TC's

The below are examples of a two- and three-blank T.C. question

Belanger dances with an (i) _____ that draws one's attention as if by seeking to (ii) _____ it; through finesse and understatement, he manages to seem at once intensely present and curiously detached.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| (A) undemonstrative panache | (D) focus |
| (B) unrestrained enthusiasm | (E) overwhelm |
| (C) unattractive gawkinsness | (F) deflect |

In answering these type of questions, the candidate is best advised to:

- Read the entire text without stopping at the blanks, and try to get an impression of what story the text is telling.
- Look out for colons and semicolons,

which both indicate a continuity or agreement between two portions of the text, and words like "However," "Despite," "Although," "While" and so on, which all indicate a change in opinion or a disagreement between two portions of the text.

- Look for clues in portions of the text that could inform your guess-word.
- Try and make a guess for words that, when put into each blank, completes the story in the most logical way. It is beneficial to first guess the blank that has obvious clues for its answer.
- Once the above has been done, try and guess the word that should go into the other blank and so on.
- Check the options for the words that are closest to your guess-words.

The most striking thing about the politician is how often his politics have been (i) _____ rather than ideological, as he adapts his political positions at any particular moment to the political realities that constrain him. He does not, however, piously (ii) _____ political principles only to betray them in practice. Rather, he attempts in subtle ways to balance his political self-interest with a (iii) _____, viewing himself as an instrument of some unchanging higher purpose.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| (A) quixotic | (D) brandish | (G) profound cynicism |
| (B) self-righteous | (E) flout | (H) deeply felt moral code |
| (C) strategic | (F) follow | (I) thoroughgoing pragmatism |

- Be sure that the selected words complete the story most logically.

How to answer Sentence Equivalence Questions?

The below is an example of a Sentence Equivalence question.

Always circumspect, she was reluctant to make judgments, but once arriving at a conclusion, she was _____ in its defense.

- A) deferential
- B) intransigent
- C) lax
- D) negligent
- E) obsequious
- F) resolute

Two options are required to be selected when answering this type of question. In doing so, the candidate is best advised to:

- Read the entire text without stopping at the blank, and try to get an impression of what story the text is telling.

- Try and guess a word that, when put into the blank, completes the story in the most logical way.
- Check the options for the two words that are closest to your guess-word.
- Be sure that the selected word completes the story in the most logical way.

N.B: A candidate's performance on the T.C. and S.E. sections is greatly helped if such a candidate is knowledgeable of typical GRE vocabulary. A list of recommended texts is provided at the end for reference.

How to answer Reading Comprehension Questions (Multiple choice, multiple answers, Select text-in-passage)

The following question types occur under R.C. passages:

Multiple Choice Questions

Here, the candidate is required to select one option that answers a question about a passage

The author of the passage cites Rosenblum's book most likely in order to

- A) suggest that the works documented most thoroughly by historians of women in photography often do not warrant that attention
- B) offer an explanation for the observation that not all aspects of the history of women in photography have received the same level of attention
- C) provide an example of a way in which scholarship on the history of women in photography has been unsatisfactory
- D) suggest that employing a strictly chronological approach when studying the history of women in photography may be unproductive
- E) provide support for the notion that certain personalities in women's photography have attained undue prominence

Multiple Answer Questions

Here, the candidate is required to select all the possible options that answer the question

Which of the following statements about Marion Palfi is supported by the passage?

- A) Marion Palfi's photographs would have received greater recognition from historians had her work been done in an era when most aspects of photography were static rather than in a state of transition.
- B) Alice Austen has achieved greater notoriety than has Marion Palfi primarily because the subjects that Austen photographed were more familiar to her contemporaries.
- C) In addition to providing a record of certain historical events, Marion Palfi's photographs played a role in subsequent events.

Select text-in-passage Questions

- Here, the candidate is asked to select a line of text in the passage which addresses a particular question

Select the sentence that describes an allegory for Voltaire's acquisition of knowledge concerning Newton's ideas.

The following steps are advised in deconstructing both long and short R.C. passages to be able to answer the corresponding questions correctly

- Give the passage a first quick read, looking to understand the general structure of the passage
- While skimming through the passage, make a mental categorization of the passage, setting it out as either making a comparison or argument or exposition or classification.
- Identifying what the author is trying to do by writing the passage is crucial to grasping the elements employed in the passage.
- After skimming, reread the passage but more slowly now, paying rapt attention to the stylistic elements in the passage especially points where contradictions are set off or refuted, where references are made to certain parts of the passage, and where clarifications are made by elaborating on a matter.
- Only proceed to the questions when you are confident that you understand the content and general theme of the passage
- Be careful that your selected option answers the question in its entirety and is not only partly correct or correct "in a sense"; ETS has a way of phrasing the wrong answers in a way that appeals to an unsuspecting candidate.

Recommended Texts

Quant: ETS Official Quant Guide, Manhattan resources, Magoosh resources, Scholarden, Nova Math Bible, KMF.

Verbal: ETS Official Verbal Guide, Kaplan Prep, Princeton Review, KMF, Magoosh GRE Prep

A few extra tips:

- Be consistent with your GRE prep
- Take as many practice tests as you need to build your endurance, but do not let your practice test scores make you feel miserable – take only your ETS PowerPrep Test scores more seriously, as they are usually most indicative of your level of preparation and can most accurately predict what you will score on the actual test.
- Since there are only two free ETS PowerPrep tests, take one (PP1) mid-way into your prep and another one (PP2) a week to your actual test.

PART IV: ACING THE TOEFL

"If you believe it will work out, you will see opportunities; if you believe it won't, you will see obstacles" – Wayne Dyer

What is TOEFL?

"I have spoken and related in the English Language all my life, yet I am required to submit proof of my proficiency in English?"

Well, yes, you do have to prove your competent handle of the language. It is always good to establish WHY you do anything so that this can inform your actions appropriately. In Graduate school, especially in native English-speaking countries, you would relate, learn, teach, address issues in English, and schools want you to go through an approximate simulation of what it would be like when you eventually join them – thus, the test of English.

Now that you know why you should know what. The TOEFL iBT (internet-based test), which you would take as it is the most popular (taken by ~97% of test-takers), has four sections - **Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing**. At a glance, the table below summarizes what you should expect;

Section	Time Limit	Questions	Tasks
Reading	54-72 minutes	30-40 questions	Read passages and respond to questions
Listening	41-57 minutes	28-39 questions	Answer questions about brief lectures or classroom discussions
Break	10 minutes	—	—
Speaking	17 minutes	4 tasks	Talk about a familiar topic and discuss material you read and listened to
Writing	50 minutes	2 tasks	Read a passage, listen to a recording, type your response

The test takes about 3-4 hours. You should find out more about the test content by visiting the URL: [Click Here](#)

The above link also contains detailed content descriptions of the four sections that you should go through, one after the other. There are videos on there that act as good alternatives to reading through texts and break down the question types for you. ETS has also made the course comprehensive by hosting the complete resource on edX – you can find this by searching for the course **TOEFL® Test Preparation: The Insider's Guide** on the edX website or mobile app. Do this if you can; it helps to prepare and train you thoroughly.

Reading Section

Recommended Text: *TOEFL Official Guide & Online course*

This is generally easier than the GRE comprehension passages

Do a first quick read through the passages (They are long, but get the passage idea)

Questions come in the order of the paragraphs, so as you go through the questions, you can reread the paragraphs but ensure you have gotten the idea of the passage.

Listening Section

Recommended Text: TOEFL Official Guide & Online course

This is arguably the most straightforward section. You can score all without stress – just listen attentively to the conversations and lectures, take notes. You can practice with podcasts, programs, or sessions day-to-day, see if you understand, and can answer questions on what you have heard. Do not worry if you missed a part; keep listening and do not miss any other part; it eventually adds up.

Candid Advice: Make the Countdown timer your friend. Currently, in this TOEFL section, the timer only counts when you are answering questions, but is paused when you are listening, so make sure to manage your time well. For instance, you could see 10 minutes (it varies) to answer three listening exercises, do not spend 6 minutes on the first exercise, and affect your performance in the other two. Listen attentively, Work fast, Check the timer, Pick an answer.

Note: You cannot skip questions – answers must be provided to each question accordingly.

Speaking Section

A few people struggle in this area, but it is just down to their mindset, not because it is difficult. Try to answer the question that is asked of you in your response, and make sure to do that within the time you are given (usually 30-60 seconds). The links below provide a template that you can use for your answers. You do not have to worry about having the same template as others. These videos from Notefull are more than a decade old but very relevant, and they would help you feel more confident about attempting the questions. The comment sections under the videos are also very encouraging – check them out.

Question 1	Click Here
Question 2	Click Here
Question 3	Click Here Click Here
Question 4	Click Here

If, for any reason, you cannot work with the template on exam day, as tension can get you disorganized, focus on the lecture or conversation, and give a voice recording that answers the question. TOEFL wants to know that you can understand and provide responses in an academic environment.

Writing Section

Your mind always goes blank when it is time to generate ideas/stories and write about them?

Don't fret; that is relatable, and it happens to everyone. With practice and your desire to think through the below video aid that describes how the writing section goes, you should do well.

The integrated writing section should not be a bother as you just have to answer the prompt based on what you have read and heard. However, the Independent essay requires your ingenuity, and I would advise that you stay original and write based on what has happened before unless you can get your imagination to paint an intriguing story.

As before, the links below from **TOEFL Resources** are recommended and very helpful. We have also included a final link that teaches you how to get ideas for your writing.

Integrated Writing	Click Here
Independent Writing	Click Here
Getting Ideas	Click Here

NOTE: Kindly ensure you get the TOEFL Software on your P.C., it is a good simulation of what to expect, and you get to see your score for the first two sections and appraise yourself. Practice is the king of preparation. There is no substitute.

On Test Day

Get to the venue as early as you can. We advise you to go for a test time in the morning (choose what works best for you) because you can be more productive in the early part of the day.

You would have a headset during the test, but you would still be disturbed by others (especially when they are in the speaking section), and the gravity of this can vary from center to centre. So, try to be one of the first students to go in and start on time. You do not want to be listening when everyone around you is speaking; it can be distracting.

Utilize your 10 -minute break well. Take a walk. You are allowed to drink or eat something. Again, you should know yourself and what works for you. Do all you can to make yourself comfortable. After all, the score is yours.

To ace, the TOEFL test generally requires that you have **a good command of the English language** and be very comfortable with it. Acting on these tips would make you confident about getting an outstanding score.

PART V: WRITING THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

"Ambition is the path to success; persistence is the vehicle you arrive in" – Bill Bradley

Writing your Statement of Purpose

It is a common practice for authors in this context to advise scholarship applicants writing SOP to divide their writing into paragraphs. In this article, we shall categorically emphasize the importance of context and writer's situation and position (for example, yet to conclude undergraduate studies, changing course or career path, took an extensive break from studies and have acquired long-term professional experience, etc.) for each paragraph that would be written.

Contextually, it is not uncommon for some scholarship organizations to provide a structure on how applicants should organize their SOP. Similarly, some opportunities, like Commonwealth scholarships, usually provide essay writing questions, which substitute and are generally in the form of SOP paragraphs. Again, there are traditionally writing limitations (number of words or pages) instructions from many organizations. Hence, it is essential for you as a reader and scholarship candidate to note these limitations and consider your specifics in adopting the paragraph writing illustration.

The paragraphs of a statement of purpose include the following:

Introduction

Usually, the first paragraph of any essay is an introduction, and there is no best way to introduce writing. However, and importantly, you need to throw a hook that would keep the reader/reviewer to the end of your SOP. Starting your essay in this format - *'I hereby submit an interest for an M.Sc. in Chemical Engineering at the University of Aberdeen'* is not an excellent way, despite its popularity. Hence, it is not a bad idea to start with a 'problem statement.' State a problem or opportunity that surrounds being a chemical engineer in your society; this does not translate to career prospects yet, creates an impression on why the school must sponsor you for your graduate school dream. Use accurate quotations, state an un(popular) statement, state facts and figures with statistics, etc. *This is recommended to be 1 paragraph.*

Who are you?

This paragraph centers around describing a personality that has capabilities of providing invaluable solutions to the problem or problem statistics earlier established. For example, you would not create a problem whose solution is at a price value of 100 million Naira, and you present yourself as worth only 100 thousand Naira; it is either you would lie that you can solve the problem or you would present yourself you are incompetent for the funding opportunity, due to the gap between the problem and the 'you.' Herein, you need to state your academic and

research experience, extracurricular activities, leadership and community service experience, volunteering, etc

It is not uncommon for SOP writers to dualize this 'who are you' paragraph, especially if the word limit is more than 500 or 2-pages. This affords you the opportunity of putting a more robust academic and research foot forward. For example, you can state how much you are prepared to take the course? Is your undergraduate thesis project related to the course? What have you achieved with it, in terms of publication, in influencing social practice and actions? Has it been presented at a conference? Are you assisting any of your lecturers with research or tutorials? Do you have any work experience? Any achievements to state in all of these with specific figures? Have you taken any Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) or popularly known as online-course? *This is recommended to be between 1 – 3 paragraphs.*

The course and the opportunity

This is what distinguishes a quality SOP from an everyday commonly submitted SOP. While it is always not advisable to submit a single SOP for many opportunities, it is a common practice. Despite this possibility, the third paragraph of every SOP must differ from one another, as it speaks to the particular course, school, and opportunities that surround the same, which is unique to individual schools.

In writing this paragraph, you are expected to visit relevant web pages, such as the 'about' or 'history of the school; you should also snap on the department's web address, the faculty staff page, information on the course, download the course brochure, alumni webpage, etc. In this paragraph, you should state how studying in that school can position you for some peculiar opportunities; for example, do you aim to be part of the 85% of alumni that are doing well in their profession, and how much more people from the school are leaders of international and global reputation, what opportunities would your prospective department or course offer you? This entails specifically naming a Professor whose research is similar to yours (this does not necessarily mean you should write to the Professor for a research assistantship opportunity. However, you can as well create a familiarity space for yourself. You can use the opportunity to inform the Professor on how you would like to state their name on your SOP; they could be positive with their response).

You can also mention between 1 – 3 course modules, do well to link same with the problem you first established, while also creating a space for career prospect around the course. Also, you can mention if opportunities like internships, visitation/excursions provided as part of the course would offer you skills, knowledge, exposure to becoming a researcher and a global leader. This paragraph communicates how much you know about the course and the opportunities that surround it; consequently, it puts you in a 'prepared' position to take up the graduate school opportunity.

This is recommended to be between 1 – 2 paragraphs

Career Prospect

Like a straight line, you have described a problem; you have moved on to start a scene of how your past achievements (academic and leadership) have prepared you for the situation.

Subsequently, you have talked about how the course and the opportunities that surround it would further prepare you to be the problem solver. The stage is set for you to relate plans on solving the problem precisely.

If the scholarship specifically states scholars' obligation of returning to their home countries, you are advised to narrate a career option in your home country and as you deem fit. Depending on the problem, you can relate how you hope to join a university's faculty staff, an independent research organization, international development organizations. Similarly, you can state how you desire to start an organization (entrepreneurship) that shall prepare you to make a sustainable income and how interested you are in giving back to your society. *This is recommended to be 1 paragraph*

The subtle difference between a Statement of Purpose and a Personal Statement

Statement of purpose is a walkway around your previous achievement and future goals. It describes what you will do compared to the Personal Statement that characterizes you and who you are as a person. Academic qualifications, work experience, long term career choices are key content. In extension, justification on why you chose their program, among others, is important. This takes a substantial number of findings into the intricacies of the school you are applying for, what you hope to do with your study, and specific subject areas that attract you.

Talk about the synergy between you as an individual and the course. To achieve this, you need to leverage your work experiences, research engagement, skills. Proof of solid achievements behind you that show promise of your success in your chosen field is also important.

A personal statement is like a self-promotion write-up, a privilege to talk more about yourself, your qualities, and what makes you a unique candidate. Your opportunity to be transparent and upfront is a vital part of a personal statement. Discuss the difficulties you have had during your studies or reality encounters you have had through your life and how it has influenced you for your professional interest, career choices, and giving back to society.

Try to get the reader's attention with an allegorical tale or story from your life. You can open with an excerpt from your favorite author. Let your paragraph flow and retain readers' attention.

In a nutshell, a Statement of Purpose is targeted at knowing your achievement and abilities as proof of what you like to accomplish from the study. In contrast, a Personal Statement is a more specific statement proving your suitability to study and can contain information not related to the program, including your "selling point" to the program, such as details of what it is that has been your driving force for graduate study.

Scholarship Advice

Life is about value. Every institution seeks not only to take in students that they can train but also to check that these students bring something to the table. Hence, never submit your statement of purpose without clearly stating what you plan to add to the degree. Show that you are an asset to the department and you are worth investing in. You should 'show' and not 'tell': it is not enough to say that you are excellent in leadership, go on to mention one instance or position in which you have demonstrated this excellence. Announce your unique qualities and connect them

with your program. Worthy to note, however, is that there is a fine line between confidence and arrogance. Let your statement of purpose show that you are outstanding yet never make it sound as if you are beyond learning- be confident yet teachable. Of course, state your long-term plans and future goals after the program. Remember, for the school to invest in you; you need to be able to prove that you are a good asset.

Your statement of purpose is more than an essay you can finish in a day; it is a complete representation of who you are. As such, you want to write a near-perfect essay! Write multiple drafts, review, and edit. Try to get the statement of purpose essays from people who have already gotten into graduate school and read them but ensure you write your very first draft before reading anyone's SOP. Do not forget to also ask for help. Send out your essay to trusted persons who can help you review your work critically. As much as you can, stay within your word limit - let your words be precise and concise. Be original; avoid generic statements and sentences. Never plagiarize another person's work; absolutely no good can come out of it. When you believe you have your final draft, take one more look before you submit it.

Without much emphasis, funding opportunities are not for you if you plagiarize, hence, desist from it in its entirety, either for SOP writing or research publications, et al. Relatively, it is not a bad idea if you have prepared yourself for flawless English language speaking, and writing capabilities, and you can woo your listeners, or now, the reviewers with big grammars/vocabularies. Usually, your SOP would not achieve its purpose and might end up being rejected, as you cannot communicate clearly in simple vocabulary or grammar. Similarly, you might not win a funding opportunity if there are many grammatical errors in every paragraph you write. While this might be unavoidable yet, you are expected to do the second reading of your SOP before submitting it to a reviewer; similarly, grammatical application checkers are popular tools that can advance your writing skills with great ease. Hence, communicate in good understandable English, and not bad and big English.

In conclusion, when it comes to writing a statement of purpose, there is no one-size-fits-all. It must be tailored to suit the type of application you are making by highlighting essential skills, research, courses, volunteering, and other experiences that align with the application.

PART VI: ACADEMIC CV

"Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat." – F. Scott Fitzgerald

What is an Academic CV?

Academic CV, as the name implies, is meant for academic purposes. It is detailed and provides an opportunity to sell yourself to the admission committee of the scholarship you are applying for.

Components of Academic CV

Title/Heading:

This contains your name, address, phone number, email address, and a customized LinkedIn address in that order. A typical arrangement is shown below

<p style="text-align: center;">FIRST NAME LAST NAME Residential Address Phone Number Email Address LinkedIn URL</p>
--

Research Interest

In this part, you should describe your research interest in one sentence and be specific. Also, it is important to tailor your research interest to fit some applications, and so this will require constant modification

Education:

In this part, you should provide information about your educational experience. It should be listed in chronological order – from the most recently accomplished. Only your educational experience after secondary/high school is required. A typical arrangement is shown below;

<p>University of Ibadan (UI) – Ibadan, Nigeria Bachelor of Science in Industrial Chemistry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">CGPA 5.00/5.00 – Top 1% of 100 students in Industrial Chemistry <p>Relevant Courses: Organic Chemistry, Polyfunctional Groups and Reaction Mechanism, Heterocyclics and Carbocyclics, Applied Spectroscopy, Pericyclics reactions and Naturally Occurring Compounds, Process Chemistry, Quantum Chemistry, Statistical Thermodynamics</p>	Mar 20xx - May 20xx
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Experience:

In this part, you will provide information about your most relevant experiences. There is a need to tailor your CV because the experience may not be part of a requirement of scholarship A and needed in scholarship B. This includes Research experience RE, teaching experience T.E., Leadership experience L.E., and Professional experience in that order.

Note: It is important to include a Research Experience section if you apply for a Research Master or PhD program. A sample of the research experience section is shown below:

Bachelors Thesis Project

Sept 20xx – Mar 20xx

Topic: *Type your thesis topic here*

- *In short sentences, describe major actions you carried out – use action verbs*
- *Action 2*
- *Action 3*

Achievements

- *Describe achievements of the project*
- *Achievement 2*

Publications: Provide information about your published paperwork, if any.

Awards and recognitions

List all awards, recognitions, grants, and scholarships you have received.

Certifications

List all relevant certifications, online and offline, especially the MOOCs.

Conferences

List all conferences attended either you have presented or participated (just in attendance). If related, it can come directly after the "Research Experience."

Skills

This is another opportunity to showcase your strengths. List all the relevant skills, majorly digital or technical skills related to your field of interest. The skills must fit into or are needed in your area of study.

Volunteer/Extracurricular activities

List all your volunteer activities here if you did not create a section for them earlier.

STEPS IN CREATING YOUR CV

It is important to note that creating your CV from start to finish is more productive than using any applications already designed for that purpose. This is because you become very familiar with the contents of your CV and you have easy access to the original document where you can easily make changes or adjustments where needed.

- Check out samples of C.V.s to get a mental picture and guide to what you will be creating.
- Pick these components one after the other and make a draft in a rough sheet.
- Write in detail your activities and achievements during each role.
- Now summarize these into a maximum of two points.
- After that, compile them one after the other to make your CV.
- Adjust page margins on both left and right to increase the size of a page if needed
- Check for errors and use correct font type and size (for example, font type - Times New Roman and font size - 11 min).
- Send out for reviews.

Dos and Do Nots of an Academic CV

DOs

- Keep your CV as brief as possible – a maximum of two pages
- In describing your accomplishments, use action verbs to indicate your strength and skills. You may also try quantifying your achievement, for instance;
"Tutored a class of 200 students for an external examination that resulted in a record of 75% excellence."
- Keep your CV organized, well-formatted, and tailor it to be fit for purpose.
- Make your points clear and understandable to all
- Ensure your CV is free from spelling and grammatical errors.
- Use chronological order – start with the most recent experience

DO NOTs

- Do not put irrelevant details in your CV to make it massive with many pages
- Do not include personal pronouns like I, me, we. Avoid it. Use action verbs instead like *assigned, collaborated, gathered, etc.*
- Do not include personal information or photographs unless otherwise stated.
- Do not include the popular last line: "References *available upon request,*" in your academic CV
- Do not make false statements or lie in your CV; this could tarnish your image if you are caught.
- Do not add acronyms; write in total to give the reader an idea of what you are talking about.

SAMPLE ACADEMIC CV

JANE DOE

+2348123456789 | janedoe@email.com | www.linkedin.com/janedoe
6, STREET NAME, TOWN, STATE, COUNTRY

EDUCATION/QUALIFICATIONS

University Name – City, Country
Bachelor of Science in Course Name

- CGPA 5.00/5.00

Relevant Courses: List the title of some of your relevant courses (see example above).

Month 20xx - Month 20xx

SKILLS

- Skill 1
- Skill 2
- Skill 3

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Bachelors Thesis Project

Topic: *Type your thesis topic here*

- In short sentences, describe major actions you carried out – use action verbs
- Action 2
- Action 3

Achievements

- Describe achievements of the project
- Achievement 2

Month 20xx – Month 20xx

PUBLICATIONS

“Predicting the Bioactivity of 2-Alkoxy-carbonylallyl Esters as Potential Antiproliferative Agents against Pancreatic Cancer (MiaPaCa-2) Cell Lines: GFA-based QSAR and ELMbased Models with Molecular Docking” – Submitted in Nov 2020

CONFERENCES

- Conference Name and Theme

Month 20x

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Company Name 1 – City, Country

Job Title/Position

- Activity 1 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)
- Activity 2 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)

Month 20xx – Month 20xx

Company Name 1 – City, Country

Job Title/Position

- Activity 1 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)
- Activity 2 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)

Month 20xx – Month 20xx

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Title of Position 1

- Activity 1 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)
- Activity 2 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)

Month 20xx – Month 20xx

Title of Position 2

- Activity 1 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)
- Activity 2 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)

Month 20xx – Month 20xx

TEACHING AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- Activity 1 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)
- Activity 2 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)
- Activity 1 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)
- Activity 2 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Award 1
- Award 2
- Award 3

Month 20xx

Month 20xx

Month 20xx

CERTIFICATIONS

- Activity 1 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)
- Activity 2 - Describe what you did/achieved (start with an action verb)

Month 20xx

Month 20xx

PART VII: RECOMMENDATION OR REFERENCE LETTERS

"It is not whether you get knocked down. It is whether you get back up." – Vince Lombardi

What Is a Recommendation Letter?

A letter of recommendation, also known as, reference letter or reference, is a document in which the writer assesses an individual based on the qualities, characteristics, and capabilities of the applicant. An individual's ability to perform particular tasks or functions which includes his/her research work, volunteering, and social activities, leadership position and many more are also being highlighted in a recommendation letter.

Details of Recommendation Letters

Letters of recommendation are typically related to employment, admission to higher education institutions, or scholarship eligibility. It should be noted that a recommendation letter is pivotal to the application process. These letters are specifically requested to be written about someone and are addressed to a particular body (such as a new employer or university admissions officer).

A recommendation letter on official letterhead should use meaningful, vivid stories and examples to demonstrate your outstanding qualities. If you have ideas, share them with your recommender. Your recommender can also include their own stories that reveal who you are and what kind of person admissions officers can expect to show up at their institution (see a sample below).

Some applications, such as professional schools, give applicants a choice to waive their right to view their letters or not. Applicants are encouraged to waive their rights because if they do not, it shows they are not confident in their recommenders.

Who Can Recommend?

Many times applicants get rejected because the recommendation does not suit the application due to the wrong choice of referee. Many factors need to be well considered before choosing a recommender which includes but not limited to:

- How informed is the person about you?
- How internationally recognized is your recommender? His/her fluency and coherence also matters a lot.

All this put together to give you the opportunity of choosing a referee who will write a mind-driven letter about you.

How to Select a Recommender for Your Graduate School Application?

- Your first recommenders are your lecturers/supervisors - who have first-hand information about your academic background and research experience).
- Next is your boss/supervisor - whom you must have worked with during an internship and can access your ability to carry out tasks.

- Most applicants think their Head of Department in school is the first person to recommend them - this is a misconception.

Tips for Getting an Ideal Recommendation Letter

Getting a recommendation is different from getting an almost perfect recommendation that will give you the opportunity of getting your dream actualize. Just as a good recommendation can elevate you, so can a poor one mar you. For an ideal letter, the following tips can be utilized:

- **Getting acquainted with the prospective recommender:** Maintain a good and healthy relationship with your lecturers in school/ supervisor at work; this includes gaining their interest and trust.
- **Maintain good communication:** This is important, as the first tip above is well developed based on this; without communication, the relationship fades off (see a sample below).

Student:

Good Morning Sir,
 Quite some while, how is everything sir?
 Just checking on you as well as showing appreciation for taking time to impact our knowledge and experiences in me
 Thank you very much sir
 Do have a wonderful weekend.
 [First Name] [Last Name]

Professor: You're warmly welcome

January 1

Student:

Here's wishing you all the joy of the season. Have a Happy New Year!
 [First Name] [Last Name]

Professor: Same to you

- **Prior awareness:** This is as important as the letter itself. Do not fill in a recommender unless you have their consent to ensure their availability to provide you a reference within the required time.
- **Choose up to 5 recommenders:** Have a list of recommenders; if you can get more than three, this will be great. Some of them might have a tight schedule to write you a reference letter when needed or when you have a short deadline; hence, you need alternatives.
- **Early Decision:** Decide early on the number of applications you want to submit and fill in the "Recommendation" part of each application at almost the same time. Many recommenders love to fill out the recommendation questionnaire and upload your letter for different schools at a sitting, to save them time.
- **Set a Reminder:** Always remember that your recommenders have busy schedules, and they are attending to other requests like yours. Hence, you have to remind them of the deadlines to submit your reference letter (see a sample below)

Student:

Good morning sir!
 I want to remind you that the following Application has been submitted and the recommendation link has been sent forth.
 Khalifa University -MSc Petroleum Geoscience
 University of British Columbia, Vancouver – MSc Data Science
 Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence-MSc Machine Learning.

Also, I will like to bring to your notice that because of external funding I am applying for in those schools, the deadline for the application is Jan 6, 2021 and I hope that you attend to it before then sir.
 Thank you for the support of all time.

[First Name] [Last Name]

- **Appreciate your recommenders' efforts:** You can do this through words or gifts that will motivate them on your subsequent request (see a sample below).

Student:

I really appreciate your effort in helping me achieve the completion of my applications. I have been so disturbed of the enormous recommendation to be filled but you really did surprise me sir.

I'm really grateful. May you be rewarded abundantly. More blessing sir.

Also to not forget – I have few of my application that requires my submission before recommenders get the link. Among which include

University of British Columbia, Vancouver
Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi
PANGEA Erasmus

These three applications will only send link after submission of the application.

Thank you very much sir, I really appreciate.

- **Update your referees on your application status:** This is also as important as other tips. It takes some recommenders little time to get fed up with the enormous request for one student's recommendations. Hence, you must update them on your application status/decision before requesting another/new reference letter.

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATION LETTER

DD/MM/YYYY

The [Name of Committee],
[University Name]
[University/Department Address]

Dear [Name of Committee],

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR [TITLE LAST NAME, FIRST NAME OTHER NAME]

I am delighted to write this letter supporting [Title First Name Last Name's] application for the [Program Name] at [University Name]. [First Name] was my student in the [Department Name and University]. [Mention how long you have known the student]. [In what way or capacity have you known the student – describe extensively]. [Describe the interactions you have had with the student and how it makes the student stand out from others you have interacted with].

[Describe relevant qualities of the student]. [Extensively describe one or two qualities with relevant examples of situations where the student has shown these qualities]

[Describe the academic qualities of the student and also make a comparison with his/her peers]. [Mention awards/honors that the student has received if aware of any]. [Mention how his academic and relevant qualities put him/her in an excellent position to excel in the opportunity you are recommending him/her for]

[Begin this paragraph letting them know that you recommend this student, for example, *I strongly recommend [Mr/Miss/Mrs [Last Name, First Name Other Name], for admission to the [Program Name] at [University Name].* [In one or two sentences, describe why you are recommending him]. [Mention that you can be contacted if they have any questions/clarification].

Yours faithfully,

[Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss] [First Name] [Last Name]

Signature

PART VIII: ACING GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERVIEWS

"All our dreams can come true if we dare to pursue them" – Walt Disney

Congratulations! Getting to this stage in your application means that out of all the hundreds of applicants, your application stood out. The admission committee wants to talk to you, they feel you are a good fit for their program, so they sent you that invite! Pat yourself on the back; you have done well to get to this stage. Only a fraction of applicants gets to this stage.

Now be careful here; this is not an admission letter; it is simply an invite. So, you are still in the race, competing against the best of candidates for the few available slots. The interview is the best place to prove yourself. It is also an opportunity to get a grasp of what the department looks like. Be aware that they are not just interviewing you; you are interviewing them as well! So, you see, it is a game of "FIT." That is the most important three-letter word in graduate admissions. Do you fit the program? By attending this school, will their training get you closer to your goals in life? From the perspective of the faculty, their thought process is like- "Is this student teachable? Are you smart? Can you communicate comfortably? Will you be able to undergo the rigor of graduate school and complete the program in due time? Are you worth investing our money on? These are some of the attributes both parties look out for during an interview or graduate admission week. We will discuss the types of interviews in detail later in this chapter.

With the proliferation of virtual platforms such as zoom, skype, Remo, etc., the interviews are done online, and they simulate an in-person meeting. More than ever before, there is absolute convenience and flexibility with virtual meetings. So as a student, you should be comfortable using these platforms. Different programs use different platforms to conduct their interview. You will receive a document or email containing the links to the event with the



date and time. The time is usually in the time zone of the University, so you have to convert from their time zone to your local time in Nigeria or wherever you would be connecting from.

How can you ace your interview? Before we proceed, let us discuss the types of interviews you can encounter while applying to Grad school.

- 1. OFFICIAL INTERVIEW-** This is an interview set up by the department or supervisor after applications have been submitted. This is the standard interview that you have to attend if you must get admitted. It usually consists of at least two faculty members. They ask you questions, and based on your reply, they judge your sense of reasoning and evaluate if you are the person they have read about in your Statement of Purpose and Resume.

How to prepare for an official interview

- Make sure on the set date, you have a strong internet connection.
- Ensure you are in a space with good lighting. Please do not appear like a shadow. It is also advisable to secure a good location for the interview.
- For your clothing, please do not choke yourself with ties and suits. Wear something comfortable and free.
- READ YOUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE. Understand every single detail of what you wrote in there.

Possible interview questions are;

- **Tell us about yourself-** To answer this question, please resist the urge to talk about your life story. Focus on your academic journey, research experience, and all the skills and experience you have acquired to prepare you for graduate school.
- **Why this program? or Why this University?** – For this question, explain why the program, University, or laboratory is of interest to you. A sample response is shown below

While I was searching for a graduate program that fits for my career goals, I came across the works of Professor xxxxx titled "xxxxxx (make sure it is a paper that aligns with your interest)." In that paper, he/she used "xxx" methodology to unravel the concept of "xxx." That paper lends credence to the fact that an interdisciplinary approach to "xxx" is vital to fully understand our "xxx". This project interests me, as well as the works of Professor xxx. I know that if I want to work on a similar project, I will have to apply to this program- hence my reason for applying.

This type of answer shows that the student is not just applying out of the blue but the student is well informed about the trends in the field he is interested in, which prompted him to apply to that program.

- After the interview, they would ask you if you have any questions for them. You do not just ask any type of question, so we direct the reader to these two useful YouTube resources. It works both for Masters and PhD [Link I](#) and [Link II](#)

2. UNOFFICIAL INTERVIEW- This interview is the one set up by a supervisor or laboratory PI (Principal Investigator) for the sole purpose of knowing you as a prospective student. This can come after you reach out to the Professor at first or even after submitting your application (that is, he/she has read your SOP and portfolio).

Usually, the purpose of this "meeting" is either to inform you about the whole admission process, tell you about the state of funding, the type of research he/she does, to know you more, size up your preparedness for graduate school, or compatibility check and bonding purpose.

Do not be carried away; make sure you humbly and confidently make your intelligence and excellent reasoning obvious! At every meeting, make sure you display your intellectual understanding and your familiarity with the program. It is easier to convince a prospective supervisor than an admission committee, so make sure you win him/her to your side as intelligently as you can.

This can be an important part of the whole admission process because, from these conversations, you can tell if you have a good chance of getting admitted or not. How do you position yourself to have this type of flow with your prospective advisor?

- From the first email, you sent to your prospective advisor (*refer to the Emailing prospective supervisor chapter of this book*), you might have asked for a meeting. If granted, that is where you start creating a bond.
- Now to sustain that relationship (let us say you reached out first in July in the current year) till around March in the following year and beyond, you need to start making your advisor see you as his/her graduate student. Now, what does a Professor and a student talk about in the academic world? Mainly research ideas, papers they have read, upcoming conferences, a manuscript they have submitted, or other interesting things, etc.
- How do you act like a graduate student? The first step is to peruse the Professor's website in detail. You can visit his website at least once a month. If the Professor does not have a personal website, peruse their laboratory's website very well, understand the research they are involved in, download the lecturer's CV, know the school he/she got Ph.D. from, grants he/she has won. If there is an active grant, then that Professor most likely wants to hire a graduate student to work on the research the grant was awarded for, and that should be your interest too, or something closely related to the grant's goal. You will not use all this information during conversations, but you will need it because it will come in handy at a time you least expected.
- Every month, you can find something to send to the Professor that interests you- at least once a month. After your first successful email, you can request a zoom call, some
- Professors will accept, and others may not. After a zoom meeting, make sure you send a follow-up email, thanking them for taking out time to speak to you. You can also follow up on a discussion you had during the conversation.
- While reading more about your proposed research, for example, you came across a fascinating paper, email your Professor, talk about it but make sure it is a paper that your Professor has expertise on, preferably his/her paper. Read your Professor's papers, ask questions (you definitely will not understand everything, research papers are not storybooks). If you have a new idea or something that comes up in your brain, write that idea down and shoot your Professor an email. The idea might be foolish to you, but innovation and scientific discoveries were brewed out of curiosity.
- Another opportunity to send your Professor an email is when you have your GRE or TOEFL score. If your score is great, send that email! If your score is not that great, please do not send it if he/she does not ask. If your score is bad, send an email before applying, explaining that your score is low due to XXXX, and ask if it would affect your chances of getting in. If he says NO, continue with that school; if he says you should retake it or sounds somehow, delete that school from your wish list.

- Did you submit a paper for a conference? Send an email to your Professor stating that your abstract was accepted for a conference, tell him the date and time, invite him/her if it is a virtual conference. Even if he does not attend, he will have a good impression of you.
- Did you win an award? You can send an email stating the body that gave you the award, why you were given, etc. For example, you won a "Best paper presentation award" in a conference or workshop, tell your prospective supervisor.
- Anything good that portrays you as someone interested in working with him, do it. See a scenario below

A Professor was following me on Twitter even before I reached out to him, I indicated that in the first email I sent to him. I also know someone that knows this professor (A mentor of mine in the US), and during our meeting, her name sufficed. All these things help to create a good bond between you and your prospective advisor!

Another one- I was checking a professor's website, and I saw a link he was featured in. In that link was a podcast he was invited as a speaker. I listened to that one-hour recording where he talked about his journey from being a kid to how he got into Geology. I noticed we had something in common, I sent him an email and sent a picture evidence to him (A secondary school year book where I wrote my future ambition was to become a geologist).

Please note that while active follow-up is excellent and effective, it is not a one-size-fits-all kind of thing as not every Professor probably wants that or has that time. There could even be cases in which you may want to join another Professor's group when you resume at the school because research interests change with time. And in that case, if you have become too attached to a Professor, it will be hard to detach and work with another Professor whose research now really looks excellent to you upon resuming at the school. We do not know it all from speaking to just one Professor from Nigeria. When people get to graduate school, things may change, and it is no problem. There is flexibility to decide what you want to do abroad.

Note: You have to be a competitive student before this method can work for you. You have to be interesting and have a track record of interest in your field. Remember that you are not the only brilliant student reaching out to this Professor; other Professors are recommending their students to another university for admission (this happens). If you have no one to recommend you, you need to stand out by every reasonable means and chance that you have.

REFERENCES

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- ETS GRE Official Guide Books
- Youtube
- Photo by Daniel Thomas on Unsplash
- Photo by Cytonn Photography on Unsplash



www.ischolarinitiative.org



info@ischolarinitiative.org



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@iScholarInitia1