

ADMISSION

Admissions Statement

The mission of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Houston Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) is to maintain an innovative and diverse environment that provides an unprecedented breadth of opportunities for outstanding graduate students to train with leading biomedical scientists at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and UTHealth Houston. To this end, all applicants to the GSBS are evaluated based on a holistic process.

GSBS Structure and Degree Programs

Recognizing that contemporary biomedical research often involves interdisciplinary approaches, the faculty has developed its educational programs to make its vast resources available to students with minimal constraints. Major emphasis is placed on studies leading to the PhD degree, but all PhD students may elect to complete an MS degree prior to starting dissertation studies. Students with specific interests in acquiring technical and specific professional skills may be admitted to courses of study for the MS degree. The GSBS also offers two certificate programs. In addition, persons who wish to take courses and/or conduct research, but not as part of a formal degree program, may be admitted as non-degree students. Degree, certificate and non-degree programs offered at the GSBS are described in the following sections.

Applicants for the MS and PhD Degree Programs

Applicants must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution or its equivalent. A solid background in the basic sciences is recommended. An MS degree is not required for admission into the PhD program.

Applicants are expected to have a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a scale of 4.0 on undergraduate and graduate level coursework.

Applicants are not required to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE).

A student admitted to the GSBS MS degree program may not matriculate into a GSBS PhD degree program prior to the completion of the requirements for the MS degree. An exception to this policy may be granted with approval from the Dean.

Applicants may submit only one application per year for a particular degree program. If an application is rejected, the applicant may reapply to that degree program after one calendar year. For reapplication, the applicant is expected to complete a new application for admission and supply any additional materials to update their application.

Factors Considered in Admissions Decisions

The GSBS Admissions Committee may consider a range of factors including:

- Previous research experience and accomplishments, including participation in science activities, enrollment in laboratory and research-based courses, and involvement in research projects, presentations of research findings and publications;
- Expressed commitment to a career in the biomedical sciences;

- Undergraduate grade point average;
- Performance in undergraduate courses in the biological and physical sciences and mathematics;
- Trends in academic performance;
- Degree of difficulty of undergraduate academic program;
- Previous graduate-level study, including course grades, grade point average, and degree of difficulty;
- Honors and awards for academic achievement;
- Success in overcoming socio-economic and educational disadvantages;
- Multilingual proficiency and performance on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for International applicants;
- Non-academic responsibilities, such as employment and family responsibilities; and
- Involvement in community activities.

Application Procedures

Applications must be submitted electronically through the online application system, Embark. A link to the online application form can be found in the Admissions section of the GSBS website.

All components of the application must be submitted electronically. Please note that there is no need to submit official transcripts or test scores as part of the preliminary application process. This information will be self-reported by the applicant. Copies of transcripts and test scores are to be uploaded into the application system.

- **Online application form.**
- **Grade Point Average** – GPAs must be converted to a 4.0 scale.
- **Unofficial transcripts** – An unofficial copy of the transcript from each college and university attended is required.
- **TOEFL scores** (International applicants) – The applicant should upload a copy of the ETS score report.
- **Application fee** – A \$50 application fee is required. Fee waivers are available by request.
- **CV/Resume** – A CV or resume is required and should include academic honors, scientific publications and presentations, awards received in college, employment history, internships, summer research programs, education history, etc.
- **Personal statement** – The personal statement should be one page in length and should be a discussion of the applicant's motivation and rationale for pursuing a graduate degree. The statement should specifically address objectives in seeking advanced education, professional goals, areas of study in which the applicant wishes to specialize, reasons for seeking admission to GSBS, and how the applicant's professional goals may be met in the GSBS.
- **Research statement** – Students must describe their research background and experience relevant to their application to the GSBS. In this one-page statement, students should provide a detailed description of at least one independent research project, including a hypothesis, aims of the project, description of data generated, conclusions drawn from this data and the significance of this work. Prospective MS students without research experience should explain other work experiences that make the student a suitable candidate for graduate school. The research statement is required for PhD applicants and applicants to the MS program in Biomedical Sciences.
- **Optional Essay** – A brief statement detailing the ability to recover quickly during difficulty. This is one important characteristic that can contribute to success in graduate school. Resilience can be activated

and strengthened through many situations in life, for example, by overcoming financial hardship to pursue education or by leading an organization to a major goal. Applicants may provide an optional essay to share their personal story of resilience. Since this essay is optional, the information shared will only be used to learn more about the applicant and provide the committee with more insight to the applicant's personal journey towards graduate school.

- **Three letters of recommendation** – Three letters of recommendation are required to be submitted via the online system by persons well qualified to evaluate the applicant's scholastic performance, scientific ability, research interests and motivation, and personal attributes such as character; contact information for these reference writers must also be provided. If the applicant is currently enrolled in, or has completed, a graduate program, one of the recommendations should be from the applicant's academic advisor or mentor.

Admitted applicants with degrees from foreign institutions must submit a transcript evaluation indicating the degree is equivalent to a U.S. baccalaureate degree prior to matriculation. Only a general evaluation is required.

Admissions interviews may be requested by the GSBS Admissions Committee. Interviews conducted by GSBS faculty are a required step to be admitted to the PhD program. Final admission requires receipt of official transcript, Educational Testing Service (ETS) score report documents (if required), and is contingent upon a satisfactory completion of the criminal background check.

Applications to the accredited programs in Genetic Counseling and Medical Physics are reviewed by program-level admissions committees who make recommendations to the Dean regarding admission.

Special Information for Foreign and Non-English-Speaking Applicants

Applicants who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and who have not obtained a bachelor's or master's degree from a U.S. school will submit the same application materials described above. However, all foreign nationals whose native language is not English, and who have not attended an English-speaking university, must take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) which is administered by the Educational Testing Service and used as a measure of the applicant's proficiency in English at the time of application.

All international students admitted to the GSBS who do not have a degree from an English-speaking institution will be required to take a diagnostic English language skills test administered in the GSBS before the start of Fall semester classes. The test will evaluate the student's ability in the areas of listening and speaking, reading and writing, and grammar and vocabulary. Admitted students whose English skills are thought to require help for successful performance in the GSBS will be asked to take an English language skills course during the first year at the GSBS.

Application Deadline

Complete applications, containing all application materials, must be submitted by a specific deadline, which is posted on the GSBS website in the Admissions section.

Enrollment of Graduate Students from Affiliated Institutions

Through reciprocal agreements, students at other components of The University of Texas System, as well as graduate students from Rice University, Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Woman's University, the University of Houston, Texas A&M Health Science Center-Institute of Biosciences and Technology, and the Gulf Coast Consortium may take graduate courses for credit at the GSBS, subject to the approval of the instructor. In addition, GSBS students may take courses for credit at any of the above institutions. The mechanisms for payment of tuition and registration fees vary according to the individual institution. Consult with the UTHealth Houston Office of the Registrar for specific details.

Non-Degree Students

Qualified individuals who hold a bachelor's degree in science, who have a demonstrated interest in a career in research, and who wish to take courses at the graduate level without enrolling in an MS or PhD degree program may be admitted to the GSBS as non-degree students. Application to be a non-degree student requires:

- **Online application form.**
- **Personal statement** – A one-page statement that explains the applicant's motivation for pursuing enrollment as a non-degree seeking student, including a proposed course of study.
- **Unofficial transcript(s)** – from each college and university attended.
- **Application fee** - A \$50 application fee is required. Fee waivers are available by request.
- **CV or Resume** – Include academic honors, awards received in college, employment history, internships, summer research programs, education history, etc.
- **Three letters of recommendation** – Three letters of recommendation are required to be submitted via the online system by persons well-qualified to evaluate the applicant's scholastic performance, scientific ability, research interests and motivation, and personal attributes such as character; contact information must also be provided.
- **Deadline** – The deadline to apply as a non-degree student is two months prior to the start of the semester.

Students admitted as non-degree seeking students must submit official transcripts, immunization records and have a background check performed prior to enrollment. Instructions regarding these and other pre-enrollment requirements will be sent by email once admitted.

A non-degree student will be admitted for one year. No commitment to eventual admission to a degree program is implied by admission as a non-degree student. Re-admission for additional periods of study as a non-degree student will be considered by the Dean, and is dependent in part on the student maintaining at least a 3.0/4.0 grade point average in GSBS courses. Application for re-admission requires a written statement by the applicant reviewing past performance and future goals.

Employees

Employees of institutions within the Texas Medical Center may, with consent of the instructor and the employee's supervisor and with permission of the Dean, register for GSBS courses each semester. Registration forms for this purpose and information regarding tuition and fee costs are available from the UTHealth Houston Office of the Registrar. Employees must submit an official transcript from their undergraduate

institution verifying that they have earned a bachelor's degree or the equivalent prior to enrollment.

Guidelines for Employees Who Wish to Pursue a GSBS Degree

Any employee of an institution in the Texas Medical Center may, with consent of the instructor and the employee's supervisor and with permission of the Dean, register for GSBS non-research courses. If the employee is eventually admitted to the GSBS, courses taken while an employee will appear on the student's transcript and may be used to meet GSBS degree requirements, with the approval of the student's Advisory Committee and the Academic Standards Committee.