Thank you for your interest in the Education Ph.D. program at UCSC. These FAQs provide answers to questions commonly asked by our applicants.

For quick reference, the responses are organized generally regarding: general admissions process and timeline (Q 1-3), application requirements (Q 4-14), degree requirement (Q 15-16), international student concerns (Q17), the program and costs (Q 18-24), how to find out more (Q25).

1) What is the timeline for applying to the Ph.D. program, and how do I apply?
Applications are accepted between October 1 and December 1 each year for entry the following Fall Quarter – there are no spring admissions. For general information about admissions and to access the online application, see the Application Filing Requirements on the Graduate Admissions site: http://graddiv.ucsc.edu/prospective-students/application-filing-requirements/index.html. This site is also a valuable source of general information about graduate studies at UC Santa Cruz. There are no paper applications. No late applications will be accepted.

2) Has UCSC received all of my application materials?
It is up to applicants to track the status of materials they’ve submitted. Within a few business days of submitting your application, you will receive email(s) that contain your username, a link to the MyUCSC portal, and login information. Portal access lets you monitor the status of your application and supporting materials. You should follow-up about materials that have not been received – first with the sender, then with Graduate Admissions (gradadm@ucsc.edu).

3) When can I expect to hear about the admission decision?
The department typically makes admission decisions by mid- to late-February and relays its decisions to Graduate Admissions. The official offer of admission and funding is sent via email from Graduate Admissions. Admitted students have until April 15 to accept or decline the offer. Graduate Admissions will also send the email notifications to students denied admission. These usually follow shortly after the admissions offers.

4) What tests do I need to take?
The GRE is required in order to apply to the Ph.D. program in Education. You can find information about the test, registration, test centers and test dates at www.ets.org/gre. We only accept GRE scores sent to us by the Education Testing Services (ETS) online delivery system. ETS will supply scores for tests taken in the previous 5 years. The code for UCSC is 4860 (there is no department code).

5) How do I prepare for these exams?
The GRE website includes preparation resources. Many books can also be found to help you prepare.

6) Is there money for testing costs?
The GRE site includes information about fee reductions at: http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/fees/reductions.

7) Are there minimum GRE scores for admission? And, how long are my GRE scores valid?
There is no GRE “cutscore”. GRE scores are considered along with all the other aspects of the application. GRE scores are valid for five years after the testing year (July 1-June 30). Currently, scores earned from July 1, 2010, to the present are available.

8) How important are the GRE scores in selecting applicants to extend an offer of admission?
Our admissions committee looks at the entire application, the GRE scores being only one component. If you feel that your scores do not represent your academic potential, you should speak to your concerns in your Personal Statement, or in the additional information section at the end of the application.

9) If I’m not able to take my GRE scores until late November, and my scores come in late, will they be included in my file?
The short answer is yes. The longer answer is that the Graduate Admissions office continues to update the electronic application as supplemental materials (such as letters of recommendation and test scores) arrive. The Education admissions committee will begin looking at applications soon after the December 1a deadline; so for full consideration, it’s recommended that your materials be submitted on time, or arrive as close to the deadline as possible. If you know your unofficial scores, you can report those on the application as placeholders until the official scores arrive.
10) What is the most important portion of the application when being considered for admission?
All aspects of the application are important, and all considered carefully by the admissions committee.

11) What should my Statement of Purpose convey?
This should be a concise, well-written essay about your academic background and your reasons for pursuing graduate study. Admissions committees place particular importance on the statement of purpose. It exhibits your ability to present ideas in clear, coherent language. Your statement of purpose should indicate how knowledgeable you are in the desired field of study, what area of research you intend to pursue, and how your undergraduate studies and other experiences (work, community involvement, and so forth) serve as a foundation for graduate study. In addition, address how and why you intend to build on this foundation of knowledge and apply your doctoral training to theoretical and/or practical problems.

Please mention in your statement of purpose why you want to pursue graduate work in education and why you would like to do it at UCSC.
  • You should address what your goals are in seeking a PhD and what area(s) of research you want to study. Include any possible research questions you want to explore.
  • The Admissions Committee will be looking for a match between the applicant’s proposed area of research and the expertise of the Education Department’s faculty.
  • Describe how you see your work in terms of larger social change or equity in education.
  • You should address any problems or inconsistencies in your academic record, test scores, etc.
  • Your Statement of Purpose is the “face” of your application: it should be substantive, well written, error free.

12) What kind of writing sample would you like? Is it ok to use a writing sample that is not on an education topic?
The writing sample is one source (along with the Statement of Purpose and letters of recommendation) that the admissions committee uses to evaluate students’ writing abilities. Samples can be term papers, field reports, research proposals, or an essay (in addition to the Statement of Purpose) written especially for the application. Education or closely-related topics are preferred, but writing on other topics that demonstrates an applicant’s ability to engage in scholarly or academic writing is also acceptable.

13) How does my undergraduate GPA factor into the admission process?
The undergraduate GPA is one important indicator of students’ academic record and potential; it is considered along with all the other elements of the application. A GPA of at least 3.0 is preferred. If you do not feel your GPA represents your academic potential, you should address this in the Statement of Purpose or Personal History Statement. Your undergraduate GPA should be recorded on the application. If you have taken graduate courses, then use the supplemental information field to report your graduate GPA.

14) Whom should I ask to write letters of recommendation for me?
At least two of the three letters should be from faculty members or other instructors who have taught you in higher education or academic settings. These letters should discuss your potential to successfully complete a doctoral degree program that requires significant reading, writing, analytical thinking, and scholarly research. All the letters should speak to your experiences and interests in the fields or topics you intend to explore in our program, and your potential for successfully pursuing the goals you have set forth.

The letters are important supporting materials, and you’re encouraged to ask for these letters soon after you begin your application. Recommenders can submit their letters before you’ve completed your application. As soon as you list and save their name and email on your application, they will receive an invitation and instructions to upload a letter.

15) Does the program admit students for an M.A. in Education?
While our Ph.D. students have the option to earn an M.A. during the course of their doctoral studies, we only admit students who intend to earn a Ph.D. The Department does offer a Master of Arts/Credential Program, for those students wishing to pursue a career in K-12 teaching. For more information, visit: http://education.ucsc.edu/academics/mac-info/index.html. The MA/Credential Program’s Information Night is usually held in October. For this year’s flyer and to register for the October 8th event, see: http://education.ucsc.edu/academics/mac-info/mac-prospective-students/macinfo-night.html.

16) Do I need a master’s degree to apply for the Ph.D. program?
The basic requirement is completion of a Bachelor’s degree. Many applicants have completed a graduate degree or hold teaching credentials.
17) Does the program admit international students?
The department welcomes applications from international students. The following information may help you decide whether to apply.

(a) English Language Proficiency
Applicants whose native language is not English and who have not received a college degree from an institution in an English-speaking country must take the TOEFL exam (www.ets.org/toefl), or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam (http://www.ielts.org/contact_us.aspx). The minimum passing scores for the Social Sciences Division are: 550 for the paper-based TOEFL, 220 for the computer-based TOEFL, 83 on the internet-based TOEFL, or 7 for IELTS. If you have received a degree from an American institution and have lived in the United States for a number of years, you may be able to request a TOEFL exemption through the department. For more information about waivers, see the English Language Testing section on the Graduate Admissions site: http://graddiv.ucsc.edu/prospective-students/intnl-applicants.html.

To be considered for teaching assistantships, you must score 26 or higher on the speaking section of the TOEFL, or get an overall score of 8 for the IELTS exam.

(b) Supplemental Non-Resident Tuition
Some international students experience financial difficulty meeting the supplemental non-resident tuition (NRT) expense ($5,034 per quarter, $15,102 per year). Unless covered by NRT fellowship support, an international student owes NRT every quarter until they pass their qualifying exam and advance to candidacy (usually during the third or fourth year).

The department may nominate international applicants for a limited number of two-year NRT fellowships provided by the Graduate Division; if any of our nominees is selected, the department may include two years of NRT ($30,204 total, $15,102 per year) in the offer. These fellowships, however, are for the first two years only, so the student would still owe any additional quarters’ of NRT until they pass their qualifying exam.

Assuming they’ve met the English language proficiency requirement to TA, international students have the same eligibility for teaching appointments; these pay a salary and a large portion of graduate student tuition. But teaching appointments do not pay for supplemental non-resident tuition; NRT is $5,034 per quarter, $15,102 per year.

(c) Transcripts
Transcripts must be submitted in the original language and with an English translation. Many institutions may use an alternate grading scale; this is not a problem. Be sure to include at least one copy of the page that shows the explanation of the grading.

(d) Fellowships and Financial Aid
International students have the same eligibility for departmental stipends and tuition fellowships as other applicants. They have the same eligibility for student teaching appointments. They are eligible for Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) positions; these positions are the only graduate student employment that covers non-resident tuition, if applicable. International students are not eligible for diversity fellowships, nor are they eligible for need-based financial aid. It is helpful if international applicants clearly show details about other sources of graduate support for which they’ve applied or have been awarded (e.g., from their government, Fulbright or other scholarship funding). Such funding is not required, but it could help demonstrate that the applicant will have sufficient resources, and is less likely to experience financial difficulties, during their time in the program. The applicant does not need to show actual proof of support until they apply for the I-20, but you should consider your finances closely before accepting an offer. An estimate of graduate student costs can be found at: http://financialaid.ucsc.edu/costs/graduate-costs.html. The amount of support shown in an admissions offer counts towards this budget, but the student will need to demonstrate they have the remaining funds.

18) How much does the program cost? Is there financial support?
Tuition information can be found on the Registrar website at: http://registrar.ucsc.edu/fees/registration/index.html.

Fees usually change yearly.

It is the student’s responsibility to secure funding for graduate studies. Over the course of students’ enrollment in the graduate program, students’ typically fund their education with some combination of the following: TAships, GSRships, UCSC graduate fellowships, scholarships or fellowships from outside sources, loans, personal savings, family income, and support from other individuals (e.g. extended family members). When possible, first year students are supported with UCSC graduate fellowships, which typically cover part of a student’s expenses for the first year only. The campus has a limited number of admissions fellowships that cover more than one year; departments may apply for these on behalf of their applicants, and if their applicant is selected, the offer will show multiple-year funding.
Beginning in the student's first year, he or she is strongly encouraged to apply for TAships in the department and other departments or for college core courses. Students are also encouraged to seek and apply for outside funding from government agencies, private foundations, and industry, and to plan alternative financing should none of these opportunities become available. The Social Sciences Division sends a weekly notice about grant opportunities, and these can also be found on the web at: http://socialsciences.ucsc.edu/faculty-and-staff/grants/grant-opportunities/index.html. Financial aid information is available at: http://financialaid.ucsc.edu/index.html. Financial Aid Adviser Diana Smith, dtsmith@ucsc.edu, handles aid for graduate students.

19) How long does it take to complete the Ph.D. program? Students vary in how long they take to complete the program, but the expectation is that students will finish in approximately six years. Students should have advanced to doctoral candidacy by the end of their third year, but not later than the end of their fourth year in the program.

20) How often are required courses offered? Required courses are generally offered every year or every other year.

21) Is there flexibility in course selection? Faculty advisors work with students annually to determine course selection. Our faculty work very hard to plan the department’s courses to be offered; they take into consideration students’ programmatic requirements and students’ interests when planning each year's courses. Students should be able to complete the required courses during their first two years in the program; many take additional courses while preparing to take their Qualifying Exam.

22) Are there restrictions on course enrollment? Our doctoral courses are available to doctoral students only; our doctoral classes are set at about 15 maximum capacity, but they are often much smaller. Four students is the minimum seminar size. Students from other departments are encouraged, and often do enroll in our courses.

23) What are the opportunities for coursework in other graduate programs on campus? There are many opportunities to take elective courses in other departments and this is highly encouraged to augment your specific research goals. Some courses are open to all graduate students, others by permission code from the instructor. Some campus graduate programs also offer a Designated Emphasis in their fields. To find programs that offer DEs, see this table in the General Catalog: http://registrar.ucsc.edu/catalog/fields/fields-of-study.html. You can find out more from each department’s website, or by contacting their graduate advisor.

24) Are there opportunities to work in other departments? Yes, we have students who hold TAships and GSRships in other departments.

25) How can I find out more about the program? There are many ways to find out about the program. (1) After reviewing the information for prospective students at: http://education.ucsc.edu/academics/phd-info/Prospective%20PhD%20Students.html, you might be interested in reading the student handbook found in the information for Current PhD Students. (2) Each year, the department hosts a PhD Information Night (usually in late October); more information and an online registration form will be available in early fall. (3) Prior to completing your application, we recommend that you arrange a personal interview with at least one of our faculty members whose research interests are similar to your own; see the faculty directory at: http://education.ucsc.edu/faculty/index.php. (4) Applicants selected for admission will be invited to a Visit Day prior to the April 15th acceptance deadline. (5) You can also direct questions about the program to the PhD advisor at edphd@ucsc.edu or to the Graduate Director (currently Professor Judit Moschkovich, jmoschko@ucsc.edu).

Please also review important admissions information on the Graduate Division’s site: http://graddiv.ucsc.edu/prospective-students/application-filing-requirements/index.html.

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