

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
PhD Admissions FAQs – for Fall 2025 Cohort

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

1. What is the timeline for applying to the PhD program, and how do I apply?

The application becomes available on October 1 and closes on December 3 for entry the following fall quarter – there are no spring admissions. No late applications will be accepted.

Before you submit your application online, you're encouraged to check that it is complete and that all the correct attachments have been uploaded. Revised attachments aren't accepted.

For general information about admissions and to access the online application, see Instructions on the Graduate Admissions site: <https://www.gradadmissions.ucsc.edu>.

For information about the Education PhD program, see:
<https://education.ucsc.edu/academics/phd-info/index.html>.

2. Can materials be submitted after the deadline?

The online application system does not accept entries past December 3, 2025 at 11:59 pm PST.

Graduate Admissions will continue to update the electronic application file as supplemental materials arrive (letters of recommendation, test scores). The Education's Admissions Committee will begin looking at applications soon after the December 3rd deadline; therefore, it's recommended to have all materials submitted by the deadline.

- Consider the normal time for test scores to be sent from the testing centers (see the TOEFL or IELTS sites for this information) and schedule your exams early enough so that the scores arrive by the deadline. There is space on the application to self-report your scores if you know them. These may serve for review purposes until the official scores arrive. However, without official scores for TOEFL or IELTS (if required), your application is incomplete (unless you're eligible for a language waiver and show the correct background or provide the requested materials).
- Official transcripts are not needed to apply. Only those applicants who receive and accept an offer of admission will be required to supply official copies of transcripts. You may upload unofficial transcripts to the application for purposes of review. If you have access to some, but not all, of your unofficial transcripts, you should submit official copies of those you haven't uploaded.

3. Can I apply for an application fee waiver?

Currently, the Education Department does not offer fee waivers for this admissions cycle.

4. How do I know that UCSC received all of my application materials?

You will be able to access your applicant portal to monitor the status of your application and receipt of supporting materials.

If a reasonable amount of time has passed since you had materials sent, or took an exam, but you do not see these in the portal, you should take steps to verify the materials have been sent. If you've already verified that materials were sent, then contact Graduate Admissions, gradadm@ucsc.edu, to check for anything that shows in your portal as 'required' (i.e., missing). It is up to the applicant to track the status of their application and to follow-up if they notice anything missing.

Please note that the campus is closed from December 23 through January 2, and you will be unable to reach anyone for assistance until the campus reopens on January 3. The department's review of applications will start shortly after the Dec 3 deadline.

5. What is the admissions review process and when can I expect to hear about the admission decision?

The department begins its review of applications in December and by early January, applications have all been reviewed by one or more reviewers. In late January/early February, the most promising applicants will be invited for a visit day.

The visit day will either be an in-person or a virtual event in early February. This is an invitation-only visit for those who are on a shortlist of applicants who may receive an offer of admission. During this visit, applicants will be interviewed by faculty and will have the opportunity to meet current PhD students and to learn more about the program. After the visit, the list of applicants who will receive offers is finalized. More applicants will be invited than there are places or funding, and not everyone who is invited will receive an offer of admission.

The department makes admission decisions by early March and relays its decisions to Graduate Admissions which will post the official offer of admission and funding in the applicant's portal. Admitted students have until April 15 to accept or decline the offer. Graduate Admissions will also notify students who are denied admission; these usually follow shortly after the admissions offers are sent.

6. Is the GRE required?

The GRE is not required in order to apply to the Education PhD program, nor are GRE scores used to evaluate applicants. Providing a GRE score is unnecessary and doesn't give any advantage.

7. What is the most important portion of the application when being considered for admission?

All parts of the application are important, and the admissions reviewers consider all parts carefully and holistically.

8. What should my Statement of Purpose convey?

The Statement of Purpose should be a concise, well-written essay about your academic background and your reasons for pursuing graduate study.

The Admissions committee places 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 and graduate studies, and other experiences (work, community involvement, etc.) serve as a foundation for doctoral study. In addition, your statement should 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 explain in your statement of purpose why you want to pursue doctoral work in education and in particular why you would like to do that within the UCSC Education Department.

- You should address what your goals are in seeking a PhD, what area(s) of research you think you would like to pursue, and which faculty members you would like to work with since we look 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 portal to your application: it should be substantive, well written, error-free.

9. What kind of writing sample should I submit? Is it ok to use a writing sample that is not on an education topic?

The writing sample is one source used to evaluate an applicant's writing abilities. Samples can be term papers, field reports, research proposals, or an essay written especially for the application (in addition to the Statement of Purpose and Personal History Statement).

Education or closely-related topics to your research interests are preferred, but writing on other topics that demonstrates an applicant's ability to engage in scholarly or academic writing is also acceptable.

10. How does my GPA factor into the admission process?

The undergraduate GPA is one important indicator of an applicant's academic record and potential; it is considered along with all the other elements of the application. A GPA of at least 3.0 is a Graduate Admissions requirement, and is waived by the department only when

warranted by special circumstances.

If you do not feel your GPA represents your academic potential, or if it does not meet the Graduate Admissions standard, you should address this in the Statement of Purpose, Personal History Statement, or in the supplemental information field. There are fields to list both your undergraduate GPA, and your graduate GPA, if applicable. Be sure to include the information about the grading scale in the field provided.

11. 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. Three letters are required (the maximum number is five). These letters should discuss your potential to successfully complete a doctoral degree program that requires substantial analytic, reading, writing, and scholarly research skills and capacities. 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 are encouraged to ask for these letters as soon as you begin your application. Recommenders can submit their letters before you have 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.

12. Do I need a Master's degree to apply for the Ph.D. program? Will previous graduate coursework or a Master's degree transfer?

The basic requirement for admission to the Ph.D. program is completion of a Bachelor's degree.

Many applicants have completed a graduate degree and/or hold teaching credentials. K-12 experience is a preferred, though not required, qualification. While a graduate degree or teaching credential may indicate preparation or readiness for a Ph.D. program, it does not transfer nor count directly towards the Master's requirements in this program, nor does it reduce the number of units required to maintain full-time status. If a student has completed a Master's thesis equivalent to the Second Year Project, that student *may* through a successful petition for exception be allowed to pursue an alternate project that advances their research.

13. Does the program admit students for an M.A. in Education?

While the Ph.D. students have the option to earn a non-terminal M.A. during the course of their doctoral studies, we only admit students who intend to earn a Ph.D. degree.

The Department does offer a Master of Arts/Credential Program, for students wishing to pursue a career in K-12 teaching. Admission to this program is handled by a different departmental faculty group. For more information, see:

<http://education.ucsc.edu/academics/mac-info/index.html>. For more information, email inquiries to: edma@ucsc.edu.

14. I am employed full-time. Is it possible to attend part-time?

The structure of the program's time and place demands assumes students are pursuing the Ph.D. as their full-time primary commitment. During the first two years, there is substantial coursework and a Second Year Project Paper to be completed. Colloquia attendance (typically two per quarter) is also required. Most students maintain full time enrollment at least until they pass their Qualifying Exam and Advance to Candidacy.

Additionally, many graduate students support themselves with teaching appointments (as Teaching Assistants or Graduate Student Instructors), or as Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs). Both kinds of employment – teaching or research – usually involve working 20 hours per week. For many students, these positions are desirable over outside employment because besides paying a salary, they include coverage of most or all of the university's quarterly fees and tuition (including health insurance).

15. How does residency affect my status?

It is very important to fully answer the questions on the application about residency. ALL graduate students pay the same amount in graduate student fees.

In addition, non-CA residents (out-of-state and international students) must also pay non-resident supplemental tuition (NRT). NRT is \$5,034 per quarter, \$15,102 per year—these amounts may vary slightly from year to year. NRT fellowships may be part of the offers made to non-residents, but these are not guaranteed.

Out-of-state students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents would owe NRT during their first year (unless covered by the offer of admission). They may be reclassified as residents for tuition purposes by their second year after 366 days in CA, at which point they will no longer owe NRT.

International students owe non-resident supplemental tuition (NRT) until they advance to candidacy. Most international students receive offers that cover the first three years of NRT, and they should advance by the end of Year 3. If a student doesn't advance by the end of Year 3, quarterly NRT is owed until they do advance. After advancement, international students are exempt from NRT for three years. NRT resumes if an international student doesn't finish their dissertation and graduate during the three years post-advancement.

EXEMPTION: Some applicants are not current CA residents, but may be exempt from tuition in their first year. The most common NRT exemption is available to applicants (excluding international students) who are not current California residents, but who attended three or more years *and* who graduated from a California high school. An applicant who claims this exemption – and who is offered admission – will need to provide a high school transcript

before the fall quarter begins. If determined to be exempt, but not a CA resident, the student will need to establish CA residency by the start of their second year to avoid owing NRT.

For more information about CA residency, including for other exemptions, see the Registrar's website at: <http://registrar.ucsc.edu/fees/residency/>. It is important to answer the citizenship and residency questions accurately. An official determination of residency status, if needed, is not processed unless an applicant actually accepts the offer.

16. How much does the program cost? Is there financial support?

For information about tuition/fees and funding sources, see information at:

<https://registrar.ucsc.edu/fees/registration/graduate-student-fees.html>,
<https://education.ucsc.edu/academics/22-23-graduate-fees.pdf>, and
<https://education.ucsc.edu/academics/phd-info/funding-sources-july2022.pdf>.

Students have guaranteed funding for five years provided they remain in good standing and in normative time for PhD completion. The minimum level of support each academic year is the equivalent of three quarters of funding at the rate for Teaching Assistantships.

Students must nonetheless actively pursue funding for their graduate studies within the competitive opportunities in the department and on campus, as well as through other sources. Over the multi-year period of their graduate program, students typically fund their education with some combination of the following: TAs (teaching assistantships), GSIs (graduate student instructor), GSRs (graduate student researcher), UCSC graduate fellowships, scholarships or fellowships from non-UCSC sources, federal and other loans, personal savings, family income, and support from other individuals (e.g., extended family members).

Besides departmental admissions funding, the campus has a limited number of competitive admissions fellowships that departments can apply on behalf of their applicants, and if their applicant is selected, the offer will show this award.

In consultation with their Faculty Advisor, students are strongly encouraged to apply for TAs and GSRs in the department, as well as in other departments, the College core courses, and other centers of research, instruction, and student support on campus. Students are also encouraged to seek and apply for funding from government agencies, private foundations, and industry, and to plan alternative financing should none of these opportunities become available.

Information about grant opportunities and fellowships are sent regularly from the Social Sciences Division and others can be found at: <http://socialsciences.ucsc.edu/faculty-and-staff/grants/graduate-student-resources/fellowships-scholarships/index.html> and

<http://graddiv.ucsc.edu/financial-aid/fellowships.html>. Financial aid information is available at: <http://financialaid.ucsc.edu/index.html>.

17. How do I find out about TAships or other student employment?

Each spring the department sends a call to its PhD students for the following year's TAships. Because the Education Department has a limited number of TAships, and in order that first year students can concentrate on their studies and transition successfully to a PhD program, new students usually do not get TAships as part of their first year admissions offer, but they are invited to apply if there are vacancies once they enter the program. Many Education PhD students also teach in other departments, programs, or colleges as either TAs or GSIs (graduate student instructors). There is an especially helpful campus Google *tajobs* group that graduate students can subscribe to so they automatically receive news about campus wide vacancies.

18. Does the program admit international students?

The department accepts applications from international students. The following information may help you decide whether to apply.

(a) English Language Proficiency

Important: Read the language proficiency information closely. There are different scores required for admission than for eligibility for Teaching Assistant appointments, and different requirements for waivers of each.

For admission, applicants whose native language is not English and who have not received a bachelor's 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 language test scores for the Education Department and for Social Sciences Division are: 550 for the paper-based TOEFL, 220 for the computer-based TOEFL, 83 on the internet-based TOEFL, or 7 overall on the IELTS.

Note that the requirement to be exempt is that your bachelor's degree was from an English-speaking institution, not your master's degree, if applicable. There is a check box to indicate whether English was the language of instruction at the collegiate institution.

Higher scores are needed to be considered for a Teaching Assistantship (TAship). You must score 26 or higher on the speaking section of the TOEFL, or get a speaking portion score of 8 for the IELTS exam. **Applicants with a Master's degree earned in the US at an accredited institution *and* with TA experience at that university may be eligible for an exemption, but your application must include a letter from the TA supervisor to be considered for a waiver for teaching purposes.**

For more information about waivers of the English language testing, see:
<https://www.gradadmissions.ucsc.edu/scores-transcripts>.

(b) Supplemental Non-Resident Tuition

Unless covered by NRT fellowship support, an international student owes NRT every quarter (\$5,034 per quarter, \$15,102 per year) until they pass their qualifying exam and advance to candidacy (usually during the third or fourth year).

However, up to three years of international NRT *may* be covered in the offer. 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, two years of NRT will be included in the offer. These fellowships, however, are for the second and third year NRT. The first year's NRT *may* be covered by a tuition fellowship from the department which would also be shown in the offer.

(c) Transcripts

If a student is admitted and accepts their offer, official 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, but the scale should be included in responses about GPA. When uploading unofficial transcripts for the application, you need to include at least one copy of the page that shows the explanation of the institution's grading. For the application, you can upload both language versions (combined as a single PDF), or an English translation only.

(d) Fellowships and Financial Aid

International students have the same eligibility for departmental stipends and tuition fellowships as other applicants. Assuming they've met the language requirement for TAs, they have the same eligibility for student teaching appointments. They are eligible for Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) positions; GSR positions are the only graduate student employment that covers non-resident tuition, if applicable. Teaching appointments don't include non-resident tuition (if owed).

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 external 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: <https://financialaid.ucsc.edu/cost-to-attend/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 any remaining funds, if the amount is higher than in the offer.

19. How long does it take to complete the Ph.D. program?

Though this may vary, the expectation is that students will finish in approximately six to seven years. Students should have advanced to doctoral candidacy by the end of the third year of continuous enrollment (or by the end of the fourth year at the latest). After advancement, they have three years to complete their PhD dissertation.

20. How often are required courses offered?

With the exception of core introductory research courses (EDUC 235 and EDUC 237) which are taught annually, required courses are generally offered every other year and students take them with others in their cohort. For more information about the required courses and the rotation, see: <https://education.ucsc.edu/academics/phd-info/phd-requirements-course-schedule-22-23.pdf>.

21. Is there flexibility in course selection?

Faculty advisors work with their advisees to determine course selection. Students should be able to complete most of the required courses during their first two years in the program. Many take additional courses (in this department or others) while preparing for their Qualifying Exam or completing requirements for a Designated Emphasis from another department.

22. Are there restrictions on course enrollment?

The Education doctoral courses are designed primarily for graduate students in Education, although students from other Departments or programs may get permission to enroll. Class enrollment caps are typically set at 15, but classes are usually much smaller. Because of the two-year required course rotation, first- and second-year students will take a number of courses together.

23. What are the opportunities for coursework in other campus graduate programs?

There are many opportunities to take courses in other departments and this is highly encouraged to augment your specific research goals. Many graduate courses are open to all graduate students, others by permission code from the instructor.

Some campus graduate programs also offer a Designated Emphasis (DE). To find programs that offer DEs, see the General Catalog: <https://catalog.ucsc.edu/Current/General-Catalog/Academic-Programs/Designated-Emphases> and also

<http://senate.ucsc.edu/committees/gc-graduate-council/policies-and-memoranda%20/designated-emphasis-policy/index.html>. You can find out more from each department's website, or by contacting their graduate advisor.

When there's no equivalent offering at UCSC, a student may take a course at another UC through an intercampus exchange. They do this *at the same time* that they take courses at UCSC, and they pay their tuition at UCSC. For more information, see:

<https://graddiv.ucsc.edu/current-students/academic-regulations/graduate-student-handbook/section-six.html#six>.

24. Is there a Visit Day for students short-listed for admission?

Applicants being considered for admission are invited to attend a Visit Day for acceptance. This visit is usually held in early February. Prospective students have the opportunity to meet faculty members and other prospective students, hear about the program, and to socialize during the day with faculty members and current doctoral students. Visitors will meet with the Graduate Director and with their potential faculty advisors. This visit also serves as an interview so faculty can get to know you better, hear more about your goals, and consider whether you and this program seem like a good match.

While we encourage attendance from as many invited prospective students as possible, we realize that some people will have work, school, or family conflicts. The best time for short-listed students to visit is on the scheduled Visit Day, but if you are unable to do so (and especially in the case of prospective international students), the Department may be able to accommodate a visit at a separate time, with adequate advance notice.

25. How can I find out more about the Education PhD program at UCSC?

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 want to RSVP to attend an online information session:

<https://education.ucsc.edu/academics/phd-info/phd-information-session.html>.

(2) Prior to completing your application, we recommend that you arrange a personal interview with at least one of our faculty whose research interests are similar to your own – see the faculty directory at:

<https://education.ucsc.edu/people/faculty.php>.

(3) You can also direct questions about the Education program to the PhD advisor edgradadvising@ucsc.edu

(4) You might be interested in reading the most recent student handbook found in the information for Current PhD Students at: <http://education.ucsc.edu/academics/phd-info/Current-PhD-Students.html>.

(5) See also important admissions information on the Graduate Division's site: <https://www.gradadmissions.ucsc.edu>.

(6) Applicants being considered for admission will be invited to a Visit Day.

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