

# FAQ

## Prospective Grads

**Q: Who in the department can I speak with regarding questions about the Graduate program?**

**A:** Contact the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), Nancy Wells, at [nmw2@cornell.edu](mailto:nmw2@cornell.edu) or 607-255-1958.

**Q: When is the application due?**

**A:** Masters are due January 15 and Ph.D. are due December 1.

**Q: May I apply in the Fall to start in January?**

**A:** No, we only have one admission cycle, applications due in December for Ph.D. and January for Masters; students start in the Fall semester.

**Q: To whom do I send my materials to (Rec. Letters, etc.), and where do I send my payment?**

**A:** Applications are submitted online via the Graduate School's application system (available on the web at: <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/applying/apply-now>). Cornell strongly encourages applicants to submit as much material online as possible (by uploading it into the system), but if you cannot upload an item and need to send transcripts, letters, etc., to us, please send them directly to DEA at the address listed on the field page: <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/fields-of-study/field/design-and-environmental-analysis>.

**Q: Is a form necessary along with letters of recommendation?**

**A:** No, it's no longer required with the on-line application system.

**Q: What do I do if I have special funding (Fulbright or other fellowship or scholarship)?**

**A:** Just let us know.

**Q: Is a portfolio required?**

**A:** A portfolio is required for the MA in Design (both the Interior Design concentration and the Sustainable Design Studies concentration), but not for the MS or PhD degrees.

**Q: Must I have a prior design degree to apply to the graduate program in DEA?**

**A:** The answer to this question depends upon the degree and concentration to which you apply.

For the *MA in Design, Interior Design concentration*, only applicants with prior degrees in Interior Design or Architecture will be considered. For the *MA in Design, Sustainable Design Studies concentration*, a prior degree in a design-related field is preferred, but not required.

For the *MS in Human-Environment Relations*, no specific prior degree is required. Students often have undergraduate degrees in Psychology, Architecture, or Interior Design; but sometimes in English, Economics, Anthropology or other fields.

For the *PhD in Human Behavior and Design*, a background in both design and research is preferred, but students may come from a variety of disciplines.

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**Q: What is the minimum undergraduate GPA that you will accept?**

**A:** DEA recommends a GPA of 3.0 (minimum), but this is not an absolute cutoff.

**Q: What are the Educational Testing Service (ETS) codes for Cornell and for DEA?**

**A:** Cornell's institutional test code for ETS is 2098. DEA's department code is 4499.

**Q: What is the minimum GRE score and what happens if my GRE score is lower?**

**A:** DEA recommends a combined verbal/quantitative GRE score of 310 (new scoring system effective November 2011) or a combined score of 1200 (old scoring) but this is not an absolute cutoff. Candidates with strong applications, but scores below this level, may be considered. You may submit scores to DEA more than once if you re-take the test. Your scores may not be older than 5 years.

**Q: Can GRE's be retaken?**

**A:** Yes GRE's can be retaken, but scores must be submitted by the application deadline.

**Q: Can scores for GRE/TOEFL/IELTS tests be submitted AFTER the application deadline?**

**A:** We strongly encourage you to take the GRE and TOEFL/IELTS tests early enough in advance that your scores will be received by our application due date. We *may* allow some latitude, however. If your *official* scores have not arrived by the due date, but your *unofficial* scores have, we may hold your application if approved by the DGS. Your scores are automatically reported to Cornell by the testing service (ETS) as soon as they are ready, and the Graduate Field Assistant will automatically add them to your packet.

**Q: When do I need to declare my major?**

**A:** You must choose your major at the time of application.

**Q: If I apply to another Cornell department and do not get in, can I switch my application to DEA?**

**A:** Yes, the Graduate School can help with this, but you must still adhere to our requirements and deadlines.

**Q: Can I apply for a Master's and a PhD program at the same time?**

**A:** No, you must make a choice at the time of application.

**Q: Must recommendation letters come from faculty members?**

**A:** No. Academic letters of recommendation are valuable; however recommendations should be from people who can best assess the qualities, characteristics, and capabilities of the applicant.

**Q: Am I required to take the TOEFL?**

**A:** According to the Graduate School:

*"Applicants whose native language is not English must take the TOEFL and have the official score reported to Cornell from the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Only students who have studied full-time for two or more years at a college or university where English is the language of instruction located in a country where English is the native language are exempt from the TOEFL."* The official link used by the Grad School to determine if a student needs to take the TOEFL is: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2098.html>.

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**Note** that if a student has completed a *one and a half year* graduate program in the U.S. (or other English-speaking country) prior to coming to Cornell, he or she must take the TOEFL. However, if at the time of application, a student has completed 1 ½ years of a 2 year program, but will have completed the two year program by the time of admission to Cornell, then he or she is not required to take the TOEFL.

**Q: What are the minimum required TOEFL scores?**

**A:** DEA and the Cornell Graduate School have different minimum requirements. *The overall DEA minimum is 105 (combined score) for the internet-based test (ibT) TOEFL. The graduate school minimum is 77; as described here: <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/applying/english-language-proficiency-requirement>*: The Graduate School has set the following minimums for individual section scores for admissions: Writing: 20, Listening: 15, Reading: 20, Speaking: 22.

**Q: How do I submit my transcripts, and do they have to be official?**

**A:** Your transcripts do not have to be official transcripts when you upload them into the Grad School on line application system, but if you are being considered for admission to the program, you will be asked to submit official copies to the department.

**Q: How do I check the status of my application?**

**A:** It is advised that you periodically check your application on line to see if your application is complete, especially if you are waiting for letters of recommendation to be uploaded. DEA's Graduate Field Assistant may, as a courtesy, send you a reminder if you have missing information when the committee begins to review applications. If you have questions, please contact DEA's Graduate Field Assistant at 607-255-2168.

**Q: Is funding provided for Master's degrees in DEA?**

**A:** No funding is guaranteed for the MS or MA degrees.

**Q: Is funding provided for the PhD in Human Behavior and Design (HBD)?**

**A:** DEA provides four years of funding to PhD students in HBD, as long as students' progress and performance is satisfactory. This funding could take the form of teaching assistantships, research assistantships, fellowships, or some combination and is typically for the nine-month academic year.

**Q: What kinds of writing samples are preferred when applying for the PhD in Human Behavior and Design (HBD)? Is there a minimum/maximum length?**

**A:** Scholarly writing sample submissions are preferred (ex: Master's Thesis excerpt; Peer Review Journal Article; Honors Project), There is no minimum or maximum length.

**Q: Should I schedule a campus visit, and if so, how do I go about it?**

**A:** If you would like to schedule a visit, you should first make an appointment with DEA's DGS. If you would like to meet with other DEA Faculty, you could also schedule meetings with them while you are on campus. Many students also enjoy taking a walking tour of campus while they are here: [http://www.cornell.edu/visiting/ithaca/walking\\_tours.cfm](http://www.cornell.edu/visiting/ithaca/walking_tours.cfm). Other useful links include the campus map: <http://www.cornell.edu/maps/interactive.cfm> and the Visit Ithaca web site: <http://www.visitithaca.com/>

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**Q: If I am admitted, but find that I need to defer my admission, do you allow deferments, and if so, for how long?**

**A:** Yes, we allow deferments up to one year, but this must be decided when responding to the department's offer. To request a deferral, by the "reply by" date (typically April 15) an applicant must first accept the offer of admission and then request (and provide a reason for) the deferral. Applicants cannot defer admission after declining our offer; instead the applicant must re-apply.

**Q: Can I transfer credits into Cornell? If so, what are the stipulations for doing so?**

**A:** Yes, but this is on a case-by-case basis, and the DEA Graduate Faculty will make decisions as to what is allowed or not allowed. Typically, you will need to provide a syllabus for your prior course(s).

**Q: Am I required submit both IELTS and TOEFL scores?**

**A:** As an international applicant, you must demonstrate proficiency in the English language by taking a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam. Please see the requirements on the Graduate School website for more information: <http://gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/prepare/english-language-proficiency-requirement>

**Q: Do you accept IELTS scores and what is the criteria?**

**A:** The Graduate School requires an overall band score of a 7.0 or higher on the IELTS.

- When you register for the exam, you may select up to five institutions to which you would like to have your Test Report Form (TRF) mailed. You may also submit a request to your test center to have additional TRFs sent to institutions not originally listed on your registration form.
- Have IELTS send your Test Report Form (either by postal mail, or electronically) to *Cornell University -- Graduate Admissions*. Please do not e-mail a scanned copy, or mail a photocopy of your TRF.