

10/16/2020 19:42

Webinar ID  
971 6978 1167

# Question

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Question

Answer(s)

I am a recent graduate with a Bachelor's degree. Would you advise that it would be better to pursue a Masters before applying? Do I need to have any written/published work to apply?

You absolutely do not need to have published work to apply. We accept applicants with only bachelors degrees as well as those with masters degrees. We don't recommend one possibility over the other.

^Related to this question, does the graduate center have a terminal MA program, or would this be available at another CUNY college?

live answered

The GC has many terminal MA programs, as do the colleges. The GC does not have a terminal English MA, but a number of colleges do.

I am thinking of pursuing an MA in english because I would like to work in a publishing house as an editor or writer in the future. Do you think this is a good route or would you advise taking specific/different courses/degrees in order to work within a publishing house?

you should apply to phd programs for the greater funding resources if for no other reason. Phd programs usually fund you MA programs expect you to pay

agree entirely with Jonathan on this.

Thank you. Could you please point me to which CUNY colleges have terminal English MAs?

I'm sorry. Did Nancy say no evening classes or limited evening classes?

Off the top of my head, City, Hunter—MA &MFA , Brooklyn—MA & MFA, Queens

Most of the senior CUNY colleges have an MA in English. Check cuny.edu

limited.

That's correct, limited. Check our website.

Very closely, I'd say. There are also ample opportunities for informal contact—especially during Friday Forums, which is what we call our department colloquia—and the Program has a robust mentorship program, as Nancy mentioned. Without exception, I've found faculty in our program to be warm and accessible.

As Kandice mentioned, I'm serving a second term as Co-Chair of the English Student Association, which also has a strong institutional and social presence. Through this organization, students are full voting members on a number of joint student-faculty governance committees, including on the Executive and Admissions and Financial Aid Committees (among others).

How closely do students work with faculty? What is the community like for doctoral candidates?

My experience has been that our Program's collegiality and comparative lack of small-p

Does the writing sample have to match the SOP and can I have two separate interests I can list down? I am very impressed with Prof Siraj Ahmad's work and also another professor in science and literature. Can I list both?

You can definitely list multiple professors you'd like to work with. It's best if there is a correspondence between your writing sample and one of the fields your Statement of Purpose claims you plan to pursue in graduate school.

Is inter-departmental collaboration welcomed at CUNY? Are English PhD students encouraged or permitted to take classes in other departments, or receive mentorship from professors in other areas?

Yes you are permitted—and encouraged!—to take classes in other depts at the GC and also at the colleges in the local consortium such as Columbia Fordham and NYU

If, during the application, I select a series of fields and faculty I'm interested in working with, but the admissions committee believes I'll fit better with a different group, will that disqualify me?

live answered

Absolutely not!

Hi. In terms of teaching fellowships, how far into the program are candidates expected to teach a class? Thank you

Most of us begin teaching in our second year. TBH, I didn't reach out to anyone at the Graduate Center—but I did attend the spring open house for waitlisted/accepted students and I was able there to speak directly with faculty and current students. Zooming into events such as these can be a great way to connect with faculty and students!

For Genevieve: how many professors did you email/speak with prior to application?

All that said, I did reach out to a few people—perhaps 3-4 at UCLA, Chicago, and maybe also Ohio State, IIRC. I'm sure some of the faculty on this call can chime in and share their perspective(s) about how they handle/recieve inquiries from prospective students and/or

In the statement of purpose, is it better to propose a particular potential doctoral research project, or to put forward a few guiding questions that animate your research? Or is either fine?

I would suggest doing both, though I think the former is the most essential.

Thank you professor! So can I have one writing sample but list two interests in my sop? My sample is on science and literature (Tennyson) and also Jane Austen and Post-colonialism...does that make me look too wide spread...I love both.

live answered

Yes, you can definitely list two interests. And no, that does not at all seem to widespread to me. 19th-c studies, science, and postcolonial studies go well together.

Hello. Does the Graduate Center offer professionalization workshops or resources for fields outside of academia? With COVID-19, will the amount of students accepted differ from previous years?

We sure do. It's called the Office of Career Planning and Professional Development. It's great. I happen to work in an office that's adjacent to the OCPPD. That's still to be determined. We are a public institution and state funding will probably shape the size of the our class.

In the past we've accepted 20. This year, we plan to accept 15.

Hello! What does it look like to complete an interdisciplinary certificate along with the Ph.D. in English (for example, in Women's Studies)?

Usually the cert programs have a required core course. The other credit requirements are filled by courses cross-listed under the designation of your cert program. These classes live in many different programs.

The ASG is affiliated with IRADAC which runs speakers and events and a lively listserv. Take a look later.

Fantastic! Thank you Dr. Gray. I would also love to know a little more about the Africana Studies certificate-is there limited availability to enroll in this program (if accepted)? Beyond the 15 credits of coursework, does this program hold events, reading groups, etc.?

[https://www.gc.cuny.edu/Page-Elements/Academics-Research-Centers-Initiatives/Centers-and-Institutes/Institute-for-Research-on-the-African-Diaspora-in-the-Americas-the-Caribbean-\(IRADAC\)](https://www.gc.cuny.edu/Page-Elements/Academics-Research-Centers-Initiatives/Centers-and-Institutes/Institute-for-Research-on-the-African-Diaspora-in-the-Americas-the-Caribbean-(IRADAC))

I know those accepted are eventually expected to teach at CUNY schools. I am disabled and can't access every university in the CUNY system easily, would my disability and the limits of public transport be taken into account with potential placements?

All reasonable accomodations will be made so that you are able to fulfill the service requirement (teaching)

Is the GRE required for applying to the PhD program?

live answered

no, we don't require the GRE.

I'm interested primarily in the representation of women in war/conflict literature, but am finding that this is a field with not a lot of source material and criticism beyond the typical "high school syllabus" examples. Can I submit an academic sample that is about a slightly different subject, but present my true research goal in my personal statement?

You can. You should choose a writing sample that you consider to be your strongest or at least strong. Still, it will helps the admissions committee if there's a correspondence between your writing sample and your statement of purpose.

The expectation is that most of the courses you take will be in our Program. Otherwise, you are welcome to take an graduate course in CUNY or the Doctoral Consortium (such as NYU, Columbia, etc) Unlike some other programs, ours allows students to take classes across the GC in any discipline. Certificate-eligible classes will be in disciplines immediately adjacent to English (e.g., Philosophy, Comparative Literature, etc.), so some/many of your classmates in these out-of-department seminars will also be in our program. I've taken quite a few classes outside the department and they've all helped me reframe and recontextualize the mainline work I've done within the department.

I know that it is allowed to take classes outside of the PhD program -- would I be able to center those classes around a particular interest I want to examine (such as journalism, art, psychology, for example)?

live answered

Does acceptance into the program automatically qualify candidates for fellowships/grants or are additional applications required?

An additional application is not required.

I participated in a conference this past Spring as an undergraduate in a topic I'm very interested in, but missed the opportunity to develop the work into a published piece with a journal. For the writing sample, is it all right if I work on this piece myself, have it reviewed by professors I still have access to, and submit it, or does it need to be a writing sample with some sort of qualification (such as submitted academic work)?

Should the essay be based on one text or is that boring and too predictable?

It needs neither to be a published piece nor something submitted for an academic class. Whatever piece of writing best reflects your interests and research capacities makes best sense -- in some cases, that'll be one textual anchor in an essay, and in others, not.

I am interested in 20th century/modernism as well as queer literature/theory/history and have been reading the work of several GC professors. In case I have missed anyone, are there particular professors you recommend I reach out to?

Reach out to those that speak to you. We are all very busy but we will make time to get back to you as best we can. But "as best we can" varies from professor to professor.

Good afternoon! if I plan to use piece of a larger work (specifically, a portion of my masters thesis), is it an issue if it does not encapsulate the entirety of my argument? in other words, if the writing sample on its own does not answer the "so what" question that the entire work does, is it problematic?

In that case, which is common with writing samples, I would suggest you introduce your sample with a headnote that presents your overarching argument.

Along the lines of Prof. Pollard's mentioning that fields and specialties may change, at what point should you be set on what will be your final field/focus as you move through the program? Should an applicant who already has an MA already have this decided, or is there time still to explore?

There is time to explore during coursework. We encourage students to explore

I have a question for Professor Pollard. My interests lie in the intersection of anti-fascist resistance and affects in South Asian feminist movements. Is it advisable for me to apply if the faculty working on affect do not work in the area of South Asian literature?

I don't think that should be a problem - faculty don't need to work on precisely your area in order to be able to guide you productively. As long as there are faculty who seem to you to look like people you could learn from and who could advise you, it doesn't matter how precisely their research specialties line up.

does the admissions committee look into the personal/social media presence of applicants?  
Two questions:

No  
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1) is it at all helpful to submit a personal statement?

a statement is part of the application.

But we think of it as a statement of (academic) purpose, not a personal (i.e., primarily biographical) statement. The latter is not required or

and 2) if my last degree involved a long writing process during which my field interest changed, is it okay to submit something that is technically within early modern but addresses more contemporary concerns - which are closer to my field interest (critical theory)?

you'll want to submit work that aligns as well as possible with the fields you indicate are your primary fields of engagement.

What conversations/places should we be entering and listening to in order to make arguments in our paper? Other dissertations? Pop culture? Specific databases?

you could certainly look at dissertations, or at journals, or contemporary books. You might think about starting with the materials that helped you identify your research interests in the first place.

My interests lie in an author whose work I have only known through translation. I'm very interested in discussing the misrepresentations of his work in various English translations, but I have a very limited knowledge of the author's native language (French). While I am aware of resources that could help me work around this, I wonder if this factor could possibly hinder my chances of being accepted into the program based upon such a proposal.

This might depend partly on whether you can identify faculty members who would be in a good position to understand and guide you in this material.

while many of us in the department work in several languages the question of translation and translatability remains vital but is not a barrier to research interests--in one language versus another. I would encourage you to flag how this might inflect the processes of investigation. // If you really want to focus on translation, then you should begin studying French and signal your intention to continue doing so.

I completed my Masters this year at the GC in the MALS program. Would classes I took during this, that could apply to a certificate (film studies), be applied eventually, or would I have to start from scratch there?

It is my understanding that the certificate programs do not accept courses for transfer. But, it would be best to reach out to them directly. They try to be as flexible as possible. No, not necessarily. Ideally you should have someone with expertise in your area, who can comment on your training and potential in the field, but you're welcome to draw on people who know your research well who aren't in English departments.

We accept up to 25 credits from previous, related graduate work. The decision on approving those transfer credits would occur during your first year.

Should the recommendations be limited to academics from the field of English?

can we have access to these questions after the conference?

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with few exceptions for specific situations, all students accepted to our program receive five years of funding, regardless of citizenship.

How is the funding for international students? If there is one at all

I have interest in both the English and Philosophy doctoral programs at CUNY, but I am unsure if I should I apply to only one of the programs or both. More specifically, I am excited by many of the English courses that have been offered in the last five years but can more easily identify potential academic mentors in the philosophy program. I don't know if my inability to identify English mentors in my subfields of interest would only hinder my application and would be interested to learn what the program and the GC would advise.

The GC does not allow applicants to apply to more than one Program. So it cannot be both.

If you don't see faculty in English who look like they could be good mentors for you, it's probably not the right department for you.

As someone who is interested in poetics & aesthetic theory, is there an opportunity to include a creative sample as well as the critical? My research interests will intersect with different creative elements

Some applicants do send creative work. Because this is a research degree, I would feel cautious about this, and would recommend focusing on critical work. That said, if you feel that your creative work encompasses and contributes to your critical agenda, you could try.

I am an international student. I don't have a question right now. But will it be okay if I email you later? @Inmaculada.

yes! glad you're here!

Continuing to work is fine if you have the flexibility to attend classes when they're offered, and to teach when you're assigned to, and you can manage your time commitments. I would just warn that the program's workload is substantial, so depending on how many additional hours you work, you might find it difficult to balance everything.

Is continuing to work while in the program discouraged since it is funded?

I might have missed this when hearing the programs listed earlier, but which department would I seek more information with if I ultimately want to go into Writing Center Pedagogy?  
Is there an application fee?

You should contact Amy Wan or Marc McBeth they are the two leading pedagogy scholars at the GC

Yes. You can find that info on the admissions webpage

I'm sorry if this was already asked and I missed it, but around how many applicants for the Ph.D. in English does the GC get per year? (With the acknowledgement that this is a strange and unpredictable year)

last year we received 276 applications. this year is a big, open question! we typically have gotten between 275-300 applications per year.

we're putting together a contact list that we'll make available to all -- please write me after!

what is the best way to be put in contact with current students?

Ideally the letter would show that the recommender knows the applicant and the applicant's work well, and can situate that work in the context of the field. Being able to give us a sense of what is distinctive about the applicant, and what kinds of contributions that applicant is likely to make, is really valuable.

What does an impressive recommendation letter include? What do you look for in a recommendation letter?  
'@Inmaculada Can I email you to get a copy of the Statement of Purpose guide you shared?

yes, please!

Hi! I think it's so cool and generous that you all are offering this, thank you! I know this has come up a little already, but I appreciate the advice to reach out to current students and professors. I also know everyone is super busy, so I was wondering if anyone who has received those kinds of emails can speak to things that make them more compelling? Other than just like, "Hey, what's the vibe like?"

I think having a fairly specific question is good. Sometimes applicants contact me to say they're interested in early modern studies at the GC, and ask me about my research and what kinds of courses I'm anticipating offering in coming years, or something similar. We understand that people are reaching out and gathering information, and although we might not always be quick to reply, we're happy to hear from you and share thoughts!

How well fleshed out do you want the research question articulated in the personal statement to be? Do you expect it to refer to potential directions within a field or are you looking for something much more specific? I am particularly curious about that because I am currently an undergraduate.

Specificity always makes proposals stronger, but the specificity might pertain, primarily, to work you've already completed. You can only be so specific about something you haven't yet begun.

I have a question regarding the publications on the CV. Is it okay to mention your public writing publications, like your writing on Medium or Guardian, on it?

Yes

In recent years we've had around 300 applicants, for around 20 spots. This year we'll be accepting slightly fewer, around 16.

I'll answer this question indirectly. I think that if you chose professors with whom you've had a relatively close relationship and who you think are extremely professional/responsible, you'll receive recommendations that do everything they need to do. Professors

Research questions will vary - some are much more fleshed out than others. As long as we can see some exciting curiosity and some knowledge of what's happening in the field, we don't need to have a precise agenda in place.

How important is it to be published before applying? Many are already published who get into schools. I am from California...this seems to be a trend. Please advise.

we have no expectation that anyone be published before applying.

It might not be disqualified, but it might count against you. When I read samples that are overly long, I make a mental note that the applicant isn't attentive to the requirements, and I tend not to regard them as highly.

I have a question regarding the length of the writing sample and SOP. If your writing sample and SOP exceed the page limit/word limit, does your application get disqualified?

No, but it likely—or at least possibly—won't be read beyond the limit.

Great share on public-facing scholarship, Prof. Gray. I am now more interested in this component of study at GC.

live answered

Thanks!

Hello everyone, thank you for all of this wonderful information. I am wondering if one of the presenters can talk a but about the Interuniversity Doctoral Consortium, which I see the Graduate Center is a part of. Thank you!

live answered

Would you suggest writing something to match our preference if we did not in school? Or should it be a piece of academic writing?

it should be "academic" insofar as it demonstrates research and analysis.

But it does not necessarily need to be an essay that you've written for a class.

I completed my MA at the GC, and so some of the people I would want to ask to write a letter for me are in the English department at the GC. Is that ethical/appropriate?

Yes

I think so. I did my MA at Hunter and had contingent GC/Hunter Profs write me letters of rec.

Sorry if this is redundant—are MA credits from universities outside of the CUNY system transferrable?

yes

Thank you so much to everyone who spoke. My question is for the current students. Have your academic interests changed or shifted at all since entering the program? If so how have you navigated this transition?

live answered

When is the deadline for the application? Is there a fee?

Jan 1st. There is a fee.

Thank you so much for the thorough responses about the Consortium! It sounds like a wonderful resource!

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I am used to using MLA citations, is there a preference of citation style for the research paper?

No

Should recommendation letters be from professors? Would work supervisors or co workers also be acceptable? This is coming from someone who has graduated with my BA a while back and I feel that my old professors would not have a good insight into my interests for grad school when compared to those I work with everyday.

Recommendations should be able to comment on your academic qualifications, so those from professors are preferable.

How many professors within our field of interest do you expect us to refer to in the personal statement? How closely familiar with their work are we supposed to be?

I'd say at least a couple, and you should have enough familiarity to say why they would be a good match for you.

Thank you addressing the anxiety of asking professors Siraj Ahmed.

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As an applicant to a PhD program, is going out on a limb advisable? is there an amount of weird or odd that is counterproductive, or does it just add colour to the application?

the best advice on this is to be true to yourself! don't be weird or odd just for its own sake, but realize also that we are all weird or odd and hence English people!

Perhaps others have differing advice, but I'd encourage you to go out on a limb—if/only if you can stay granular while doing so! Setting a starting point, then being able to riff on that in an informed but unconventional way often leaves you & your reader in a really lovely headspace—I think working towards that as your goal can be an

I would like to amplify the gratitude that other participants within this Q&A are expressing. This has been an extremely helpful and informative info session. A few presenters mentioned that the Graduate Center offers a strong sense of community and warmth. I'd like to hear more about what specific experiences and opportunities the GC offers for collaboration and community within the doctoral program? Thank you!

live answered

Beyond the examples I spoke about, I'd note that a lot of my students have formed writing groups with each other, and are really committed to helping each other develop their thinking and writing.

Thank you for all of this amazing concrete information—it's helpful and so compelling. I'd be curious to hear a little bit more about the specific opportunities within the program for for developing pedagogy. I see teaching as a key aspect of my doctoral training, and I'd love to hear more anecdotally about the pedagogical opportunities the GC offers.

live answered

How does one register for the teaching bootcamp -- would we hear about it if we managed to get into the program?

Yes if you're admitted you will receive the information about teaching....

How would you describe the faculty advisor/candidate relationships during the degree? supportive or rigid? ie: if I'm working through a difficult section, or need individual attention for something, will it be forthcoming, or will I be "on my own?"

It absolutely should be forthcoming (within reason, of course). In my experience, the faculty here are generous with students and attempt to support them not just academically but through their inevitable graduate school difficulties.

That really depends on the individual advisor and on the chemistry, but like Siraj, I've seen very generous and supportive relationships.