Tips for applying to graduate school

Your application will be reviewed by at least three School of Life Sciences faculty members. Think about which faculty mentors you might like to work with, and on what types of projects.

Use the references cited in their journal articles to learn more about each faculty member's research and whether it appeals to you. Identify these faculty members in your statement of research interest, and on the application so we know whom you would like to review your application.

1. **Prepare your statement of research interest with care.**

   This statement does not tie you to a specific research project. We use it to identify students who have a mature sense of the type of research they want to pursue in graduate school. We look for students who can think critically and write clearly about a research problem.

   Be sure to mention the faculty members you might like to work with and the types of specific projects that interest you. *Hint:* Don’t begin your statement with, “Ever since I was a child...”

2. **Email the faculty member(s) you are interested in working with.**

   Tell them about your interests and reasons for wanting to work with them. Ask about the projects currently in progress in their lab, and ask whether they are accepting additional students in the coming year.

   We like to receive these letters and usually answer them promptly. Realize that our application procedure relies in part, on how well a student fits our research programs. It helps if a specific faculty member is excited to have you join our school.

3. **Consider visiting the campus.**

   We care about whether the fit between a student, a program, and a faculty member is a good one. That can be difficult to evaluate from an application. A visit allows you to sell yourself directly; it puts a "face" on your application and allows you to evaluate our programs more closely.

   Travel funds are usually available for top applicants to visit SOLS, so if you are a serious candidate for one of our programs, ask the your potential mentor or the
Grad Program Associate Director if funds are available to help defray the cost of airfare.

4. **Ask your potential mentors and our current graduates the tough questions.**
   Compare the places you are considering for graduate school and do not hesitate to ask us for more information. We are confident the more you know about us, the greater the chance you will select our program for your graduate studies.

   *Hint:* Get the details about grad stipends and quality-of-life issues with grad students and the Grad Programs office staff, but spend your valuable time with potential faculty mentors talking about your research interests.