

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

---

TO INTERNATIONAL  
**MASTER'S**  
PROGRAMMES ADMISSION

BY ILIANA BOBOVA

# contents

**03**

**About This Guide**

**04-05**

**The Author**

**06**

**Why Study  
for a Master's  
Degree**

**07**

**When to Study  
for a Master's  
Degree**

**08-11**

**How Master's Degree  
Programmes Differ**

**14**

**Prerequisites  
for Admission to  
Master's Degree  
Programmes**

**15-17**

**How to Select a  
Programme and a  
University for your  
Master's Studies**

**18-21**

**Step-by-Step  
Preparation  
Timeline**

**22-23**

**Admission  
Tests**

**24-27**

**The Application  
Package**

**28-29**

**Applying for a  
Scholarship**

**29**

**Budget Your  
Preparation**

Atendia Ltd. **2016**

Author: **Iliana Bobova**

Graphic Design: **Maria Stankova**

Publishing: **Atendia Ltd.**

Copyright: **Iliana Bobova**

The content of this publication is protected by copyright. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied or reproduced, in any form or by any means, without the prior written consent of the publisher.

GMAT is a registered trademark of the Graduate Management admission Council TM. The Graduate Management Admission Council TM does not endorse, and is not affiliated with the owner or the content of the current publication.

TOEFL and GRE are registered trademarks of the Educational Testing Service. The Educational Testing Service does not endorse, and is not affiliated with the owner or the content of the current publication..

## A few words About This Guide

This guide is a comprehensive and user-friendly tool for international students who are considering pursuing a Master's degree programme in their home country or abroad.



# MASTER'S E-BOOK

Allow enough time for research so that you can carefully select the programmes that are the best match for you.

A Master's degree may come under different names in different education systems. Here we are referring to the specialised degree which comes after you obtain your first university degree.

The advice provided in this guide focuses on applying for admission to programmes taught in English in the fields of management, business administration, marketing, finance and related subjects.

Although the guidelines may be applicable for admission to Master's degree programmes in other fields, there may be differences in terms of admission requirements, types of aptitude tests, required minimum test scores or some of the documents in the application package. If you are considering an international Master's programme in Business Administration (MBA), then check out PrepAdviser's [Step-by-Step Guide to International MBA Admissions](#).

It is never too early to find out the steps to take to ensure admission to the best-matching international Master's degree programmes. A post-graduate qualification is the springboard to your professional growth and the career of your choice.

Allow enough time for research so that you can carefully select the programmes that are the best match for you. Then, commit to good preparation so that you increase your chances of admission to the programmes of your choice. In this way you can enjoy your studies and quickly progress along your professional path.



**IT IS NEVER TOO  
EARLY TO FIND  
OUT THE STEPS TO  
TAKE TO ENSURE  
ADMISSION TO THE  
BEST-MATCHING  
INTERNATIONAL  
MASTER'S DEGREE  
PROGRAMMES.**

---

Iliana Bobova

## THE AUTHOR

# Iliana Bobova

Iliana Bobova has built a unique professional profile and a holistic approach to education and career development at all stages of post-secondary education. She is really passionate about educational advising and career coaching.

She has over 15 years of consulting practice in international education and has advised prospective students from all over the world for their Bachelor's, Master's and MBA applications and career development.

She gained her professional training at the Institute of [International Education \(IIE\)](#), US Department of State/USIA, [The College Board](#), [Harvard University](#) and the [European Association of International Education \(EAIE\)](#). She has a strong academic background, professional experience in HR management and development, and is a certified career counsellor. She has been a Board member of the EAIE Educational Advisers Group and an active contributor to OS-EAS-Europe and [NAFSA: Association of International Educators \(USA\)](#).

Author of articles and books on international education published internationally including in North and South America, Asia and Europe, Iliana Bobova is currently the Head of Admissions Consulting at PrepAdviser.

Check out also by the same author:

## PrepAdviser's Step-by-Step Guide to International MBA Admissions



# Why Study

## for a Master's Degree

Post-graduate studies, such as Master's degree programmes, provide specialised knowledge and new skills in areas which are narrower than your first degree (Bachelor's).

Once you have acquired an overall grasp of your major field of study during your Bachelor's degree studies, you can choose an area of specialisation and increase your knowledge of it with a post-graduate degree.

For example, if you studied business administration for your Bachelor's (or equivalent) degree, and you found out that you have a passion for finance, marketing, human resources management or any other track, you can add specialised knowledge with a relevant Master's degree programme – for example, a Master in Finance or Master in Marketing in order to gain professional expertise in your selected field.

In addition to giving you the chance to go deeper into your preferred professional track, Master's degrees are a gateway to better job opportunities. A higher degree qualifies you for higher starting professional and even managerial positions. Thus, they also give the potential for a better salary and faster career progression.



**NEW SKILLS**



**SPECIALISATION**



**INCREASED  
KNOWLEDGE**



**PROFESSIONAL  
EXPERTISE**



**BETTER JOB  
OPPORTUNITIES**



**FASTER CAREER  
PROGRESSION**

# When to Study

## for a Master's Degree

---

You can continue in a post-graduate programme straight after you complete your first degree. However, you can also do it at a later stage, if you prefer to acquire some practical experience before you go back to university.

### You can gain experience with internships or permanent full-time jobs

---

Internships will enable you to try out different positions in a short period of time. A permanent full-time job will provide you with a deeper insight into the scope, responsibilities and skills needed in a position. This experience can help you decide on the area of specialisation you are most passionate about.

The majority of Master's degree programmes are open to fresh graduates. This means that if you want to begin your post-graduate studies immediately upon graduation from your first degree, you should prepare your application and take admissions tests during your last year of first-degree studies.

It is essential that you only head to your post-graduate studies once you are clear about the field in which you want to specialise. This makes it possible to select the programmes which best match your needs and expectations, and – ultimately – gain the new knowledge, skills and expertise which you aspire to. In this way you will enjoy really worthwhile studies and better career prospects.

### CHECK OUT:

[Internships Matter](#)

[How to Get an Awesome Internship \(Video\)](#)

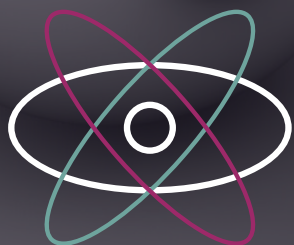
---

# How Master's Degree Programmes Differ

## Master of Arts vs. Master of Science

In a Master's degree programme, students build on the skills and knowledge they have already acquired in their Bachelor's programmes. Master's courses consolidate theoretical knowledge and deal with practice-oriented applications.

The two most common titles of Master's degrees are the Master of Arts (M.A.) and Master of Science (M.Sc.). In broad terms the differences can be defined as follows:



### Master of Science (M.S., MS, MSc, M. Sc., M.Sci., M.Si., Sc.M.)

Master of Science degree programmes focus more on scientific learning. A Bachelor's degree in a related field is almost always a prerequisite. Master of Science degrees are earned in economics, accounting, finance, management, engineering, information science, aviation, environmental studies, etc.

### Master of Arts (M.A., MA, A.M. or AM)

Master of Arts programmes are usually in the fields of humanities and social sciences such as history, geography, philology, philosophy, theology, education, human resources, social and political sciences or fine arts. Master's degree programmes may be either research-based or coursework-based, or a combination of the two. The degree can be conferred by passing examinations or by doing research, or a combination of the two.

**CHECK OUT ALSO:**

**5 Ways Master's Programmes Differ: MA vs. MSc**



## Dual Master's Degree Programmes

To study for a dual Master's degree means following the coursework of two Master's programmes simultaneously. In pursuing a dual degree, credit from a course is applied only to one degree. Having a dual degree helps you become a really agile expert in your field and combine disciplines which you find worthwhile.

Some popular combinations of Master's programmes are Law and Business (JD/MBA), Management and International Relations; Management and Law (LLM) and Management and Finance. Many universities offer dual degree programmes so, it is important to explore your options.

Dual degrees may be provided by different departments within one university or as a cooperation between two universities locally or internationally. Application for a dual degree programme usually requires you to apply separately for each.



## Joint Master's Degree Programmes

The difference between a Joint Degree and a Dual Degree programme is that in a joint degree programme, credit from a single course may count toward both degrees. Your degrees are conferred simultaneously, upon completion of the requirements for both programmes. Normally, students are allowed to pursue only one additional degree at a time.

Joint degree programmes combine two or more areas of study in two departments on the same campus or at two universities. They are interdisciplinary in nature.

Application for admission to a joint degree programme may require you to apply separately to each department/institution or only to one.

Both joint and dual degrees enable you to maximise your experience and build a competitive skillset and expertise.

**CHECK OUT ALSO:**

**Why Consider MBA Dual Degree Programmes**

## > Master of Business Administration (MBA)

The MBA is a post-graduate degree for experienced professionals aspiring to grow as managers, business leaders or entrepreneurs. Prospective MBA students should have at least two or three years of full-time work experience before they apply for admission.

MBA studies are very practical and build upon the prior professional experience of the students in the class. Work on business cases, company projects, teamwork and international exposure are normally an essential part of an MBA.

All MBA programmes provide a sound foundation of courses covering all disciplines related to managing and growing a business – managerial accounting, macro and microeconomics, marketing, finance, human resources, business strategy, business law, ethics, etc.

The classic MBA is the 'General Management MBA', but there are a growing number and diversity of MBAs specialised in various industries or functional areas such as consulting, strategy, innovation, etc.

Check out also:  
[A Quick Guide to Specialised MBA Programmes](#)

## > Master's vs. MBA

If you have to choose between a Master's or an MBA, follow this simple rule. A Master's programme will improve your professional expertise in the chosen field of study and you will be in a position to grow as an expert. The MBA will take you into the realm of general management and business leadership. For example, if you want to stay up-to-date with the latest trends in digital marketing, then opt for a Master's programme. If you would like to lead a marketing company, then opt for an MBA.

It is possible to obtain the best of both worlds. Many professionals go on to an MBA once they have a Master's degree. This is usually when they decide to make the transition from an expert-level job to a management role.

## > Duration of Master's Degree Studies

The duration of studies for a Master's degree depends on the national education system, as well as on the type of programme. In some countries, such as the US and some European countries, it takes two years to study a Master's degree programme. In the UK and many European countries, the traditional full-time Master's programme takes only one year.

However, there may be extended programmes depending on the prior qualifications and experience of the students. For example, if you come from a totally different background, you should join a programme with additional prerequisite courses, so that you can catch up before you plunge into the depths of the new field of study. Dual and joint degree programmes may also take a little longer to complete.

The duration of a programme affects your budget as longer programmes lead to higher living expenses and a longer period without earnings. However, the two-year programmes usually provide internships and better networking opportunities. There are pros and cons of each type of programme.

## > Delivery Formats of Master's Degree Programmes

As for most academic programmes, you can study full-time, part-time, distance or online. Full-time programmes require full commitment to your studies and can rarely be combined with work.

Part-time, distance and [online programmes](#) are good options if you want to keep working while studying. However, these programme formats take longer to complete and the intensity of student-faculty interaction, as well as networking opportunities, may be less than in full-time studies. But their great advantage is that they save you time and money, and you keep working and thus earning.

## > Accreditation

Accreditation is a formal evaluation of the quality standards of a university and/or a programme. It is conducted according to a thorough process implemented by independent accreditation bodies (agencies). Accreditation adds a stamp of quality to your diploma. In addition it is a guarantee of its validity.

You should check the accreditation status of universities and programmes that interest you in advance. This is especially important if you plan to study in another country.

The website providing a comprehensive source of information on accreditation in Europe is [ENIC: European Network of Information Centres in the European Region, and NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union](#).

The list of [US Regional and National Institutional Accrediting Agencies](#) can be accessed at the website of the US Department of Education.

The three major agencies evaluating the quality of MBA, business and management programmes are:



[The Association of MBAs \(AMBA\)](#)



[European Quality Improvement System of the Management Development Network \(EQUIS – EFMD\)](#)



[The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business](#)



PrepAd✓iser

A group of students are sitting on a grassy lawn under large trees. In the foreground, a person's hands are visible typing on a laptop. The background shows several other students sitting and talking. The image has a soft, slightly blurred quality with a greenish tint. Two thin, light blue diagonal lines cross the image: one from the top left towards the center, and another from the bottom right towards the center.

**A POST-  
GRADUATE  
QUALIFICATION  
IS THE  
SPRINGBOARD  
TO YOUR  
PROFESSIONAL  
GROWTH AND  
THE CAREER OF  
YOUR CHOICE.**

# Prerequisites for Admission to Master's Degree Programmes

---

01

## Academic

You will be required to have a first university degree (Bachelor's or equivalent) in order to be able to enrol in a Master's degree programme. Applicants who apply during their final year in a Bachelor's degree programme should present academic transcripts for their coursework, but should also submit their diploma prior to joining the Master's programme.

Some universities will require a good level of academic standing during first degree studies and may have specific requirements regarding your GPA or your achievement in certain subjects related to your desired post-graduate field of study

02

## Professional

Most Master's degree programmes are open to fresh graduates, but some may require prior professional experience in a field related to the subject of the Master's programme. For example, you can find Master in Finance programmes that cater for both types of student.

03

## Language of instruction

When you apply for admission to a programme taught in a language other than your native one, you will be required to be fluent in listening, reading, writing, speaking and the grammar. These skills can be demonstrated by taking international English language tests such as [TOEFL](#), [IELTS](#), Cambridge ESOL CAE/CPE, or a similar test. Some universities conduct their own exams

04

## Skillset

Some programmes require a specific skillset related to the field of study, for example maths, analytical thinking or creative writing. These skills can be demonstrated in international standardised aptitude tests such as the [Graduate Management Admission Test \(GMAT\)](#), the [Graduate Record Examination \(GRE\)](#), general or [subject-specific tests](#) or exams set by the universities.

# How to Select a Programme and a University for your Master's Studies

There is a huge diversity of Master's degree programmes. They can vary greatly even if they are in the same field or specialisation, and even if they have the same name



## Desired specialisation and career

You will have a hard time selecting the right programme if you have yet to decide on your preferred specialisation and/or career. As difficult as it can be, this is essential if your post-graduate studies are to be really worthwhile.

So take your time over soul-searching and career counselling, doing internships and talking to people about careers, professions, positions, skills, best practices and future trends.



## Programme content

When choosing a programme you have to take a careful look at the curriculum, teaching methods, professors, class profile (age, academic background, gender balance and cultural diversity), student services, extracurricular activities (especially those related to your field of study or interests), career services, internships and practical projects, alumni successes and traditional employers/recruiters.



## Graduation requirements

Check also the graduation requirements – is the completion of coursework and final exams enough, or will you be expected to write a thesis or undertake a practical project for a company?



## Location

When choosing the location of the university you should consider factors beyond continent, country and region; factors such as climate, student life, networking opportunities, transportation, availability of residence halls/student lodging and living expenses.



## Language and culture

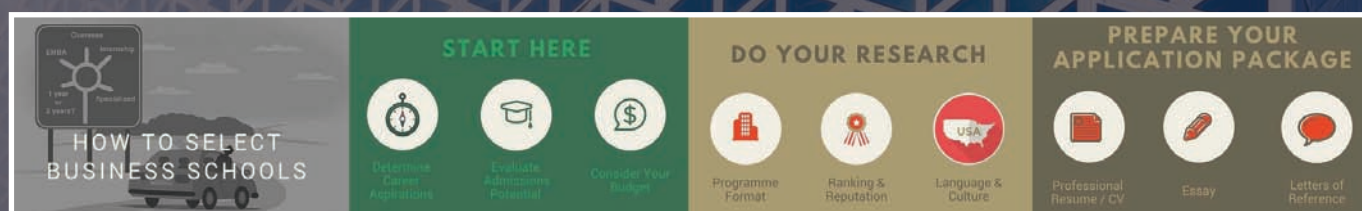
Nowadays you can find Master's degree programmes taught in English in all parts of the world. So you can select the culture you would like to immerse yourself in, going beyond the Anglo-Saxon world. Your post-graduate studies can be a good opportunity to learn a new or improve on a foreign language and find out about a new culture.

If you want to feel comfortable outside of the university, then select a country where English is widely spoken by the population. If you know a second foreign language and you want to practise or improve it, select a programme in a country where this language is spoken or at least popular.



## Budget

Make sure you stay within your budget. Do not rely on a part-time job to sustain yourself during your studies. Job availability may be limited, and more importantly a job may hinder your studies. It is better to focus on internships if you have free time, rather than on typical part-time student jobs. That is why you need to have your budget secured in advance, so that you can focus on and make the most of your studies.



## Reputation

To start with, make sure that the programme is accredited. This is the guarantee of a certain standard of quality and of recognition of your diploma. (Learn more in the Accreditations section, page XX)

Despite the popularity of university rankings, the reputation of a university varies by country and even by industry. This is true for all universities, with the exception of about ten university brands that are easily recognised all over the world..

When we speak of Master's degree programmes, the reputation of the programme (more than that of the university) matters. If reputation is particularly important to you, then check which programmes are well recognised in the countries and industries where you would like to find a job upon graduation.

Rankings are an easy-to-use tool, because they give you lists of universities, but be aware that they can be misleading. Always check the methodology of the ranking in order to understand how these universities came to be on the list. If the rating criteria match your own, then everything is OK. But if they don't it might be better to disregard the ranking and create your own.

Check out also:

## Master's Rankings and Reputation

## Master's Degree Rankings (Part 1 – 3)

Selecting the right universities and programmes is half the battle. The right choice helps your admission, ensures that your studies will be worthwhile and improves your career prospects. So, choose wisely.



## Realistic chances of admission

Selecting the right universities and programmes is half the battle. The right choice helps your admission, ensures that your studies will be worthwhile and improves your career prospects. So, choose wisely.

### > Test scores

The shortlisting of universities should only be done after you have taken the admission tests such as [TOEFL](#) or [IELTS](#), [GMAT](#) or [GRE](#). When you know your test scores, you can select universities where you both meet the admission requirements and find the Master's degree programme particularly appropriate for your career goals.

### > Professional experience

Carefully check whether the programmes of your choice require prior professional experience and whether this should be related to your chosen field of study. If unsure about whether you meet this requirement, feel free to contact the admissions office or the director of the programme for guidance.

### > Student profile

Another factor to consider when selecting a university and a programme is the class profile – average age, diversity, academic (and professional) background.



## Step 1

### Decide on an area of specialisation

Start thinking about your area of specialisation during your final year of Bachelor's degree studies. If you cannot decide, take your time. This is an important decision. Take some career counselling sessions, and/or take internships, a part-time or a full-time job in the fields which you are considering. This will help you clarify what you are passionate about.

## Step 2

### Research the programmes, check requirements

Once you have decided on the area of specialisation, start searching for programmes which teach what you need in your preferred manner. Although with the Internet everything seems at your fingertips, detailed information is not always standardised or readily available. Even if you use searchable databases such as, for example, PrepAdviser's [School Finder](#) you should go to the universities' websites for the details.

That is why you should anticipate a month or two to look at various programmes, their curricula, teaching methods, students, tuition fees and additional expenses. Take notes about the admission requirements, especially scores on admission exams such as GMAT or GRE and language tests such as TOEFL or IELTS. Also, take a careful look at application deadlines and the programme start dates (most start in the autumn, but there are some which begin in January/February).

# STEP-BY-STEP PREPARATION

## Step 3

### Plan your budget

While researching the availability of programmes, take a look at the expenses related to your education – tuition and other fees, living expenses, travel, health insurance, etc. It is also important to search for various sources of funding such as scholarships, grants, education loans, etc. The table below shows the types of expenses that can be covered by the various funding sources. You can also use the table to plan your budget and make sure you can realistically secure all the financial resources that you will need for your studies.

	Personal Funding	Family Support	Scholarship	Assistantship	Stipend	Grant	Loan	Employer
<b>Tuition &amp; Fees</b>	*	*	*	*		*	*	*
<b>Travel</b>	*	*				*	*	
<b>Accommodation</b>	*	*		*	*		*	
<b>Food</b>	*	*			*		*	

Now is the time to make a realistic estimation of the total maximum amount of funding that you can provide for your studies, from all sources – personal savings and earnings, family support, education loans, and grants from the EU, government, local or international organisations.

Scholarships are available from some universities, but they are usually partial and only apply to the tuition fee. Scholarships are always competitive. So, it is good to consider them as an option, but you should have a realistic back-up financial plan.

#### Check out:

[Living Costs in Western Europe: Study the Good Life](#)

[Living Costs in North America: Do It like the Americans \(or Canadians\)](#)

[How do you finance an MBA or Master's?](#)

[Scholarships, Assistantships and Grants](#) (video interviews)

## Step 4

### Check student visa requirements

If you are planning to study in another country, check whether you will need a student visa for your stay. If this is the case, obtain details of the visa application process, documents you will need to submit, including financial ones, and the deadlines.

**Check out:**

[The Student Visa – What You Should Know](#)

## Step 5

### Prepare and take admission tests

Plan for four to six months of test preparation, a month between booking and taking the test, and another month for your official scores to reach the universities. This means that you should start your test preparation no later than six to seven months before universities' application deadlines. If you have to take the [GMAT](#) or [GRE](#) you may need to retake the exam for a better score.

[GMAT](#) and [GRE](#) are quite challenging exams and preparation takes a minimum of three or four months. If you are fluent in English, it will not take you more than a month to prepare for tests such as [TOEFL](#) and [IELTS](#). However, if you need to improve some of your language skills, especially grammar and vocabulary, this certainly requires some months.

**Check out:**

[Better to study TOEFL or GMAT first? \(Video\)](#)

# TIMELINE → STEP-BY-STEP

## Step 6

### Shortlist universities and programmes you will apply for

Once you have taken the exams and have your scores, you can make your final selection of universities and programmes. It is important to have the scores first so that you can select those universities where you meet the requirements.

For your selection you should take into consideration many factors such as how well the programme matches your goals, the budget, the country/location, career services and prospects, and everything else that matters to you.

It is normal to apply to several universities at the same time, to give yourself a good chance of being admitted and have a choice of where to enrol.

**Check out:**

[How to Choose Schools for MBA or Master's Programmes?](#)

## Step 7

### Plan your application according to deadlines

Check out the application deadlines of all your selected universities. Each application is different, so you cannot work on them all simultaneously. Instead, you should prioritise and draw up a plan and a time-line.



## Step 8

### Prepare the application packages

The application package consists of an application form, [essay\(s\)](#) or a [statement of purpose](#), [CV/resume](#), [letters of recommendation](#), official test scores, official academic transcripts of your previous university studies, and a certified copy of your university diploma. For Master's degree programmes taught in English, all documents are to be submitted in English, including official certified translations of the transcripts and the diploma.

It takes time to prepare all these documents. Some of them you will prepare yourself (essays, CV/resume), others should be prepared by other individuals (recommendations) or by institutions (test scores, academic transcripts and diploma).

Essays, statement of purpose and the CV/resume, although short, should be carefully thought out, so they usually take much longer to prepare than you initially think. In addition, you will also have other responsibilities during that time. You will either still be in your final year at university with all its coursework and exams, or you will be in an internship or a job. So, the preparation of your application is an extra effort which you will have to squeeze into your schedule.

That is why you need to allow a month to prepare your application package adequately.

#### Check out:

[How to Write an Impressive Statement of Purpose](#)

[Who should your Master's application recommendations come from?](#)

[How to Receive Strong Recommendation Letters \(Part 1–3\)](#)

## → PREPARATION TIMELINE

## Step 9

### Submit the application package and fee

Your full application package, including official test scores, should reach the admissions office before the application deadline. Some of the documents can be submitted online, but others have to be sent by post. Allow enough time for everything to reach the university on time. Do not rely on submitting anything at the last minute, because online systems can become blocked by a large number of simultaneous applications.

Many universities charge a fee for reviewing your application. This fee should also reach the university before the application deadline. Check the payment options in advance and allow enough time for the money to be transferred to the university.

## Step 10

### Prepare for an admissions interview

An [admissions interview](#) is part of the application process of many Master's degree programmes. It is usually conducted after a review of your application package. However, you should start your interview preparation early, because some universities will invite you for an interview a couple of days after receiving your application. Of course your interview invitation may take longer, but anyway start your preparation as soon as you submit the application. Actually, you could start even earlier.

#### Check out:

[Interview Preparation Tips for B-School Admission](#)

[How to Impress an Admissions Director](#)

## Step 11

### Prepare to choose among offers

How soon you will be informed of the decision of the admissions committee depends on the university. Some programmes will notify you within two weeks. In other cases, you can wait for a month.

There are several possible outcomes of your application for admission:

- Admitted with a scholarship (financial aid package)
- Admitted with no financial aid
- Admitted conditionally
- Waitlisted
- Rejected

When you apply to several universities and programmes, it is unlikely that all the admissions decisions will arrive at the same time. This can create some suspense and indecision. This is not an easy moment in your application process, so plan in advance how to play it.

## Step 12

### Confirm enrolment

If you are admitted you will be asked to accept or reject the offer within a certain period (between two weeks and a month). If you want to accept and reserve your place in the programme, you will be asked for a confirmation deposit which may be about 10% of the tuition fee. So you should have the money ready. Then you will have another deadline to enrol and pay the first semester tuition and fees.

If you have applied to several universities, the decisions will arrive at different times. If you want to be able to choose the best offer, you may have to be prepared to lose a deposit on one programme, or risk losing your place.

## Step 13

### Apply for a student visa

As soon as you decide where to enrol, you should start your application for a student visa, if you need one. After the euphoria of being admitted, things start to become more hectic again with all the preparations for travel, accommodation and payments of university fees. You do not want to pay for your ticket before you are sure of being able to obtain a visa, so contact the local embassy/consular office as soon as you have decided where to study.

For your **student visa** application you may need some official letters sent to you by the university, up-to-date documents, bank statements, etc. All these documents require time to prepare and reach you. So, plan accordingly.



# Admission Tests

Universities can require you to take two types of test for a Master's degree application – an aptitude test that checks the skillset required for the field of study, and an English language proficiency test (if English is not your native language).

## Aptitude Tests

If you are applying for admission to programmes in business, management, finance or related areas, most business schools will require you to take a test to evaluate your academic potential and the skills required for your studies

The GMAT is the most common of these tests. **GMAT – The Graduate Management Admission Test** is a standardised American test used internationally to assess your aptitude for study in business, management and finance programmes.

Universities in the US and a growing number of international ones accept the **GRE – The Graduate Record Examination** – as an alternative, and some others offer their own admission test.

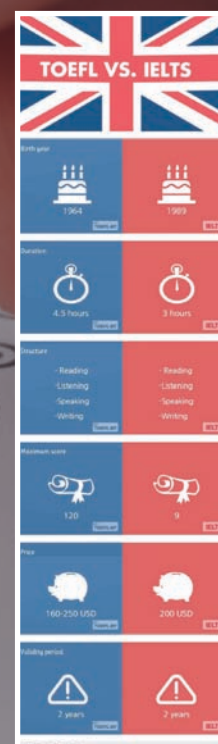
Despite the fact that these tests are conducted in English, they check your analytical and quantitative skills rather than your English language skills.



## Language Tests

If you are not a native speaker of English and didn't do your first university degree (Bachelor's) studies in a programme where English was the sole language of instruction, you will also be required to sit an English language proficiency test.

In most cases, you will have the option between **TOEFL**, **TOEIC**, **IELTS** and Cambridge ESOL CFA/CPA. All are internationally recognised, standardised tests to evaluate your language skills – reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing and speaking and mastery of standard English grammar.



## CHECK OUT:

[How Language Tests Differ from GMAT and GRE](#)

[GMAT/GRE Preparation Tips](#)

[11 Tips to Score High on Language Tests](#)  
[Language Tests Preparation Tips](#)

# When, How and Why to Prepare

Plan to prepare for and take the tests before you shortlist your universities. In this way you can select universities with realistic admissions requirements. So start your preparation as soon as you know which tests you should take.



## WHEN

If you are already fluent in English, plan for four to six months for **GMAT/GRE preparation** and another month for **TOEFL/IELTS preparation**. However, if you need to improve some of the language skills, especially vocabulary and grammar, add more time into your plan.

Leave at least a month between your test date and the application deadline of the universities. You may need to retake a test for a better score and it can take up to a month for your official score to reach the universities.

## HOW

Although people have different learning styles, normally the most effective way to prepare for these tests is to have guidance from professional instructors. This does not mean you will not do any self-study and practice. Not at all!

As a start, make sure you request professional guidance to learn about the test and the way it works, and to master the most appropriate approaches and test taking strategies. Guided preparation can be face-to-face or online, in a group class or with a personal tutor. Choose whichever is the most effective option for you to ensure steady progress.

Be diligent with your homework and practise, practise, practise. Practice is best done step by step. Start by practising one type of question, then a full section, and finally a full-length test. Start with untimed tests and then proceed to testing under realistic conditions.

### Check out:

[How to Select a GMAT Preparation Course](#)

[The FAST Way to GMAT Exam Preparation with a Full-time Job](#)

## WHY

Tests are not just about achieving a particular score. Their added value is that they help you develop or improve skills that will be essential for your success in the post-graduate classroom.

If you struggle with reading comprehension, you will not cope with the large volume of reading material. If you are not confident speaking in English, you will not be able to participate in class discussions, ask the professors questions or deliver presentations. If writing takes you too much time, then you will not be able to meet the deadlines for your essays and written exams. Listening comprehension is crucial for understanding your professors and communicating with your peers. So, focus on improving your skills and a good test score will follow.

### Check out:

[Some Fringe Benefits of GMAT Preparation](#)

# THE APPLICATION PACKAGE

Master's admission is all about convincing the admissions officers of your selected programme that you have made a well-informed choice of programme and that you have the potential to grow and contribute during your graduate studies.

The aim of Master's studies is to take the next step in your professional development. Graduate studies build on your first university degree, adding the specialised knowledge, skills and focus for a professional career in your chosen field. Here are the elements of the application for admission to a Master's degree programme.

## University Diploma Academic Transcripts CV/ Resume

You can apply for admission to a Master's programme only after you graduate from university with either a Bachelor's or another Master's degree or their equivalent. The Bachelor's degree is the required minimum. Note that in some countries there are Master's degree programmes with a full course of study of five or more years, but rather than being in the fields of management and business, these are in law and medicine. Application for such programmes can be made immediately after graduation from a secondary/high school. These are not within the scope of this guide.

When applying for admission you should submit a copy of your university diploma as part of your application package. It should be a verified copy of the diploma with an apostille accompanied by a certified translation in English. Please make sure you check with each of your targeted universities or business schools for any additional requirements.

Your university diploma should be accompanied by original official academic transcripts which list the courses taken, the scores achieved, the final GPA and other academic details. Certified translations are required if the original academic transcripts are not in English.

When you are applying for a Master's degree programme, your GPA and score in subjects related to your chosen Master's course of study will be important for admission. Please check whether your chosen universities have requirements for a minimum GPA.

The majority of Master's degree programmes in management and business related areas will be open to holders of university diplomas in any subject area. For example, if you studied sociology or languages for a Bachelor's degree this will qualify you to apply for a Master in Management, Marketing or other. However, there are some programmes which will require your first degree to be in a relevant subject area or require you to take a prerequisite course before you begin your Master's degree study.

The majority of Master's degree programmes are targeted at fresh Bachelor's degree graduates. However, some Master's programmes, such as the Master in Finance at certain schools, will – just like MBA programmes – require applicants to have some relevant professional work experience.

Your experience is presented in your Master's application [CV or resume](#). The resume can be a shorter version of a CV, which focuses on your Master's programme application. It presents only the information which is most relevant to higher level academic study in your selected subject area. The resume includes details of your professional, personal and academic life and accomplishments. Some of the facts in your resume will also appear in the letters of recommendation.

There are different formats of CV/ resume. Please check whether your targeted business schools have any preferences or requirements.

The aim of Master's studies is to take the next step in your professional development. Graduate studies build on your first university degree, adding the specialised knowledge, skills and focus for a professional career in your chosen field.

## Language test scores

To be able to enrol in a Master's degree programme taught in English, you should be fluent in reading, writing, speaking and listening in English. This is why business schools require official scores in internationally recognised English language proficiency tests.

The most popular of these tests are [TOEFL](#) and [IELTS](#). Other options may be [TOEIC](#), and Cambridge ESOL – Advanced or Proficiency Certificates. Some business schools may offer their own school's test as well.

Please check with your targeted university or business school regarding their minimum score in these tests. For initial orientation, you may assume that you need a score of at least 100 (out of 120) in the TOEFL iBT and 6.5 (out of 9.0) in the IELTS.

These test scores are valid for two years from the test date. Admissions offices normally ask for the original official score reports.

## Aptitude test scores

Official scores in the [Graduate Management Admission Test \(GMAT\)](#) or the [Graduate Record Examination \(GRE\)](#) are often required as well. These are not language tests, although they are conducted in English. GMAT and GRE are aptitude tests which assess the level of those skills needed for graduate management education, such as quantitative, analytical and reasoning skills.

GMAT and GRE exam scores are valid for five years. These tests are usually much more challenging than English language tests and require more time for preparation.

Please check with your targeted business schools regarding their minimum score in these tests. The GRE is the more popular test for admission to Master's degree programmes, while the GMAT is more often needed for MBA and Master in Finance admissions.

## Recommendation Letters

[Letters of recommendation](#) are an outside source of information for the admissions committee about your potential for higher level academic studies. They are part of the application package. For most programmes you will be required to submit academic letters of reference, but in some cases one of the recommendations may relate to your professional experience, if you have any.

Most universities will have their own forms for the recommendation letters, as well as instructions and guidelines for recommenders. Make sure you read these instructions carefully and provide them to your recommenders.

It is very important to select your recommenders according to the universities' requirements. Also, allow enough time for your recommenders to prepare the letters. Finally, each recommendation should be school-specific. You cannot submit 'general' letters of reference.

## CHECK OUT:

[How to Receive Strong Recommendation Letters \(Part 1-3\)](#)

[Who should your Master's application recommendations come from?](#)

## Essays/ Statement of Purpose

**Essays** or the **Statement of Purpose** are one of the most interesting and challenging parts of the application package. Admissions committees pay a lot of attention to them.

Each university or business school provides one or more essay topics – usually two or three. The topics vary between universities and programmes. As with recommendation letters your essays should be specific. You cannot use the same essay for different business schools, even if the essay topic is the same. This is because the universities and programmes vary and your arguments for selecting one or the other will not be exactly the same.

Some programmes will require a Statement of Purpose, rather than an essay. The Statement of Purpose (SoP) may or may not relate to a specific topic or question set by the programme. The SoP is a presentation of your motivation for choosing the field of study, the programme and the university. It should provide a clear description of your career goals and the way this programme will help you reach them. The SoP should also illustrate how you will fit into the programme and what your contribution will be.

## Application form & fee

An application form should accompany your application package. Each business school has its own application form. Most often it is submitted online.

The application form contains important details about your profile, your academic and professional experience and other information related to your Master's admission. The information which you provide in the application form should be coherent with the rest of the documents in your application package. It is recommended to submit all documents as a package so that you can double check before submission that all facts are correct.

Most universities will charge a non-refundable application fee in order to review your application package. The fees vary greatly, but the average is about 70 Euros.



## Admissions Interview

Some universities will conduct an interview with applicants for admission to their Master's programmes, but this varies greatly. Interview policies differ between business schools. Some programmes will interview all applicants, others will interview just the preselected ones. Most schools usually conduct only one interview.

If you are invited to an interview this only means that your application is of interest to the admissions committee. In no way does it mean that you are admitted. The actual competition is still ahead of you.

Your performance during an admissions interview carries a lot of weight in the decision for admission and for a scholarship, if you are applying for one. Make sure you prepare well for the interview. Start early. Do not wait until the interview invitation, as this often gives very short notice.



## CHECK OUT:

[What is a Statement of Purpose and Why is it Important for a Master's Application?](#)

[How to Write an Impressive Statement of Purpose](#)

[Interview Preparation Tips for B-School Admission](#)

[How to Impress an Admissions Director](#)

## The value of the application package

The application package is the second most important part of your Master's degree project, the first one being the selection of the best university and programme for your goals, profile and potential. Many universities will make their pre-selection based solely on your application package.



**Master's Application Checklist**  
PrepAdviser

<p><b>Step #1</b> Academic Transcripts</p>	<p><b>Step #2</b> Optional: GMAT or GRE</p>	<p><b>Step #3</b> Recommendations</p>
<p><b>Step #4</b> Essay</p>	<p><b>Step #5</b> Interview</p>	<p><b>Step #6</b> Language Test</p>

**Key Takeaways:**

- ✓ Plan to begin your preparation about six months before the intended start of your studies in a Master's programme.
- ✓ For most Master's degree programmes your referees should be former university professors who can comment on your academic performance and potential for higher-level study.
- ✓ Most universities will accept both IELTS and TOEFL so you can select the test in which you feel most comfortable.
- ✓ Essay is one of the most important parts of your application, because this is where you present your motivation, expectations and career goals related to your chosen programme.

## Timeframe

Preparing a well-thought-out application package takes time. Start working on it as soon as your selected universities and programmes open their application process. This may be about 12 months before the actual start of your Master's studies. There are usually at least two or three months before the application deadline during which to apply.

Preparation for language and aptitude tests should be done in advance. Plan for about four additional months of preparation, taking or retaking the tests, and official score reporting. It is very good practice to first take the tests and then shortlist the universities and programmes based on your scores and their requirements, among all other factors.



**Check out the Step-by-Step Preparation Timeline on pages 18-21**

# Applying for a Scholarship

Winning a scholarship for your Master's degree studies will reduce the amount you need to invest. Many universities provide scholarships, but all of them are highly competitive. Your chances of winning a scholarship depend on the overall quality of your application package and interview performance, as well as a perfect fit with the scholarship eligibility requirements



## > Identify universities

Careful selection of universities is the major way to improve your chances of winning a scholarship. First, you need to be a strong applicant for the school and second, the school must provide scholarships for which you are eligible. Add these criteria to your wish list and gather all the details while researching and short-listing schools.

Some universities provide various financial aid opportunities rather than just scholarships, such as graduate assistantships, stipends, etc. Check all options to see whether you can win more than one and combine them. Take a careful look at the requirements for maintaining your financial aid during your studies. For example, you will be expected to keep in good academic standing and if your GPA drops then you can lose your financial aid.

Also check out grants and scholarship opportunities of European Union funding programmes for student mobility, international organisations or bilateral intergovernmental programmes, such as those administered by Fulbright Commissions, embassies or your local Ministry of Education.

## > Plan your own budget

Make realistic calculations for the budget you will have at your disposal for your Master's studies. Look for schools where the amount of the scholarship will leverage your budget and make it financially possible for you to attend the programme and pay for tuition and living plus travel expenses. It is important to know that scholarships cover tuition fees only, seldom living expenses and you cannot depend on working during your full-time studies to cover your expenses.

### > Check requirements and deadlines

If you want to apply for a scholarship, you may need to prepare additional documents, essays or application forms. Also the submission deadline may be different from the application deadline for admission. Sometimes you even have to communicate with a different office at the university – the Financial Aid Office instead of the Admission Office that will be handling your application for admission.

### > When you receive a scholarship award

When you receive notification of winning a scholarship or other type of financial support, make sure you send a formal thank-you letter to the sponsors. Submit it through the office which handled your application (Financial Aid Office, Admissions Office, etc.).

During your studies, keep in good academic standing and fulfil any additional requirements which apply to you as a scholarship recipient.

## CHECK OUT:

[How to Win Scholarships? \(Q&A\)](#)

[Tips on How to Finance Your Studies](#)

## Budget for Your Preparation

### Budget for Preparation of a Masters's Application

As prices vary depending on location, please tell us your country of residence and city and PrepAdviser experts will send you a precise budget estimate. Use PrepAdviser's Live Chat.

### Budget item

Admission test (GMAT/GRE) preparation course/tutoring/books

English language (EL) test preparation course/tutoring/books

GMAT/GRE test fee (incl. up to 2 retakes)

GMAT/GRE additional score report fees

EL test fee (incl. 1 retake)

EL test additional score reports

Travel to the nearest testing centre and accommodation (if needed)

Expert advice/Admissions consulting

Application fee (up to 5 schools)

**TOTAL:**

### Price



**PrepAdviser** is an interactive online platform, which assists prospective applicants in their preparation for international Master's and MBA admission.

[www.prepadvisor.com](http://www.prepadvisor.com)