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# Graduate School Application Process

*This is meant as a general help outline only, it is not guaranteed to be complete or correct (especially after 2018). You are encouraged to research the application process through the Virginia Tech website, or by speaking with a VT admissions advisor, before completing your application to graduate school. We are not responsible for any delay in your application process that may arise by you following only this outline and not double-checking to ensure your applications completeness through the www.vt.edu website.*

## 2019 Application Deadlines:

|  | US Students | International Students |
|---|---|---|
| Fall Semester | August 1st | April 1st |
| Spring Semester | January 1st | September 1st |
| Summer I Semester | May 1st | January 1st |
| Summer II Semester | June 1st | February 1st |

## As soon as you decide to apply to graduate school:

1. Send a professional letter of intent to the professor(s) that you're interested in studying under – be sure to include your specific areas of interest and why you think the professor(s) of your choice would be a good fit for your research goals. The entire application process usually goes more smoothly if the professor has a heads-up that you will be applying to study under them.

    a. We recommend also contacting the professor(s) of your choice via phone or email to ensure that they are available to take on new graduate students and that they agree that your areas of research interest will fit well with their expertise and educational programs.

    b. If they aren't able to work with you, for whatever reasons, they will be able to point you towards a professor who can, or who may be a better fit with your research goals.

2. (ONLY if you're an international student applying for graduate school) Look into what immunizations you will need to travel to the US and study at Virginia Tech. You will want to get these immunizations in your home country on the months-long timeline recommended by your doctor. If you wait until arriving in the US, you will be given the immunizations all at once which can cause unforeseen health problems.

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## At least three months prior to application deadline:

3. Take the GRE General Test (Graduate Record Examination) – through the Educational Testing Service ([www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org) | [https://www.ets.org/gre/](https://www.ets.org/gre/)).

   a. The Educational Testing Service Institution Code for Virginia Tech is 005859 – give them this code when you register and when you take the GRE so that your scores are forwarded to Virginia Tech.

      i. The GRE test is offered almost daily, and sometimes 2x a day, at a location on Electric Road in Roanoke VA, but the seats are limited and fill up quickly. Check the available test dates early and register to take the GRE as soon as you decide to apply to graduate school to ensure you're able to take it in ample time for the results to be sent to Virginia Tech. [https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/register/](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/register/)

      ii. If you're an international student traveling to the US to study, you will need to check into when and where the test will be offered in your home country – and make sure they'll forward the scores to all of the universities that you're applying to – you will need to create an ETS account and bring proper ID with you to the testing center of your choice. [https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/register/](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/register/)

4. (ONLY if you're an international student applying for graduate school) Take the TOEFL test - through the Educational Testing Service ([www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org) | [https://www.ets.org/toefl/?WT.ac=etshome_toefl_flagship_180417](https://www.ets.org/toefl/?WT.ac=etshome_toefl_flagship_180417)).

   a. The Educational Testing Service Institution Code for Virginia Tech is 005859 – give them this code when you register and when you take the GRE so that your scores are forwarded to Virginia Tech.

   b. As of 2018, you must get a minimum TOEFL score of 90 (IBT) or IELTS score of 6.5 for admission. Further, TOEFL scores of 20 or greater in Listening, Writing, Speaking, and Reading subsections are required. We recommend checking the VT website to see if these requirements change from year-to-year.

## At least two months prior to application deadline:

5. Collect the following information for the Graduate School application packet:

   a. Undergraduate transcripts (showing at least a 3.0 GPA). You must request the official copies of your undergraduate transcripts to include with your application – unofficial copies or printouts from online will not be accepted. However, if you completed your undergraduate degree at Virginia Tech, you do not need to include this item with your application packet.

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i. (ONLY if you're an international student applying for graduate school) Your official transcripts will need to be forwarded to Virginia Tech in ENGLISH. You will be required to either have them professionally translated before sending them, OR Virginia Tech will allow a qualified professor at a recognized university who speaks both English and your native language to translate the pertinent information and sign his name to the translation – you can then send this, including the professor's info, in as your official transcript.

b. Up to 3 Letters of Recommendation from previous professors, mentors, or employers basically stating that you're intelligent, professional, responsible, and would be an asset to the educational program for which you are applying.

i. Our department will not even consider applications that do not include at least 2 recommendation letters. It is very important to our faculty that these character references are included with your application. Many people are slow to provide these, so you may want to start asking and collecting these as early as possible.

ii. Tips for what Virginia Tech looks for in recommendation letters are included about half-way down on this page: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/admissions/Getting-ready-to-apply.html

c. The GRE scores for all graduate school applicants must be included. The scores should have been forwarded to VT by the ETS, but also make sure that you include a hard-copy of your test results with the application packet.

i. (ONLY if you're an international student applying for graduate school) The TOEFL scores for all international applicants must also be included. The scores should have been forwarded to VT by the ETS, but also make sure that you include a hard-copy of your test results with the application packet.

d. An application fee of $75.00 will need to be paid either online or included with paper application

e. If you're applying via a paper application packet, you will also need to include the printed and filled out paper application which can be found on the VT website under the admissions to graduate school section.

i. Even if you plan to apply online, it can help the process move smoothly if you print out the paper application and fill it out - this will make sure you have all the information required at your fingertips.

- US Student paper application: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/GAAPforms/Application_US_and_Permanent_Resident.pdf

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- International Student paper application: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/GAAPforms/Application_International_2016.pdf

## Prior to the application deadline:

6. Once you have collected all of the items listed above for the complete application packet, it is time to apply to Virginia Tech's graduate school.

   a. EITHER mail/fax the entire application packet (including transcripts, letters of recommendation, test scores, filled out paper application form and $75 fee) to:

      Graduate School Admissions
      Graduate Life Center at Donaldson Brown
      Virginia Tech (0325)
      Blacksburg, VA 24061
      Fax: 540/231-2039

   b. OR apply to Virginia Tech's graduate school online: https://applyto.graduateschool.vt.edu/pages/login.php

      i. You will need to create an account using your email address and then make sure you're logged into the system before you can access the graduate school application.

      ii. The online application form will ask for the same info as the paper application, so if you've gathered all the info ahead of time, you should be able to fill out the online form quickly.

      iii. Also be sure to scan in the hard-copies of paperwork that you've collected (transcripts, letters of recommendation, and test scores) in order to attach them, when asked, to the online application form.

          1. It is also possible that, in addition to attaching the extra paperwork, you will be asked to mail in copies of your transcripts and test scores, etc… so keep a hard copy of all paperwork ready to go until the process is complete.

      iv. You will be asked to provide payment of the $75 application fee before being allowed to submit your application. The system accepts most major credit and bank cards.

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## Now the waiting begins...

The Virginia Tech graduate school can take 2-6 weeks to review your application, and at that point if anything is missing it will be sent back to you without a decision, so be sure that everything requested/required is included.

Once you are accepted into the Virginia Tech Graduate School, the graduate admissions board passes along your accepted application to the proper college / department based on what you've indicated that you're planning as your course of study for your graduate degree.

Each department/college then takes time to review all of the applications accepted by the graduate school and chooses which graduate students will be accepted to study under which faculty members and what sort of financial aid/ assistantships/ scholarships can be offered.

The professor that accepts you as their graduate student will be in charge of contacting you and letting you know that you've been accepted to the graduate school, accepted to study in their department, and accepted to study under them specifically. They will also let you know of any financial help that may be offered to you.

This is why it's helpful to contact the professor of your choice ahead of time. If they are familiar with your name, educational records, and grad school goals, then getting assigned to them will be easier and the whole process (after you've been accepted to graduate school at the university level) will go faster.

## US Students: Skip forward to the New Graduate Student Checklist section.

## International Students – AFTER acceptance to the graduate school... Complete the below tasks.

*This section is in addition to anything else you may need to do to travel legally to the U.S. – it is not intended as a complete 'moving to a new country' guide. This outlines just what is needed to be legally authorized to study at Virginia Tech as a non-US citizen (https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/immigration-services/new-student-guide.html).*

## At least 90 days prior to school start-date (but not until after receiving notice of acceptance):

1. It is your responsibility to ensure you have a valid, unexpired, US accepted passport. Passports can be obtained through your home country's government centers and obtaining one is the first step in the process of being allowed to travel to study in the US.

2. Once an international student has been accepted into the Graduate School you must supply the following documents before an I-20 or DS-2019 form can be issued. You will need the I-20 or DS-2019 form in order to apply for F-1 or J-1 visa status. Collect together the following information, documents, and forms.

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a.  Completed Immigration Information Form
    https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/igss-forms/Immigration_info_form.pdf

b.  Copy of passport ID page (with name and date of birth included)

c.  Proof of sufficient funds to cover educational and living expenses for the first year. See our Financial Requirements page for details on required amount of funds and acceptable financial documents (https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/immigration-services/new-student-guide/financial-requirements.html). The following documents are accepted as financial certification:

    i.  A current (less than six months old) original bank statement or certification from other legal financial institution, along with an original official letter (affidavit of support) from the sponsor. The letter should include the student's name, sponsor's name, his/her relationship to the student (parent, sister, friend, etc.), the amount of support and the time period for which it will be provided, and a stated willingness to cover the student's expenses.
    ii.  Original written confirmation from the sponsoring institution or government agency of a scholarship, fellowship, or other type of funding. NOTE: copies of external funding also MUST be provided by the student to the University Bursar's Office to set up billing to these agencies.
    iii.  For assistantships, a copy of the assistantship agreement signed by the department is required.
    iv.  In case of personal funds, an original bank statement or statement from any legal financial institution that includes the student's name, and the amount available.

2.  Submit these documents to the Graduate School  (submit the packet of documents via ONE method only – and only after receiving official notice of acceptance into the Graduate School):

- Fax to 540-231-3714

- Upload through the *admission application portal* → in Section 4 → Other File Uploads.  Do not use any option besides "Immigration" and "Financial" to upload these documents.

- Mail documents to:
  International Graduate Student Services
  Graduate Life Center at Donaldson Brown (0325)
  Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061, U.S.A.

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## When to Expect Your Immigration Documents

3. Allow 2-3 weeks for Virginia Tech to process these immigration/financial documents. After receiving the above immigration documents, Virginia Tech will issue you an I-20 or DS-2019 form - which is legal proof that you have been accepted to study at a US university – this certificate / form is what you'll use to apply for a student VISA through the US State Dept. If you did not include everything required the packet will be sent back to you without a form being issued.

    a. Learn about your mailing options and let us know how you want us to mail your I-20 or DS-2019.

    b. Immigration forms for the fall semester are issued and mailed between March and July; forms for the spring semester are issued between October and December. Forms for transfer students who are already in the U.S. may be issued up until a week before classes begin.

    c. You will receive an email notice from IGSS when the I-20 or DS-2019 form has been issued and shipped or is ready for pick up. The email includes your SEVIS number, our school code, and additional details.

4. After Virginia Tech, a SEVP-approved school, accepts your enrollment, you will be automatically registered for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and must pay the SEVIS I-901 fee. https://www.ice.gov/sevis/overview

    a. You will have to present the Form I-20, and proof of SEVIS registration and payment, to the consular officer when you attend your VISA interview.

    b. If your spouse and/or children intend to live with you in the United States while you study, they must also enroll in SEVIS, obtain individual Form I-20s from the SEVP-approved school, and apply for a visa.

    c. Visit the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) website to learn more about SEVIS and the SEVIS I-901 Fee. https://www.ice.gov/sevis

5. After you receive the I-20 / DS-2019 form, AND register for SEVIS, AND pay the SEVIS-901 fees, then you will need to apply for a student VISA through the Department of State. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html#overview

    a. The steps for applying for a VISA can vary based on what country you're traveling from - it's suggested that you contact the US embassy in your home country and follow their specific instructions. https://www.usembassy.gov/

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b. You will need to fill out the DS-160 form online and print out the last page (the bar code page) of the form to keep with you during this process: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/forms/ds-160-online-nonimmigrant-visa-application.html

  i. You will be expected to upload a professional photograph while filling out this application – guidelines for acceptable photos can be found here: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html
  ii. You will need your Passport available as you fill out this form
  iii. You will need to provide your travel itinerary, and the dates of your last five visits or trips to the United States, if you have previously travelled to the United States. You may also be asked for your international travel history for the past five years.
  iv. You may be required to provide info about your current and previous education and work history.
  v. Other Information - Some applicants, depending on the intended purpose of travel, will be asked to provide additional information when completing the DS-160.
  vi. You will be asked to provide your SEVIS ID, which is printed on your I-20 or DS-2019, so you should have this form available when completing your DS-160.
  vii. You also will be asked to provide the address of the school/program at which you intend to study. This information should also be on your I-20 or DS-2019 form.

c. You must then schedule a VISA interview appointment at the US embassy in your home country (the U.S. Embassy or Consulate does not schedule an appointment for you), and you must keep the appointment to move forward with the VISA process.

  i. Make sure you bring your passport with you to this in-person VISA interview at the embassy.
  ii. Bring your I-20 / DS-2019 with you.
  iii. Bring proof of paying your SEVIS I-901 fees.
  iv. Bring your DS-160 form with you.

d. You will be expected to pay the VISA application processing fee. Review country-specific instructions on the U.S. Embassy website. This fee is generally $150-$250, but can vary country to country.

e. Allow three to four months for your visa application, interview, and approval process from the date you receive the I-20 or DS-2019 form from your university and fill out the DS-160 form.

6. Once you've received approval of your VISA and you travel to the US you will be issued an I-94 Form which must be kept with your passport, I-20/DS-2019, DS-160 form, and F-1/J-1 VISA.

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7. As an international graduate student, you will be expected to purchase health insurance while you're a student at Virginia Tech. The requirements for this insurance can be found: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/student-services/health-services.html  and https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/immigration-services/new-student-guide/insurance-health.html

    a. Documentation proving health insurance coverage must be submitted by all international graduate students before the start of each academic school year.

8. Once you arrive in the US, you will have to complete the mandatory immigration check-in process. All new international graduate students are required to check in with International Graduate Student Services (IGSS) to satisfy immigration requirements.

    a. Set up your two-factor authentication sign-in process. You will need an active cell phone number to use from here forward to log into any secure Virginia Tech online system.

    b. You will need to know your new permanent home address before checking in.

    c. Collect together scanned-in copies of your passport, I-94 Form, I-20/ DS-2019 Form, and F-1 / J-1 VISA – all of these will need to be uploaded during the check-in process.

    d. Check-in is done online through the IntlHokies portal. After you log-in, select "Immigration Check-in" from the menu options. Once you complete the form and upload the necessary files, click "Submit."  https://sun-prod-app.db.vt.edu/istart/controllers/start/start.cfm

    e. An immigration advisor will contact you if anything is missing and will guide you through completing the check-in if this happens – or the advisor will contact you to inform you that it's all been received and approved.

9. As an international graduate student you will be expected to complete an immigration orientation designed specifically for internationals (this is in addition to the New Graduate Student Orientation that is required of all students): https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/immigration-services/new-student-guide/immigration-orientation.html

## New Graduate Student Checklist

Prior to arrival at Virginia Tech, it's recommended that all new graduate students complete some of the miscellaneous requirements including:

1. At least 30 days prior to classes the immunization records / medical questionnaire form must be submitted to the Graduate School. There are many immunizations that are required of any student attending classes on campus. Info about this process can be found here: https://www.healthcenter.vt.edu/content/dam/healthcenter_vt_edu/assets/docs/IM_Health_Instructions.pdf

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a.  All students should check into getting these immunizations on their proper timetables by their home doctors. US students are more likely to have all of these immunizations already as they're generally required for all US public school attendees.

b.  (ONLY if you're an international student accepted to graduate school) International graduate students, in particular, will want to have looked into this prior to arrival. You will need to have proof of receiving these immunizations from a doctor in your home country.

c.  The immunizations records / medical questionnaire form that must be submitted is found at: https://www.healthcenter.vt.edu/content/dam/healthcenter_vt_edu/assets/docs/immunizationhistory_form.pdf

     i.  The form can be submitted through their secure online portal, hand-delivered to the Health Center in McComas Hall or mailed to:

         Medical Records Department
         Schiffert Health Center (0140)
         McComas Hall – Virginia Tech
         895 Washington Street, SW
         Blacksburg, VA 24061

2.  You will need to create a Personal Identifier – your PID. This will be your access to everything online at Virginia Tech. It will be your email address, provide you with cloud storage while you're a student here, will allow you to register for courses, and will basically be connected to everything you do from now on at the Virginia Tech campus.

    a.  It is recommended that it be a combination of your first and last names and, if needed, your birth year, but it can be anything you choose. It cannot be changed once it's created – make sure it's what you want and is completely correct before submitting it.

    b.  You register for your new PID here: https://onboard.it.vt.edu/

    c.  Make sure you can log into HokieSPA with your new PID.

3.  Contact your academic department and start a conversation with the faculty member who you've been assigned to. Your faculty advisor will be able to help you outline a class schedule for the entire time you're attending graduate school at Virginia Tech.

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a. All students are expected to register for classes and pay tuition and fees prior to the start of each semester. Classes are registered for, and payment is submitted through, the HokieSPA portal: https://banweb.banner.vt.edu/ssb/prod/twbkwbis.P_WWWLogin

4. Get your student ID card, which is called your Hokie Passport, through the Hokie Passport office, 100 Student Services Building, Virginia Tech. https://secure.hosting.vt.edu/www.hokiepassport.vt.edu/pages/getyourcard.php?div2=Student

   a. Hokie Passports can only be issued to students who are currently registered for at least once course. So, make sure that you're signed up for classes before attempting to pick up your Hokie Passport.

   b. You will be expected to have a filled out the ID Request Form, and bring a valid form of government issued ID with you, and know that your picture may be taken for your Hokie Passport.

5. All graduate students are expected to participate in a New Graduate Student Orientation where you will learn more about the expectations the Graduate School has of you, discover resources that will help you throughout your graduate student career, meet the Dean of Graduate Studies, and find out how to get involved in campus life here at Virginia Tech.

   a. Orientations are held multiple times at the start of each school semester. Find out details of when and where: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/admissions/orientation.html

## Links for more information:

1. Information on the Virginia Tech Graduate School can be found here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/

2. Degrees and programs offered through the graduate school are listed here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/programs.html and class info and schedules are listed here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/courses-and-scheduling.html

3. The processes outlined here for applying to graduate school have all been summarized or expounded upon from the online application processes page here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/admissions/how-to-apply.html and all application deadlines can be found here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/application-deadlines.html

4. After you've been accepted to the graduate school, you will need to take the steps outlined here to prepare for coursework, research, and life as a VT grad student: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/admissions/getting-started-as-a-student/new-student-checklist.html Or download the pdf version of this checklist here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/checklist_fall_2018.pdf and links for every step on the checklist have been compiled here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/admissions/getting-started-as-a-student.html

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5.  What is expected of you as a graduate student at Virginia Tech is outlined here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations.html and all of the policies and procedures surrounding being a graduate student are outlined here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/graduate-catalog-policies-procedures.html

6.  Any form you may need during your graduate school career can be found here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/what-you-need-to-graduate/forms.html

7.  Find clubs, organizations, and student groups centered around your interests as well as advising centers, mentoring networks, and health and wellness offices linked here: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life.html