



Common FAQ for folks applying to Graduate School

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APPLICABLE TO ALL APPLICANTS

When is the application deadline? When can I start applying?

On or before January 1st (every year). The application system opens on September 1st (every year).

Is there an application fee, and if so, can I request a waiver?

Yes, the application fee is \$65. This is administered and collected by the SIU Graduate School. No waivers are offered under any circumstances.

What is the minimum CGPA to be considered for admission?

MA degree

For admission to a Master's program, a CGPA of 2.7 or higher is required **on the last two years** of undergraduate coursework, based on a grading scale where 4.0=A (basically a B- average). If you have a higher GPA than 2.7 on your last two years of coursework, than yes your application will



still be considered. If your CGPA is lower than 2.7 for those last two years, we will consider you, however, your application may be ranked lower than someone with a higher CGPA.

If you have completed 9 or more semester credit hours of graded graduate work at an accredited U.S. educational institution, and your GPA is 3.00 or better in that graduate work, then you are exempt from the 2.7 undergraduate GAP requirement.

PhD degree

Consideration for admission into the PhD program requires a minimum CGPA of 3.00.



Can I apply if my undergraduate or Master's degree is in a field other than Communication Studies?

Yes. You may want to state why you want to further your education in the field of Communication Studies in your Statement of Purpose.

Do I need to send official transcripts before I am officially admitted; can my application be reviewed with unofficial transcripts?

We can review files without *official* transcripts. We will still need unofficial transcripts uploaded. However, once an offer for admission is made, official transcripts will be required ASAP for the student to attend, especially if they will be receiving a GTA position. One of the biggest issues international students have with registering, getting paid for their GTA positions, and other points of entry is lack of official transcripts. These must be in a sealed envelope or sent directly from their university electronically to the SIU Graduate School. If they need to, the student can also send these directly to us and we can upload them and forward the hard copy to the Graduate School.

Do you require the GRE?

We no longer require the GRE for admission. (However, most fellowships offered by the SIU Graduate School do require the GRE. If you wish to be considered for one of these fellowships, you will need to submit GRE scores.)

What are the additional School of CMST requirements for the application?

Please review our helpful checklist for applicants, which can be found online in the "[program admissions](#)" section of our website. (Checklist is the same document for MA and PhD.) If you have questions regarding the statement of purpose, recommendation letters, or writing sample, please send those questions to Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway (sandypc@siu.edu).

What can I do to make sure my application is reviewed as favorably as possible?

We make admission decisions based on a full examination of your materials, not just CGPA and other scores. Most important often are the three letters of recommendation, the statement of purpose, and a writing sample. You should make your application materials (particularly the statement of purpose and writing sample) specific to SIU Carbondale, and the School of Communication Studies. Make it clear that you want a degree in Communication Studies, and that you have an understanding of the field (which is particularly important if you come from a field other than Communication Studies). It's also helpful if you identify faculty members in our program that you might like to work with if given the opportunity.

Please provide advice for my statement of purpose.

[This article](#) gives excellent advice for your statement of purpose.



What can/should I send for a writing sample? Where do I send it?

Typical writing samples are under 30 pages and are things like a good undergraduate paper you wrote for a course or a chapter from your thesis or other research report. Please do NOT send entire theses, articles, or other documents longer than 30 pages, as only 30 pages of these will be reviewed. You can upload these directly into the application portal, or send them to Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway (sandypc@siu.edu).

What is the possibility of getting funding through a teaching or research assistantship?

All applicants to the MA and PhD programs are automatically considered for a teaching assistantship. These offer a tuition waiver and small stipend in exchange for teaching two sections of our introductory communication course each semester. Typically, we offer these to about 30% of our applicant pool, although that number might shrink in years with a larger amount of applicants. [This equates to about 6 of these positions being offered a year].

When will I hear back about whether or not I was accepted into the program/offered a graduate teaching assistantship?

We do not begin reviewing files until mid-January. This is an extensive process involving several faculty and many files that must be individually reviewed and discussed. You will most likely not hear about a decision until late February or early March.

Am I eligible for a scholarship or fellowship?

Yes, all students are eligible to apply for a scholarship or fellowship, but not all students qualify for all scholarships and fellowships. Please visit the [graduate school funding and aid page](#) for more information. Note that some scholarships and fellowships require a nomination from the School of Communication Studies; they are not available for applicants to apply for on their own.

Do I need to secure/look for a faculty member to serve as my advisor or agree to work with me before applying?

No. Students accepted into the graduate program do not need to find an advisor until their second semester in the program.



SPECIFIC TO INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS

Do I have to have all my financial information submitted before my application will be reviewed?

No. We are able to review applications without the financial documentation required by the SIU Graduate School. In addition, any international student who is awarded a graduate teaching assistantship, submission of these documents is not required. If you are admitted without a teaching assistantship, you will still need to submit the financial disclosure documents in order for the SIU Graduate School to create your I-20 form and allow you to apply for a visa.

Do I need to have my transcript evaluated by a third party?

When you apply to our program, you can use an unofficial transcript. If you are admitted and you come to our program, you will need to submit an official transcript that is readable by our graduate school. Most transcripts do not need a third-party evaluation, but it depends upon the transcript.

Do you require the TOEFL/IELTS exam?

The School of Communication Studies primarily follows the [requirements outlined by the graduate school](#). Those requirements are outlined below. The School of Communication Studies requires higher scores as indicated:

The English language requirement may be met by submitting:

- 550 on the paper-based TOEFL [**Communication Studies requires 600**]
- 80 on the internet-based TOEFL [**Communication Studies requires 100**]
- 6.5 on the IELTS [**Communication Studies requires 7.0**]
- 105 on the Duolingo English Exam (**EFFECTIVE JUNE 1st, 2024, Duolingo score minimum will increase to 115**)
- 3.8 on the iTep Academic Plus Exam
- C1 required on the Cambridge English Exam

Some programs require a higher score and some require a specific test rather than accepting every test listed. Please check with the academic program directly to verify their requirements.

The English language requirement may be waived if:

1. An applicant was awarded a Master's degree at an accredited college/university in the United States and has been in residence in the United States continuously prior to application to SIU (not out of the country for more than one calendar year).
2. You have a minimum of 60 graded (A, B, C) hours of recent coursework completed at an accredited college/university in the United States with continuous residence in the United States prior to application at SIU. Pass / Fail, Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory, or Proficiency credit is not acceptable.
3. Here is a current list of countries and territories that are exempt from the English proficiency requirement: [EXEMPT LIST](#).

Please note: English language requirements vary according to individual situations. What will satisfy the requirement is always determined by the Graduate School Admissions Office, not the program. Please include a photocopy of your TOEFL/IELTS Examinee score report with your program application materials.



Do I need to establish English language proficiency if I am awarded a graduate teaching assistantship?

Yes, most international students who are awarded a graduate teaching assistantship must take and pass the International Teaching Assistant Oral Interview, conducted virtually. Visit the Center for Teaching Excellence [ITA interview page](#) for more information.

Do I need to submit proof of funds in the application process?

Yes, international applicants must affirm that they are responsible for paying all tuition, fees and living expenses for the entire period of the intended study program. Applicants must document the estimated full cost of the first academic year of study, following admission, before the university can issue a Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20 or DS-2019) for F-1 or J-1 visa issuance. Students being offered a Graduate Assistantship will require confirmation of the offer from their hiring unit. The graduate school [international admissions page](#) provides more information.

