



Department of Epidemiology – Ph.D. Program

Frequently Asked Questions

APPLYING TO UC IRVINE

Q: Do you offer an MS degree in Epidemiology?

A: YES. The Department of Epidemiology faculty is accepting applications for the Master of Science degree program in Epidemiology. Interested applicants should view relevant information located [here](#). UC Irvine also offers the MPH degree through the Program in Public Health, which is in another office/area that is not associated with the Dept. of Epidemiology nor the School of Medicine. For more info on the UC Irvine MPH degree program, click [here](#).

Q: What are your minimum requirements for my GPA?

A: The University of California requires that applicants to our graduate degree program have a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA upon completing their undergraduate degree. If a student subsequently completes graduate level work with a higher GPA, exceptions may be considered.

Q: What are the minimum scores necessary for my GRE General Test and Subject Test?

A: There are NO minimum GRE scores that represent a 'cut-off' whereby an applicant would automatically be denied admission by the Admission Committee. Also, the GRE scores of other applicants applying for the same enrollment date as you can vary from year to year. Obviously scores need to be competitive with others in your applicant cohort, but all GRE scores are considered by the Admission Committee. We will not know how this year's applicant cohort performed on their GRE Exams until late January. **Reminder:** Application files are evaluated by our faculty with a holistic review and assessment approach.

A GRE subject test is NOT required for application. However, if you have a level of proficiency in a particular subject that you would like to demonstrate via GRE Subject Test(s), then your score will certainly be considered as part of your application file.

Q: Do I need to select a faculty advisor before I can apply to your program?

A: NO, you do not have to find a UCI Epidemiology faculty advisor in order to apply to our program. This would indeed be problematic for most applicants. However, it is important that you've reviewed the [research interest of our faculty](#) so you can ascertain whether or not your interests line up with the expertise of our existing faculty. For example, if you state in your Statement of Purpose that you are interested in a specific area of epidemiology that is not a strength or otherwise falls outside the expertise of the particular faculty in our department, then the faculty may feel ill equipped to mentor you towards your degree. If you have questions for a particular faculty person in the department, you should send them an email. Most of our faculty is very responsive.

Q: How many applicants do you expect to admit for this upcoming academic year?

A: There is no quota for admits per se. The faculty is looking to admit the highest caliber of students who are prepared to meet the high standards for doctoral studies at the University of California. Typically, we receive about 10 – 20 applications each year. Of these, ~50% are typically invited for an on campus interview. We may admit ~3-6 students each year with ~2-3 of those choosing to enroll in our doctoral program in epidemiology at UC Irvine. Since applicants tend to apply to multiple institutions, some fraction of those we admit will choose to enroll in another program that is more convenient for them personally.

APPLICATION TIMELINES

Q: When should I inform your department of my intention to apply to your program?

A: It is very helpful if we can begin the communication process between the university and the applicant in parallel with your efforts in completing UCI's online application requirements and process. This allows us to know of your interest, send you any additional information or updates that might arise, tell you which documents we have received and/or which are still missing, address any issues specific to your background, etc. To indicate your interest, we ask that you email or US Mail a copy of your CV to [D. Green](#) at the address located at the bottom of this FAQ document. Also, if you are from out of the area, but have plans to visit southern California in the next few months, please let us know.

Q: What do I need to do to submit an application to your PhD degree program?

A: Full information about the Epidemiology PhD program including instructions for submitting a complete application is detailed on our website [here](#).

Q: What is the application deadline for those expecting to enroll during Fall Quarter, 2012?

A: The application deadline for the PhD program in Epidemiology is Noon (PST) on Tuesday - January 17, 2012. The completed application, payment of the application fee and all supporting documents are required by this date. If you are having a problem meeting this deadline, you should contact dgreen@hs.uci.edu before Jan 10th to discuss the problem. *Special note: The traditional January 15th deadline will be extended to January 17th for this year only as University Offices will be closed January 14th, 15th and 16th.*

Q: I noticed that the online application provides an option for either full-time study or part-time study. Can I apply for part-time study?

A: NO. The PhD program in Epidemiology is a full-time program. You will find that virtually all PhD programs throughout the nation require a PhD student to be pursuing their degree full-time (enrolled in 12-quarter units or more where a typical course equals 4-quarter units). This is a UC Academic Senate policy for doctoral programs. There are a few exceptions in other disciplines for UC professional-type Master's or doctorate programs; e.g., in Business and Education. Thus, the part-time option listed on UCI's online application service is necessary to accept/process applications for a few other UCI graduate degree programs. Part-time study is not an option for the PhD Program in Epidemiology.

Q: When I create my online application account, will I be required to complete the full application during that one session?

A: NO! It would be almost impossible to complete the application in one sitting. We strongly recommended that you go ahead and set up an application account now. This has many advantages. You will be able to see firsthand what information is required of you, what documents you may need to order or otherwise request, what information you may need to collect, etc. You can also work on it at your convenience, as the system is designed to save any info you have entered. The online system will let you navigate around your application as needed upon your return. You can access your application, logout and login to access your online application again and as many times as you wish. The application will remain unprocessed until you feel you have completed it, PAID the application fee and hit the submit button.

Q: Which elements of the application are most important?

A: Application files are evaluated by our faculty with a holistic review and assessment approach. A broad diversity of applicant backgrounds is quite common and thus, all applications and associated elements of their applications are carefully reviewed. Thus, ALL the elements of your application are very important. The core features of our students is that they have strong academic records, have earned the respect of other faculty/post-doc researchers as demonstrated through their letters of recommendation, and have expressed a clear vision via their personal statement & statement of purpose. Past experiences with applicant files reveal that some applicants falter as a result of the lack of the professional information they originally provided to their Letters of Recommendation (LOR) writers, in their Personal Statement and/or in their Statement of Research Purpose. Given the importance of these documents, they require special attention by you as elements of your overall application portfolio.

APPLICATION -- SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Q: Where should I tell others to send my original transcripts and letters of recommendations if my recommenders do not want to use UCI's on-line option to submit letters?

A: Please mail (e.g., USPS, FedEx or Intercampus) all paper documents such as official transcripts, paper letters of recommendation, test scores, publications and the like. Any 'Paper' documents should be sent directly to D. Green ([address at bottom of this FAQ document](#)) as soon as they become available to you. We will create an applicant file on you and we will retain any documents received prior to the completion and transmittal of your on-line application. If your letter writers do plan to send us a paper letter, then you MUST provide them with the 2-page paper waiver form that you will download, complete, sign and provide to each of your letter writers as they must attach this waiver form to their original letter of recommendation printed on their institutional letterhead with their original signature.

Q: Can I just wait to have my supporting documents sent in after I have completed my on-line application?

A: This is not a good tactic and this approach is not in your best interest! In fact, we strongly encourage you not to wait until you submit your completed application. By waiting to submit supporting documents, you run the risk of depending on someone else to do their part in a timely manner so that you meet the strict January 17th deadline (a Tuesday for 2012) to ensure you a completed application including all required supporting documents. It is unfortunate when some needed document gets to us too late to consider; e.g., letters from faculty recommenders who may need large lead times to fulfill your request of them, missing college transcripts, etc. Common sense would suggest that if you are dependent on someone else to complete their part of your application materials, the prudent approach would be to *ask them early and often*. Consider requesting that others submit any required paper documents to UC Irvine *BEFORE* the end-of-year holidays since many faculty become less available between mid-December and mid- January. Some applicants have sent requests to four (4) LOR writers to be safe. This is acceptable if you desire, although only three (3) LORs can be submitted on-line. Any others would need to be submitted by mail with UCI's LOR form attached. This 'extra letter' approach is taken by some applicants to provide them with a safeguard should one of their writers fail to get their letter submitted and received by UC Irvine before the Jan. 17th deadline.

Q: Should I request ETS to send my GRE scores to the Dept. of Epidemiology or to the central UCI Graduate Division?

A: For those tests that are given by Educational Testing Service (ETS), please request to have your GRE, TOEFL and/or TSE scores electronically transmitted directly by the testing service (ETS) to UC Irvine's Graduate Division. To send an official ETS test score to UCI, please select UC Irvine's institution code R4859 and department code 0606 as appropriate. Minimum TOEFL and TSE scores are provided in Appendix I. There are no minimum GRE scores per se, but applicants need to be competitive.

Q: What if I took the IELTS administered test instead of the ETS administered test?

A: For applicants taking exams in foreign countries, there is no problem with you submitting to us your International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores instead of ETS' TOEFL and/or TSE scores. They are similar English proficiency exams administered by different organizations and UC Irvine accepts both equally. If you are able to request that your scores to be transmitted to UC Irvine electronically, you may do so. If you cannot make this request to IELTS for whatever reasons, you can request IELTS mail your official results to us at the address given at the end of this FAQ document. UC Irvine is a registered institution with IELTS and, using identification information on your report; we will access their online verification service to verify scores on your report. Minimum IELTS band scores are provided in Appendix I.

LETTERS OF RECOMENDATION

Q: One of the individuals who I requested a letter of recommendation from does not want to submit his/her letter via your on-line procedure. Is there another option?

A: YES. Letter writers may submit 'paper' letters of recommendation (LOR). However, they *must* complete and return the requisite 2-page UCI [LOR form](#) (which you will need to complete and provide them) along with their written recommendation on their institutional letterhead. Otherwise, the letter will not be forwarded to the admission committee. Complete instructions are on the downloadable form. All necessary information and forms can be downloaded directly from the Graduate Division's [website](#). In cases of paper letters, MAKE CERTAIN that you provide the writer with a signed [waiver form](#) to be attached to their letter before they mail it to us.

Q: The online application instructions state that LOR writers cannot access the online LOR system and submit their LOR until I've completed and submitted my sections of the online application, which is also when my "Application Number" is assigned to me. How can I have LOR writers submit online letters before I complete my application? Is there a way to get around this in light of the above FAQ answer?

A: Yes and No. Technically, LOR writers cannot submit their recommendations via the online LOR system until you have officially submitted your application, paid your application fee and received confirmation that will include your personal application number that you will need to provide your writers for online submission of your LOR. You have two good options:

1) You can ask your letter writers to go ahead and write their letters in parallel to your completion of your online application. With this approach, they will be prepared to quickly authenticate their identity and upload their letter quickly as soon as you notify them of your application number. FYI, if they intend to submit their letter via the online LOR system, there is no need for them to take time to format a formal letter on their letterhead since the online LOR submission system they access only has a section (plain text box) where they will cut and paste the narrative of their LOR. Unlike some online LOR systems, the UCI system does not accept actual document file uploads, e.g., a .pdf or .doc file; only 'plain text' is available. The other parts of the online LOR information requested of your LOR writers mirrors the paper [LOR form](#) that must accompany any paper letters (see below) an applicant's LOR writer might submit.

.OR.

2) You can supply each of your LOR writers with a printout of UC Irvine's [LOR Form](#) available on the Grad Division website and have them submit their paper LOR along with the completed paper [LOR form](#) previously mentioned above. Both you and then your LOR writer must complete and sign this 2-page form with the paper LOR writer returning the documents directly to the Department of Epidemiology. You might seriously consider this option if the LOR writer is expected to be out-of-town or they are otherwise unable to submit an LOR via the online LOR system. Paper letters can be mailed directly to the department at any time (prior to 1/17/2012) since we will match it up to your departmental file by your name and not your application #. The Epidemiology PhD Admission Committee has no preference as to the format of LORs they receive. Both paper and online submissions are equally fine.

Q: My Letters of Recommendation are on file with my school's LOR repository service or with a confidential third party credential file management (dossier) service. What should I do? They say they cannot do online submissions?

A: In this particular situation, the batch of paper LORs, waiver notification and the service's cover letter must be physically mailed (e.g., USPS, FedEx, etc.) by the service directly to the Department of Epidemiology at the physical address below. It is important to check that the service provides us with a student signed waiver of LOR access to accompany your letters. A standard waiver form from the service will likely be acceptable, assuming the waiver language is roughly the same as the UC Irvine waiver form. However, if a non-UC Irvine waiver form is sent to us by your service, then you must complete and sign your section of the UCI [LOR form](#), specify the name, etc. of the service you are using and then submit the completed form directly to the Department of Epidemiology ASAP.

Q: How can I make sure that those letter writers who I requested a LOR from actually submitted my letter to the university?

A: All Letters of Recommendation (LOR) submitted by your letter writer via UC Irvine's on-line LOR system can be verified using our [Application Progress Review](#) online system. Within 10 days of receipt of any 'paper' Letters of Recommendation (LOR) submitted by your letter writer via mail to the address at the end of this document; you will be sent an email notifying you of its receipt by the Program Director in the Department of Epidemiology.

Q: What is the purpose of the 3 required "Letters of Recommendation (LOR)"?

A: With LOR's, our faculty want to read what other faculty candidly think of a student's potential for doctoral studies at a major research university like UC Irvine. Therefore, it is important that the faculty recommender, or researcher, has worked somewhat closely with you and can comment as to your potential as an academic researcher as well as attest as to your character as a person. A faculty letter simply stating that they had you in a class and stating the grade you got in that class would be an example of a redundant and relatively unhelpful letter. Courses taken and grades are already available via your transcripts.

Q: Should I sign the LOR waiver section? Do I have the choice of not signing the waiver?

A: Please review the [LOR waiver form](#) located on the UCI Graduate Division website for the [university's official guidance](#) which provides more detail. Briefly, the section you reference is a legally binding waiver addressing your individual rights. You are making a personal choice as to whether you do or do not wish to waive your legal right to view a particular LOR after it is submitted by your LOR writer. The choice is solely yours to decide. When an Admission Committee receives a LOR where the applicant has specifically waived their right to review a LOR, and the LOR writer was informed of this decision, then the committee can be reasonably certain that the writer felt free to express whatever they deemed pertinent to the Admission Committee's confidential deliberations.

IMPORTANT: Regardless of whether you waive your right of access to a particular letter of recommendation or not, **YOU MUST ALWAYS SIGN**, and forward the 2-page [LOR form](#), to your letter writers who will complete their part and forward all documents directly to us.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FAQ

Q: What is the purpose of the required personal "Statement of Purpose"?

A: The *Statement of Purpose* should ideally be 1 - 3 pages, single spaced, in length. It is expected to provide important guidance to the Epidemiology PhD Admission Committee when making decisions. This essay is your creation and needs to convey to the faculty of the admission committee your academic background, where you are headed and how this degree program is expected to get you there. It is very important! You should have some vision as to what you are trying to accomplish and as much focus in that vision as possible. For example, you should address questions like "How the strengths of the Epi faculty (by name if possible) at UCI match your specific academic plan and/or research interests?"

Additional items you may want to consider addressing if appropriate are:

- Your overall purpose in pursuing an advanced degree.
- Any area of study in which you wish to specialize if known.
- Your intended future use of your graduate education.
- Any special preparation and fitness for study you possess in the field of epidemiology, biostatistics, healthcare and the basic sciences.
- State any special conditions that are not revealed elsewhere in the application, such as a significant workload outside of school that would make it difficult to pursue full-time studies.
- Any problems or inconsistencies in your records or scores, such as a bad quarter reflected on your transcript, that you would like to add additional information to be considered during its evaluation.
- Any information about you as a person that would be helpful for us to know.
- Your reasons for wanting to attend UC and the Irvine campus in particular?

Also, if you do a Google search, you can find links to various sources that may provide useful advice when writing a clear statement of your purpose for grad schools.

PERSONAL HISTORY FAQ

Q: What is the purpose of the “Personal History” section? How is it different from the “Statement of Purpose” section?

A: The *Personal History* essay can provide information to the Admission Committee that you believe is important for the committee to be aware of, but not otherwise obvious and not addressed in your *Statement of Purpose* essay. The length of this personal essay should ideally be one or two single spaced, 12pt. pages at most. Think of the *Personal History* statement as providing the link between one's "personal life and past" with their "career and future" as addressed in the *Statement of Purpose* essay. It is your creation and should address, as appropriate, anything in your life that is integral to your course of studies in the PhD degree program in epidemiology and/or attendance at UC Irvine specifically. The following are provided merely as examples of the type of information that may be relevant to your *Personal History* statement:

- An applicant may want to discuss how your personal background informs your current decision to pursue a graduate degree. This might include any educational, cultural, economic, family or other social experiences, challenges, or opportunities relevant to your academic journey.
- An applicant may want to briefly discuss any academic rough areas reflected in the past quantitative measurements of their academic performance. As examples only, an applicant may have had an especially rough semester where their GPA was poor or a GRE score that might be unusual.
- Applicants may want to share how your scholarly interests intersect with their personal history.
- An applicant may wish to describe how they might contribute to social or cultural diversity within their chosen field and/or how they might serve educationally underrepresented segments of society with their degree.
- An applicant may want to disclose any special financial arrangements they have made in preparation of their graduate studies here at UC Irvine; i.e., a fellowship/scholarship they have been awarded, their participation in a program sponsored by their home country that is to provide all or part of the funds they will need to study and live here, pre-arranged housing while studying at UC Irvine, etc.

FINANCIAL (\$\$) MATTERS FAQ

Q: How is funding for PhD students handled in your program? Which funding opportunities should I check on the application?

A: Funding for doctoral programs at tier 1 research universities is in general somewhat standardized across the nation. You may want to review the information located on the campus' Grad Division Website title "[How to Fund Your Graduate Education](#)" to make sure you understand the basics. Having said this, you should check all the funding opportunity blocks (e.g., Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant, fellowship, etc.) on the UCI application [that you qualify for](#). The department, in coordination with the University, will decide what support to offer you if you are accepted into our program.

For U.S. Citizens only: Applicants who are U.S. Citizens should also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) [online](#) and review the information hosted on the university's [website](#). FAFSA is administered by Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education, and ensures that all eligible individuals can benefit from federally funded financial assistance for education beyond high school. Once you have completed your FAFSA, a summary analysis of your financial need will be calculated and forwarded to UC Irvine's Financial Aid Office for the university's consideration.

Q: I have been awarded a fellowship to support my enrollment at your institution in epidemiology. Should I list this fellowship somewhere on the application?

A: Yes, an applicant should disclose any special financial arrangements they have made in preparation for their graduate studies here at UC Irvine; i.e., a non-UC Irvine fellowship/scholarship they have already been awarded or expecting to be awarded, their participation in any programs sponsored by their home country, or otherwise, that can provide all or part of the funds they will need to study and live here, pre-arranged housing while living near UC Irvine, etc. Depending upon the nature of any support you may receive, you can describe it in your "Statement of Purpose" or your "Personal History" sections of the application.

Q: How can I learn more about graduate student financial support matters?

A: The [UCI Graduate Division](#) provides an excellent primer on [Financing Your Graduate Education](#) for those applicants new to graduate education or those just needing a refresher course.

As necessary, Mail ALL 'paper' documents to:

DeWayne Green | Epidemiology PhD Prgm.
224 Irvine Hall, School of Medicine
University of California
Irvine, CA 92697-7550

✉: dgreen@uci.edu



*** Appendices begin starting with Page 12 below**

APPENDIX I: Minimum English Proficiency Score Requirements for Admission to the University of California, Irvine (International Applicants Only)

TOEFL Minimum Score Requirements ^{2,3}

- A minimum score of **213** on the computer-based test version, **OR**
- A minimum score of **550** on the paper-based test version

TOEFL iBT Minimum Score Requirement ¹

- A minimum overall score of **80** ^{2,3} **AND**
- A minimum score of **26** on the “speaking” component

Notes:

1. *The TOEFL iBT (Internet Based Testing), represents the newest generation of ETS’ TOEFL exam. The TOEFL iBT was first administered in the U.S.A. on 9/25/2005 and has been subsequently phased into other countries. This newer test includes an important speaking component that was missing from earlier TOEFL exams.*
2. *TOEFL and TOEFL iBT scores that are more than two years old will not be accepted for consideration and the test must be taken again before applying.*
3. *TOEFL or TOEFL iBT scores you may receive from “institutional (non-ETS) administrations” will not be accepted.*

IELTS Minimum Band Score Requirements ^{1, 2}

- A minimum **overall** band score of **7**, **AND**
- A minimum band score of **7** on the “Speaking” module, **AND**
- A minimum band score of **6** on each of the other modules; i.e., English “Listening”, “Reading” and “Writing”

Notes:

1. *IELTS scores that are more than two years old will not be accepted for consideration and the test must be taken again before applying.*
2. *Any IELTS scores you may receive from “institutional (non-ETS) administrations” will not be accepted.*

Updated: 11/10/2011, D Green