

Updated September 2009 Admissions FAQs- PhD

1) I do not have a degree in biomedical engineering. Am I eligible to apply for admission to the BME PhD program?

Students with undergraduate or MS degrees in other engineering fields or the quantitative sciences may apply for admission and are often admitted. At a minimum, students must have a background in advanced mathematics (through ordinary differential equations) and a basic understanding of biological sciences, physics and engineering related to their intended area of research. Under exceptional circumstances, a student may be admitted prior to meeting these requirements, but is expected to meet them before enrolling.

2) How do I apply for admission to the BME PhD program?

Applications for admission are submitted online through the Graduate School website (<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/admission/>).

3) When is the application deadline for fall admission?

For full consideration, complete applications for fall admission to the BME graduate program must be received by December 31. Applications will not be reviewed until all required supplementary information is received and the application fee is paid to the graduate school.

4) Is there a minimum GPA or GRE requirement for eligibility to apply?

The BME department does not enforce minimum GPA or GRE scores for applicants. However, admission is competitive and the average undergraduate GPA of Fall 2009 matriculating PhD students was 3.66, and the average quantitative and verbal GRE scores were 765 and 584, respectively.

5) Before I apply, can I have somebody in the BME department review my qualifications and tell me if I have a chance of being admitted?

No. Because of the difficulty of accurately assessing qualifications of students in the absence of official transcripts, letters of recommendation and other information, we cannot honor these requests. Emails sent to the BME department requesting a pre-application analysis of admission chances will not be acknowledged.

6) Do I need to take the GRE exam?

All applicants must take and submit the results of the general GRE exam. Official scores must be less than three years old, include results from the new analytical writing section, and must come directly from the Educational Testing Service (ETS). [The institutional code assigned to The Graduate School at Northwestern is 1565](#). Be sure to include this number, and only this number, on your test form. If you do not include this code on your form,

we will not receive them. Personal copies are not considered official, nor are "attested" or notarized copies. However, it is to your advantage to include a paper copy of your score report in your supplemental information packet. This helps the department verify your scores quickly, should there be any delay in receiving the official report from ETS.

7) Do I need to take the TOEFL?

Students whose first language is not English must take and submit the results of the TOEFL exam. International students that received a BS degree from a university in the USA or Canada do not need to take the TOEFL exam.

8) What kind of financial aid is available and how do I apply for it?

All admitted PhD students are supported by University/school fellowships, external fellowships, research assistantships, or teaching assistantships. Applications filed by the December 31 deadline are automatically considered for school and university based fellowships. Exceptional students are encouraged to apply for external fellowships during the application process. The National Science Foundation (<http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/dge/programs/grf/>), the National Institutes of Health (<http://grants1.nih.gov/training/nrsa.htm#fellowships>), the Department of Defense (<http://www.asee.org/ndseg/default.cfm>), as well as several nonprofit organizations offer fellowships appropriate for graduate study in biomedical engineering. Many of these programs have application deadlines in the fall and winter for enrollment in a graduate program the following fall. More information on external fellowships for graduate study can be found on the Graduate School external funding website (<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/financialaid/fellowships/externalfunding/>).

9) Is there a form to be used for recommendation letters?

No. Persons providing letters of recommendation should comment on your past academic/research performance and future potential to perform independent research.

10) How many letters of recommendation are required?

We require at least two (three preferred) letters of recommendation. The letters of recommendation should be provided in sealed envelopes and included in the supplementary information packet that you mail to the BME department.

11) Can I send supporting materials before my online application is complete?

Yes. Documents that arrive before your application will be held in a pending file until the application and fee are submitted. (Pending file items are held for six months and then destroyed.) Anything sent separately from the application should include your name and your birth date.

12) Where do I send supporting documents (transcripts, recommendation letters, etc.)?

Letters of recommendation and **two** official copies of transcripts should be sent together with all other supplementary materials in a single packet to:

Graduate Admissions
Biomedical Engineering Department
Northwestern University
Tech Institute, Room E310
2145 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60208

13) What factors are taken into consideration, and when are admission decisions made?

Past academic performance, work experience, research experience, test scores, letters of recommendation and statement of purpose are all taken into consideration, and each case is unique. Admission decisions are made after review of applications by a committee of BME faculty, after which final approval of admission recommendations is granted by the Graduate School. Generally, most admission decisions are made by mid-March for fall admission.

14) Can I apply to the PhD program for winter or spring admission?

We generally do not admit PhD students for admission during the winter or spring quarter.