DOCTORAL DEGREE APPLICATION PROCESS

PhD vs. MIA/MPA—what are the benefits?

- **MIA/MPA degree**—provides a broad-based curriculum with a balance between theory and practice, leaving plenty of career paths open to the recipient.
- **PhD degree**—completely theory-based, with a bent towards abstract thinking. The focus is narrow, which tends to limit job prospects upon graduation. Most PhD recipients follow an academic career path, where research is valued over teaching skills. However, it is becoming more common for individuals with a PhD to fill highly specialized roles within professional public and private sector organizations.

Getting in

- A program’s first priority is to maximize its academic credentials. As such, the primary focus will be a candidate’s academic record, followed by GRE scores (humanities programs stress verbal over math), and then work experience, if applicable.

Funding

- DO NOT PAY TO ATTEND A PhD PROGRAM. Most programs take roughly 7 years to complete, which over time can be very costly. Many programs provide full funding for PhD candidates. Be sure to gather information about each program’s internal funding mechanisms before you decide to apply. Make sure that you are clear about what each school is willing to offer you and the time commitments required of you for their fellowships.

Quick tips

- Apply to at least one program with an improving reputation.
- Once you are interested in a program, look over the faculty roster and try to make contact with an adviser who may be of interest to you. Since you will be in constant contact with your adviser, it will be helpful if you have a shared connection.
- Caveat: get a feel for the long-term plans of the faculty adviser of interest to you. Are they close to retirement? Will they be moving to a different school? Are they interested in the area of research you intend to pursue? You want to find someone who will be there for the duration of your studies.

Resources

- *Survey on Doctoral Education and Career Preparation* ([www.phd-survey.org](http://www.phd-survey.org)) — national survey of doctoral students intended to provide a snapshot of their experiences and goals.
- *The American Political Science Association* ([www.apsanet.org](http://www.apsanet.org)) — professional organization for the study of political science, serving more than 15,000 members in over 80 countries.
- *Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs* ([www.apsia.org](http://www.apsia.org)) — provides information about its 30 member schools for current and prospective students, employers and media sources.
- *Interfolio* ([www.interfolio.com](http://www.interfolio.com)) — manages credential files for students and alumni. Interfolio collects, stores, and distributes credential files including such documents as evaluations, curriculum vitae, committee letters, certifications, and much more. These documents are then used to support applications to graduate schools, professional schools, or jobs. All files are protected through secure encryption, and are kept confidential according to federal privacy regulations for educational institutions.

Updated 7/14