



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Toronto looking for in a successful candidate?

The department looks for applicants who are balanced in their academic preparedness, which may include (but is not limited to) transcripts, research experience, and related work experiences. An applicant with a non-traditional academic experience that could include exploring other majors, working, or delaying graduation does not necessarily put that particular applicant at a disadvantage.

For entry to the M.Sc. program, our department requires a minimum B+ average in the final year of a B.Sc., and at least a mid-B average in the second last year of undergraduate studies.

For entry to the Ph.D. program, an applicant will normally have achieved a minimum of an A-minus average in their M.Sc. and a B+ average in the last year of their bachelor's program. For Direct Entry to the Ph.D. program from an undergrad program, an applicant must have an A-minus average in the final year of a B.Sc., as well as an A- or better in courses in Ecology and Evolution, and evidence of research potential. Student and supervisor must both agree to direct entry before an admission offer is made. International applicants from non-English speaking universities must have a minimum overall score of 7.0 on the IELTS (with a minimum score of 6.5 in each component of the test), or an overall score of at least 93 on the TOEFL, with minimum scores of 22 in each of the Writing and Speaking sections (the TOEFL Institution Code for the University of Toronto is 0982). English proficiency scores are also required from some English speaking universities located in predominantly non-English speaking countries, so please check with the EEB Graduate Office (grad.eeb@utoronto.ca) if you are uncertain.

2. I do not have the minimum required English proficiency test score. Can I be granted an exception and be offered admission? And if not, can I be offered admission on the condition that I complete English language courses once I arrive at the University of Toronto?

No. All applicants must have a passing score prior to being registered at the university.

3. How many students apply, and how many are accepted?

While the number changes from year to year, we receive an average of 80-100 completed applications, with about half of those receiving an offer of admission. Note that some students are unable to find a supervisor who might be willing to support them before they complete their online application and thus they do not bother applying. The department has limits on the number of international applicants, who do not have a major scholarship, that can be accepted; this makes admissions very competitive for international students. Therefore, it is especially important for international students to contact potential supervisors before they complete their online application.

4. Whom should I ask to write reference letters?

At least two of the three reference letters should provide input from people in responsible positions who can comment on your academic and/or research performance, character and career goals. For undergraduates this often means professors or laboratory supervisors (including postdocs). A third letter could come from someone who is not in a university or laboratory environment, but that letter

should still be able to comment on your academic potential, work ethic, and motivation to come to the graduate program. If you feel that a Teaching Assistant could provide a useful reference, we suggest that you ask the Teaching Assistant to ask the Professor for the course you took to integrate the Teaching Assistant's comments with their own about you in a reference letter that the Professor will submit.

Reference letters are completed by the referees using a web-based form, and the referees will be sent an email requesting that they complete the form as soon as you have paid the application fee and entered their personal information. While separate letters can be mailed directly to the department, we strongly encourage referees to use the web-based form. It is easy to fill out.

5. What should be included in my statement of interest?

We want to know about what you have studied in the past, what you want to study as a graduate student, and why. Your *curriculum vitae* (i.e., your resume) provides us with just an outline of your academic and employment timeline, so your statement of interest offers an opportunity for you to tell us about your experiences and your goals. This is your chance to let potential supervisors learn more about who you are.

Be sure to name potential supervisors in your statement. You can do this in one of two possible formats: In the middle of your statement, you can name specific supervisors and mention what aspects of their research appeal to you; or you can provide a list at the end of your statement. *Please note that you should contact potential supervisors before you complete your online application to find out whether they will be taking on graduate students in the coming year.*

It is a good idea to have someone with an academic or professional background proofread your statement, to ensure that you are making your points clear and concise.

The statement should only be one page in length. Avoid statements longer than one page, because reviewers will want to see that you can abide by the rules, and summarize your past achievements and future goals in a brief but effective manner.

6. How are my transcripts evaluated?

While grades are certainly an important aspect of any application, they are not the only determining factor. Potential supervisors will want to see what specialization/majors that you are taking/have taken, and the specific upper level courses that were successfully completed. Some research experience (e.g. an independent research project course) is beneficial, but there are successful applicants who do not much/any research experience.

7. Are there interviews included in the application process?

Although interviews are not officially part of the application process, potential supervisors will often want to speak to an applicant in person, by Skype, or over the phone. Applicants often arrange to meet in the supervisors' office to discuss the applicants' experiences and possible future projects. If you do speak to a supervisor do to ask any questions that you may have about the research being conducted in the lab, the lab personnel, etc. See pages 4-7 in this document for advice about this: <http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/Documents/supervision+guidelines.pdf> Enter a meeting well prepared.

8. How do I apply to a collaborative program?

You need to have been admitted to an individual department before you can apply to a collaborative program. The department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology participates in three collaborative programs, with details found on the following webpage:

<http://www.eeb.utoronto.ca/grad/prosp/collaborative.htm>

If your application to the department is successful, you can apply to a collaborative program after you begin your program in EEB.

9. When will I find out if my application was successful?

Although there is no set date where all responses are mailed out, most offers of admission are sent in March or April. If you have not received a response from us by May 2016, please contact the EEB graduate office (grad.eeb@utoronto.ca).

At any time, if you have received an offer from another institution and need to let them know soon about whether you will accept their offer, please contact Kitty Lam (kittygk.lam@utoronto.ca) to find out the status of your application.

10. Does the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology have rolling admissions?

Yes. For full consideration for scholarships and available positions, applications should be completed by Jan. 15, and applicants can choose to begin their program in May 2016, September 2016 or January 2017. However, we expect to continue to accept applications after Jan. 15, 2016. Please see this webpage for updates on whether we are still accepting applications:
<http://www.eeb.utoronto.ca/grad/prosp.htm>

11. Is the residency status of an applicant considered in the admissions process?

Yes. The department has a set number of offers that can be made to international applicants. That being said, we strongly encourage strong international applicants to apply, especially those with major scholarships and those who will be competitive for University of Toronto's scholarships for international applicants.

12. Are there additional tips that could strengthen my application?

Most successful applicants have contacted supervisors before they complete their application online. All professors in the department can review any completed application, but faculty that you contact are more likely to take a close look at your application. Make sure to include any professors that you contact in your [list of potential supervisors](#) that should be incorporated into your statement of interest. The names that you list are not the only faculty members who can accept you to the program, but those that you mention will be most likely to seriously consider your application. Also, when naming potential supervisors, avoid listing seven (or more) faculty members. By listing an excessive number of potential supervisors, you can give the impression that you do not have any kind of specific research areas that interest you. Mentioning between three and five potential supervisors is ideal.

Please keep in mind that individual supervisors cannot promise admission to any applicant, because final admissions decisions need to be granted by the EEB Graduate Admissions Committee after they verify that all admissions requirements have been met.