

Navigating MFA/PhD Applications

MFA		Ph.D.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1-3 years of study• Basis of degree is writing workshops and some literature/intergenre electives• Some programs allow you to pursue more than one genre, others don't!• Full funding is available for some programs/*some* students; many work as TAs/writing instructors/part-time jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5+ years of study• Basis of degree is coursework, a series of oral and written exams, a dissertation• Foreign language work probably required• Full-funding should be your expectation as a full-time graduate student; includes fellowships and work as TA/instructor for undergraduates in related field		
Applying			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most important: your writing! (15-30 pg)• Personal/academic statement• Recommendations• CV• GPA/GRE (not very important!)• Many schools don't want you to visit• You don't need to be published at all!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most important: academic statement (1-4 pg)• Your academic writing (10-30 pg)• GPA/GRE (important!)• CV• Recommendations• Try to make connections with professors and students (not all will be receptive!)		
Choosing a program			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does this program offer me personal support/guidance in developing my writing (in all the genres I want)?• Does this program offer funding or do I have a plan for how to support myself?• Do I like the professors' writing?• Does this program offer me opportunities to develop as a teacher/editor/professional in the field? (AWP, conferences etc).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do the professors/students in this program seem happy and are they receptive to my efforts to communicate with them?• Will I have enough time/money to pursue my research without being overworked?• Does this program offer me benefits/healthcare/participation in a union?• Does this program offer extra funding for research/summer pursuits?		
Big Picture things to keep in mind			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please choose a program that values what you have to offer and reflects your values as both a student and a person. Think about what is negotiable/non-negotiable for you. If diversity/accessibility/certain aesthetics/certain genres are vital, makes sure these are not just accommodated but embraced• In programs where you will be working for the institution, you are both a student and employee, make sure the program/institution will support you in both these roles• Don't forget to consider your personal life/preferences (city vs. rural, distance from family/friends etc.)			
Resources			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MFA vs. NYC: On if you need an MFA or if you need to move to NYC to be a writer (spoiler: you don't need to do either; you can do both)• Top 50 Programs Ranking (2012): get a sense of well-funded, well-respected programs, not exhaustive• Low-residency MFAs: if you want to work on your writing without quitting your day job/while pursuing other things• Career services guide to applying for graduate school• Swarthmore funding for graduate study			