Department of Anthropology
Applicant FAQ’s

If you don’t find an answer to your question here, try our Application Handbook and/or the Rackham website. If you still do not find answers to your questions, email the Graduate Program Assistant, Katia Kitchen at kitchenk@umich.edu with specific questions.

Q: What is your application deadline?
A: All application materials should be submitted online by DECEMBER 15.

Q: How do I learn more about your program?
A: Please visit the Prospective Students page of our website. Because all application information is now available online, we no longer print and mail information on our program.

Q: Do I need a Master's degree to enter your program?
A: No, a student can apply to our program with either a Master's or a Bachelor's degree. Those with a Master's are reviewed in the same applicant pool as those with a Bachelor's degree.

Q: If I currently have a Master's degree, can I apply it towards your program?
A: Maybe – you will need to speak to the Department’s Graduate Chair once you are admitted to see if your Master’s degree can be declared relevant towards our program. However, you should be aware that possessing a relevant Master’s will most likely not reduce your time to degree in our program.

Q: What can I do to improve my chances of admission?
A: Begin by reading the Application Handbook (on our website). The best thing you can do is plan in advance to present a complete and good quality application. This means doing a little research on the web or in the library to find out who the faculty are and to think about how their interests line up with yours. Prepare for the GRE and/or TOEFL tests and leave yourself enough time for a re-test if you feel you have not done your very best. In this same vein, start well in advance contacting current and previous institutions about submitting transcripts. We cannot consider your application without them. Think about who you will ask to write letters of recommendation for you. Try to get at least two of the letters from academic sources (e.g., a current or former professor). Finally, use the resources available on our website (especially the Application Checklist and the Application Handbook) to keep track of the supplemental materials required to complete your application.

In submitting your application, a clear, concise Statement of Purpose outlining your professional, intellectual, and research interests and career goals and how they connect to the professional and intellectual commitments of anthropology is crucial. Take time in preparing this statement and try to include some assessment of how your interests connect to
the interests of the faculty (this is different from the Personal Statement, which is also required).

Q: About how long does it take to earn a Ph.D. in your program?
A: It varies across subfields, but approximately 6 – 8 years. We do not offer a terminal Master’s program.

Q: What are your minimum GRE scores and GPA requirements?
A: There are no GRE or GPA requirements or cut-offs. From our Application Handbook:

GRE: Successful applicants normally have a verbal and quantitative score of 160 and an analytical writing score of 5.0 and above on the GRE. GRE scores can only be judged in conjunction with the student's Academic and Personal Statements, letters of recommendation, academic record, experience, and background.

GPA: An applicant for admission to the Department of Anthropology is expected to have at least a grade average of B+ (3.3 on a 4.0 scale) in his/her undergraduate course work and some preparation in anthropology. Although it is important, the grade record is not an exclusive criterion for admission and factors in the applicant's academic record are taken into consideration (e.g., a trend toward better grades or graduation from a school known for its rigorous grading practices).

It is impossible to judge whether your chances of admission will be better or worse based solely on your GRE score or your GPA (or even both). The faculty take into consideration all elements of an application when making admission decisions.

Q: Should I send anything directly to the Department of Anthropology?
A: All application materials should be submitted through the online application. Transcripts should not be sent to the Department of Anthropology, but to Rackham.

Q: Could you please clarify how to properly submit transcripts?
A: Scan the front and back of your transcripts and upload them with your online application (if you are an international student, please upload English translations as well). An official transcript (mailed or online) must also be sent to Rackham from every institution where you have received a degree.

Note: Screen shots of your grades from an online student account are NOT acceptable. We must have scans of transcripts from your institution. Rackham will accept transcripts sent from the school or from the applicant, so long as they are in a sealed envelope that bears the official seal or letterhead of the institution.
Q: When I submit my application online, do I need to do anything extra to make sure it gets to the Department / Rackham?
A: No. When you submit your online application it will be available to both Rackham and the Department automatically.

Q: Your Application Handbook says you encourage students to not submit letters of recommendation from online services like Interfolio. Why?
A: We find that these letters are written in vague and general terms in order to satisfy a large audience. Our admissions committee is looking for reference letters that speak in specific terms of the student’s strengths in academia, Anthropology, potential for graduate work, and to all of your other various talents. We have found that letters from services, such as Interfolio, do not make the student stand out as individually created letters of recommendation do, thus hindering your chances of admission.

Q: My recommenders have lost the email from CollegeNET (my online application) instructing them on how to submit the recommendation letter online. Can you resend them the information?
A: No, we cannot. Only you, the applicant, can log back into your online application account and resend the information to your recommenders. If that does not work then you need to contact CollegeNET directly, as only they are able to troubleshoot their system.

Q: Can I submit my supplemental materials along with my online application?
A: Yes, we accept your Academic Statement, Personal Statement, and writing sample(s) that are uploaded to your CollegeNET online application. Letters of recommendation should also be submitted online by the recommender.

Q: On the Description of Interests page of the application, what information are you looking for under “Topical Interest” and “Area Interest”?
A: For “Topical Interest” we’re looking for a listing of the topics you are interested in (i.e. gender, ethnicity, kinship, etc.), and for “Area Interest” we’d like information on the geographic area you are interested in (i.e. Latin America, the Middle East, Nepal, etc.) – general and/or specifics. You don’t need to write an essay here – just “bullet point” some of your main interests.

Q: What do I do with an Affidavit of Financial Support?
A: This ONLY applies to international applicants; please do NOT submit financial information at the time of application. If you are recommended for admission by the Department of Anthropology and Rackham approves the admission, you will be notified by Rackham to submit the Affidavit of Financial Support for International Students along with the required financial documentation.

Q: Will I receive confirmation when my application is complete?
A: We do not send confirmation from the Department when your application is complete, but we will notify you if any required supplemental materials are missing from your application. You
should receive a confirmation from the online application system when your actual application is submitted successfully.

Q: When will I hear results about my fee waiver request?
A: The Department does not handle fee waivers. Please contact Rackham.

Q: Since your office is closed from December 24 until January 2, who should I contact if I have questions regarding my application?
A: Since the entire University will be closed during this time period, there will be no one available to answer questions regarding the admission process. However, since our application deadline is December 15 we would expect to have all your application materials well in advance of this closure. We will return all phone calls and emails once we return on January 2. Also, please be advised that no decisions will have been made during this time period, and even when decisions are made, we are unable to divulge this information over the phone.

Q: What happens if my application materials are late? Will you accept supplemental materials that arrive after the application deadline?
A: Please be aware that the online application system automatically closes down after the deadline and will not accept application materials after December 15. All supplemental materials should have been submitted online by the December 15 deadline – this is the only way to fully ensure that your application is complete for faculty review. We will consider the acceptance of late materials on a case by case basis and notify applicants when a decision is reached.

Q: When should I expect to hear a decision on my application?
A: Applicants will be notified of decisions in mid to late February.

Q: I’m planning to visit – how can I arrange a meeting with faculty?
A: We strongly encourage students to postpone campus visits until they have been admitted (at which point a weekend event is held by the department). Faculty may be contacted via email if you are interested in speaking with them about your interest in the program. Faculty email addresses are available here.

Q: What kind of funding do you offer?
A: We typically offer a five year funding package to incoming students. Given that the program time to completion ranges from 6-8 years, we strongly recommend that all applicants seek external funding – for instance, through fellowships and grants. For ideas on where to find funding, you can browse the Funding Resources section of our website, our Student Support Handbook, and Rackham’s Funding Resources website.
Q: Do I need to fill out separate forms/paperwork to be considered for Department funding?
A: No, funding decisions are made along with admissions decisions and your application and supplemental materials are sufficient – except for FLAS funding. If you want to be considered for FLAS funding, you must submit a FLAS Intent Form along with your supplemental materials (the FLAS Intent Form is available on the “Prospective Students” section of our website).

Q: What is your policy on deferring admission?
A: We allow admitted applicants to defer admission for one year by notifying the Department’s Graduate Program Administrator. You will then need to submit your matriculation decision by the following April, at the latest. If you have been offered funding and choose to defer, you will not necessarily receive funding the following year. The funding offer does NOT defer along with your admission offer.

Q: How many total applications do you receive? How many do you admit?
A: For the Fall 2014 application cycle we received 206 applications and 29 were offered admission.