

Holistic Review

In the Department of Botany, we are looking to admit graduate students who are passionate about learning and exploring the plant, algal, fungal and protist sciences. We are committed to the continued development of our diverse and collegial community of people, ideas, and approaches through our missions of research, education, and public outreach. The Department of Botany will evaluate applicants using holistic review, which is an evidence-based approach to identify people who are likely to be successful in a research-based degree, regardless of what research opportunities may have been available to them prior to their application.

Please answer each of the following 6 questions individually. Each question includes an explanation describing why we are asking this. We expect each answer to be no longer than 1000-2000 characters.

1) Why are you interested in applying for an MSc or PhD in the Department of Botany?

What are your aspirations and/or career goals and how do you see this degree helping to advance them?

Explainer: We are looking for evidence that you are passionate about your field and also why a research-based M.Sc. or Ph.D. in our department will help you to achieve your goals. Examples of diverse career paths that graduates have pursued are academia, teaching careers, industry careers such as pharmaceuticals, biomedical, and environmental consulting, science writing, and careers in policy and government.

2) What research topics or scientific questions are you particularly curious and excited about, and why?

Explainer: It is important for researchers to stay curious and remain motivated to work hard to answer their research questions even when the going gets tough. It is also important to be able to explain the science you are doing to a broad audience. Note that the Admissions Committee recognizes both that not everyone will know these details when they apply, and that research directions often change once a student enters graduate school.

3) Explain why the lab/s you have indicated is/are relevant to your interests and goals.

Explainer: It is important to ensure that the lab you choose is a good fit for you and your research goals. The committee will be looking for your ability to articulate the link between your interests and the lab's research. Successful applicants will already have had discussions with potential supervisor.

4) Briefly describe any academic and/or research experiences that have prepared you for graduate school. Examples include upper-level laboratory courses, field courses, discussion groups and seminars, lab experience, publications, conference participation.

Explainer: Having a foundation of appropriate course work and relevant research experiences promotes success in conducting graduate research. The committee is aware that access to research opportunities varies.

5) Briefly describe personal skills you have acquired that will translate to your success in graduate school. These can be from academic and/or non-academic contexts. Examples could include time management, creative problem solving, resilience and perseverance.

Explainer: The graduate student experience will involve a range of challenges, such as juggling research and teaching commitments, handling setbacks, and finding solutions when experiments fail. Being able to overcome these difficulties and persevere in the face of challenges is key to being a successful graduate student. The committee is aware that these skills can be acquired in any aspect of your life.

6) Using examples from your experiences, briefly describe how you would make positive contributions to the lab community and departmental environment. These can be from academic or non-academic contexts. Examples can highlight skills and experiences and could include: collaboration, team work, interpersonal/intercultural communication, leadership, volunteer and outreach activities, and efforts to promote equity, diversity and inclusion.

Explainer: The Botany Department values our collegial environment and is committed to promoting a respectful and inclusive community. Graduate research is a team effort. Graduate students are encouraged to collaborate in their research, participate in teaching and mentoring and are an integral part of our departmental culture. Graduate students have also been at the forefront of changing many departmental policies and practices.

[This question is optional. Leaving it blank will not negatively impact the evaluation of your application.]

Describe any barriers, hardships, and/or challenges you have faced that have affected your access to opportunities, or describe any other aspects of your life experiences that help us contextualize your application.

Explainer: We are actively working to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in our department. People who apply for advanced degrees come from a diversity of backgrounds and world experiences. You may have already discussed your experiences in the answers above, but if you have anything you would like to add you are welcome to include it here.