

The Full-time MBA Program Round 2 Admissions Chat November 15, 2016

Chat with Berkeley-Haas

Talin Abrahamian, Assistant Director of Admissions

Brooke Baranzano, Assistant Director of Admissions

Candace Gonzales-Tumey, Assistant Director of Admissions

Sandra Cruz-Lezama, Admissions Specialist

Jamie Hayden, Assistant Director of Financial Aid

Lizzy Hazard, Moderator

Lizzy_Moderator: Welcome to the Berkeley MBA Admissions chat! My name is Lizzy Hazard, and I will be moderating the chat today. Joining us will be Talin Abrahamian, Assistant Director of Admissions; Brooke Baranzano, Assistant Director of Admissions; Candace Gonzales-Tumey, Assistant Director of Admissions; Sandra Cruz-Lezama, Admissions Specialist; and Jamie Hayden, Assistant Director of Financial Aid. Please send us your questions!

Candace_Berkeley: Hello! I look forward to your questions!

Brooke_Berkeley: Hi everyone! Looking forward to some great conversations today.

Sandra_Berkeley: Good Morning! I am Sandra Cruz-Lezama, an Admissions Specialist. I look forward to chatting with you all today.

Jamie_Berkeley: Hello! My name is Jamie Hayden and I am an Assistant Director of Financial Aid for the Haas School of Business. Please feel free to submit any questions you have regarding financial aid, including scholarships and loans.

Talin_Berkeley: Hi everyone! Looking forward to our chat today!

MValencia: Hello staff! Thanks for being with us today. I have a question. **What area in the GMAT exam does Haas admissions focus on the most with applicants?**

Brooke_Berkeley: Hi, MValencia - thanks for the question! We look at each section of the GMAT exam (and the total score too) to gauge your abilities on quant and verbal. However, we do pay particular attention to the quant score, as a few of our core classes require that students enter classrooms with quant knowledge already. That said, our review process is completely holistic, so we'd be looking for quant skills throughout the application (not just in your quant sub-score on the GMAT).

Francinelee: **It be judged for our musical tastes, but to what extent will the genre of music be examined?**

Brooke_Berkeley: Hello, francinelee! That question is much less about the genre of music that you choose, but rather, how it relates to you and what it means to you personally. We get all types of different music genres frequently, so there's no one type that we prefer at all.

- Jeff:** Thank you for setting up the session today. **I have a question regarding the first essay question regarding naming a song that expresses myself. While finding it very interesting, I'm curious what does the admission team seek from this prompt?**
- Talin_Berkeley:** Hi Jeff! Thanks for your question. The Admissions Committee hopes to learn about you with all of our essays. Essay 1 is indeed a unique question, so please take advantage of that opportunity to tell us something about yourself that perhaps can't be seen in other parts of your application. We just want to learn about you, so any song choice will do!
- s123:** **What is the process for getting scholarships for international students?**
- Jamie_Berkeley:** Hello! The process is the same for both domestic and international students. You must first be admitted and then you will be able to access our online scholarship application. When completing the application, you may select any scholarship for which you meet the criteria. A list of scholarships, criteria and essay prompts are available online at <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/entering-students.html>. Decisions for most scholarships will be released prior to your deposit deadline.
- s123:** Hi. **About transcripts - do I need to upload scans online or can I directly get them sent from the university?**
- Sandra_Berkeley:** Hello s123, applicants can upload official copies of their transcripts onto their application, or you can have your official transcripts mail to our office.
- MValencia:** **Jaime, where and when is the best moment to look for scholarships during the application process for Fall 2017?**
- Jamie_Berkeley:** Haas scholarships opportunities are listed and updated regularly at <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/entering-students.html>. We also have an Outside Scholarships List available at [http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/documents/Outside Scholarships - 10.24.16.pdf](http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/documents/Outside_Scholarships_-_10.24.16.pdf).
- Valentine_Quadrat:** Good morning, **What are the main focal points of growth for Haas School of Business over the next two years?**
- Candace_Berkeley:** Hi Valentine! Thank you for your question. As you are no doubt aware of we have a new building! Thus we are growing in our classroom capacity, and our ability to ensure that our students have a state of the art learning environment.
- Zaid Aziz:** **Are the undergraduate GPA's all weighted the same in the application process regardless of undergraduate degree and institution?**
- Brooke_Berkeley:** Hello, Zaid Aziz! Good question. When reviewing Undergraduate GPA's, we do take into account the caliber of the institution you attended as well as the rigor of your major. Those are two things that influence the overall holistic review of your application.

- Francinelee:** Okay, no problem. I was wondering **to what extent will the genre of music be examined in the first essay.** I feel some hesitation writing about a pop song, there was a part of me that was unsure of whether we needed the song to be 'surprising' or obscure.
- Brooke_Berkeley:** Thanks, francinelee. That essay question is much less about the genre of music that you choose, but rather, how it relates to you and what it means to you personally. We get all types of different music genres frequently, so there's no one type that we prefer at all. A pop song would be totally fine, as long as it says something about you personally that you feel relates to who you are.
- Dani:** Hi. Thank you for your time today. **What scholarships and loans are available to citizens of Sub-Saharan region through the school? How many scholarships are available?**
- Jamie_Berkeley:** Haas is proud to participate in the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, which offers funding for students from sub-Saharan Africa who demonstrate very significant financial need. Admits must also apply for our need-based Berkeley MBA Grant and obtain the maximum funding. Because of the deadlines associated with the MasterCard Fellowship, eligible students should apply for admission in the first round. We also a few loan options to international students. Information may be found here <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/international-loans.html>
- MValencia:** **Which is preferred most, GRE or GMAT?**
- Brooke_Berkeley:** We accept both scores, but we prefer the GMAT, as we have the most statistical data on what types of GMAT scores garner the most successful future students.
- DF1:** **Is there a target Quant score or percentile you are seeking on the GMAT? Can you discuss how you view non-traditional applicants, and specifically humanities majors, who may not have the depth and rigor of quant background?**
- Brooke_Berkeley:** There is not an exact quant score that we look for, but I do suggest you check out our online student profile to check on GMAT statistics of last year's incoming students at: <https://mba.haas.berkeley.edu/admissions/class-profile.html>
- Brooke_Berkeley:** Also, DF1, we look for quant solid skills no matter what type of major you were. If you don't have a ton of quant courses during undergrad, then we'll pay attention specifically to the quant sub score on the GMAT.
- Hasan:** Hello and thank you for giving us this opportunity. **Regarding the first question, if the song that best describes me is not in English, would it be okay if I go a little over the word limit? Due to the fact that I am translating it as well as describing how it relates to me, or should I simply try my best to stay under the word limit and perhaps choose a different song?**
- Talin_Berkeley:** Hi Hasan. Thanks for your question! I would provide the name of the song and go into how it describes you. We don't need the translation. I would much rather learn about how it describes you and learn about you rather than see all the lyrics. Please do your very best to stay within the word limit.

Ashwin R: Hi, this is Ashwin from India. **While I am aware that TOEFL is mandatory, I would want to understand how much importance you place on the exam? Is it merely to qualify a candidate as "English speaking"? Or am I underestimating the role it can play in my application?** (I have not faired extremely well in the verbal part of my GMAT)

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Ashwin, UC Berkeley Graduate Division requires all applicants who received their degrees from countries in which the official language is not English to submit official evidence of English language proficiency. This requirement is education-based, and we are unable to make an exception. I would like to inform you that we have a holistic review process for when it comes to reviewing applications. We review each applicant's professional experience, academic aptitude, GMAT or GRE examination results, TOEFL or IELTS examination results (if applicable), and letters of recommendation.

Wprioiseau: **What is the best way to stand out in the application process if you're not going to with GPA and GMAT?**

Talin_Berkeley: Our application review process is very holistic. The GPA/GMAT are just part of our review. The essays, letters of recommendation, and interview are great ways to shine and stand out. Best of luck!

Clemente: Hi guys. **I am interested in knowing how career services can help us connect to different internship opportunities focused on entrepreneurship?**

Candace_Berkeley: Hi Clemente! Career Services is quite familiar with internship opportunities for entrepreneurs. You will also have the opportunity to engage in entrepreneur focused experiential learning courses such as Lean Launchpad, Social Lean Launchpad and The Startup Lab to increase your opportunities to work with others in the space. Our Berkeley-Haas Entrepreneurship Program has numerous activities for exposure as well. In other words, if you are interested in entrepreneurship Berkeley Haas is the place to be!

Evanlinker: **As my recommenders must fill out multiple recommendations for the different schools I am applying to, can they just submit a general recommendation letter?** Basically I don't want them to have to fill out 5-10 different recommendation forms.

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Evan. I understand your concern. We ask that you please request that your recommender fill out our Berkeley-Haas form. We ask those questions because we do indeed want to know what they have to say about you in answering those questions. We ask about your strengths, areas of growth and how you display confidence without attitude. If they choose to write their own letter (which recommenders sometimes do), then that's fine but we would highly prefer that they fill out the form...and the recommenders do understand that each program is different and usually accommodate.

MValencia: **What experience or skills do you look for in an applicant that may not necessarily have a Business background?**

Candace_Berkeley: Thank you for your question! We have a holistic review process so there is not a prescribed list of required skills. We are looking for passion for your desired field. Where do you want to be post MBA, why, and how have you prepared yourself for success?

Wprioiseau: **What is the best way to stand out in the application process if you're not going to with GPA and GMAT?**

Talin_Berkeley: Our application review process is very holistic. The GPA/GMAT are just part of our review. The essays, letters of recommendation, and interview are great ways to shine and stand out. Best of luck!

Jeff: Another question: **Besides full time work, I am also involved with a start-up on the side, and it is relatively small and young, generating about \$70K revenue. Does the school take smaller start-ups seriously? Or should I mainly focus on talking about my full time position?**

Talin_Berkeley: Hi again! I would talk about both. If you have any other projects you're working on the side, there is no reason to exclude them from your activities.

s123: **Why isn't the MBA application itself used for assessing scholarship eligibility? Why does an applicant have to apply separately for each scholarship?**

Jamie_Berkeley: Hello! Haas Scholarships are awarded based on a variety of criteria and are not solely merit based. Our online scholarship applications allows students to select the scholarships for which they feel they are the best fit and provides a separate platform for which they can express their strengths. Please note that applicants submit one application for all scholarships they wish to be considered. A list of opportunities is available here <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/entering-students.html>

Svetlana K: Hi! Thanks for the opportunity to chat! I have a question related to undergrad grades. **There is not GPA system in my country, how HAAS evaluates these types of degrees? Do you convert it to GPA?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Svetlana, thank you for your question. In your application you want to go ahead and check "not on a 4.0 scale." Under the section for international undergraduate degrees, you can input your score. Our admission committee is experienced in evaluating international transcripts.

MValencia: **Should applicants fill out a FASFA form before or after being admitted to the Haas program?**

Jamie_Berkeley: Either option work for Haas. Currently the FAFSA is only required for federal loan consideration. We urge student to first focus on admissions, then scholarships and finally loans. We will prompt students to complete loan applications during the summer.

Zhen: **How long approximately will the Haas recommendation form take?** Just want to give my professors/line managers an estimate.

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Zhen. The form will take the same amount of time as a letter of recommendation would. It is a letter of recommendation form. The only difference is that it asks specific questions, which help guide the recommender.

Evanlinker: Hi there, **are there any modules or course specializations focusing on the energy industry, specifically renewables?** Thanks!

Candace_Berkeley: Hi Evanlinker! Absolutely! We have numerous Energy and Clean Technology Courses including Cleantech to Market and even a renewable energy speaker series. Please look into the Energy Institute at Haas. We are truly at the forefront of renewable energy in research and classroom experiences not to mention opportunities outside of the classroom such as the BERC Energy Summit

Yashovardhan: **Does Haas' MBA program include a global real estate market exposure?**

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Yashovardhan! Berkeley-Haas offers a comprehensive curriculum in real estate. Please feel free to view our offerings in the field (including information about the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary grad certificate in real estate here: <http://mba.haas.berkeley.edu/academics/realestate.html>)

Jeff: **Can you share any statistics as to what percentage of applicants are generally invited to an interview?**

Candace_Berkeley: Hi Jeff! While it varies a bit year to year, we invite about 30% of applicants to interview.

Francinelee: In regards to letters of recommendations: **I have a recommender in South Korea who needs help with translation and submitting the recommendation form. A former teacher has agreed to help my recommender through this whole process. I spoke with an admissions representative at a Consortium event a few months ago and she said this should be okay as long as the translator submits his personal info and agrees that I, the applicant, had no part in facilitating the process.** I just wanted to double check today.

Sandra_Berkeley: Dear Francinelee, it is acceptable to obtain the recommendation in the native language of the author. The original letter and an English translation completed by an ATA (American Translators Association) certified translator must be provided through the mail with the letter writer's signature across the seal of the envelope.

Jeff: **I'm curious - does the school reserve spots for California residents like many undergraduate programs do?**

Talin_Berkeley: No, not at all. We don't have any quotas to meet. Everyone is reviewed on their merits.

Yashovardhan: Hi, **how can I include fintech electives in my MBA courses? Also can I combine classes across different Berkeley Schools?**

Candace_Berkeley: Hi Yashovardhan! While 40% of course work is typically required core courses, 60% of your selected courses are of your own choosing. You are able to include as many fintech electives as you like in that 60%. Yes, you are able to take courses throughout the UC Berkeley campus. 6 units taken at other graduate schools may be applied to your MBA.

Katie: Good Morning - **I have a (more logistical) question about transcripts. I just want to make sure that I understand the instructions - is an uploaded transcript sufficient? Or does the transcript need to come directly from degree-granting university?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Katie, we prefer that you upload copies of official transcripts or degree certificates with your online application. If you are invited to interview, you will be required to submit hard copies of the official transcripts and degree certificates by mail.

Zhen: **Do MBA students typically find studios/apartments to rent near the campus? Is there a forum? Are you aware of anyone who commutes from San Francisco? Is it feasible?**

Candace_Berkeley: Hi Zhen! Haas students take advantage of many different opportunities to live near campus. We have graduate student housing of course, but many students find roommates via Facebook and rent together. We do have a small percentage of students who choose to live in the city. It is feasible as public transportation is accessible to the Berkeley campus.

Anh: Hi, thank you for your time today! **How specific should one be when using the optional essay to explain a low GPA during undergrad, especially when that issue is related to a sensitive health issue?**

Brooke_Berkeley: Hi, Anh! Thanks for your question. You can be as specific as you want, really. As long as you are comfortable with what you say, we are open to hearing anything that has affected your studies. That said, if you are uncomfortable with details then you can just state that you had a sensitive health issue and then state how it affected you.

Vicky: Hi there. **I had my recommenders fill out the form on paper and plan to mail it in with the signature across the seal of the envelope. Is this still okay?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Vicky, as long as your recommenders have submitted their letters in the required format, we will accept the recommendations.

- Jeff:** Thanks again. From the statistics I've seen, Haas MBA has a relatively small class size compared to other top MBA programs. **While I definitely understand that Berkeley wants a smaller student body to maximize the experience, does the school ever consider admitting a larger number of students? I'm sure you hear this all the time, but isn't it more beneficial for students to have a larger network to connect with throughout the program?**
- Talin_Berkeley:** With our new building, we are planning on growing our class (very slightly) since we will have more space available to accommodate. I understand your position that having a larger network might be more beneficial; however, we do want to be able to provide personalized attention here on campus. Our students have many resources and a very personalized approach to these resources that may not be possible in larger programs. Also, our student body is quite tightknit and part of it is because of our small class size. We do value having a small student body and know that our connections are on a deeper level so the wider Berkeley-Haas network only benefits from these types of relationships! It's about quality and not quantity for us. Good questions, Jeff! Keep them coming!
- Steven P.:** Hello - I will be applying through the Consortium program and submitting my application by the second round deadline of January 5th. I've already taken the GMAT but would like to take it again. **What is the latest test date that Haas accepts for Consortium's second round deadline? In addition, if I take the GMAT again after the January 5th deadline but before a decision has been made, can that score also be considered?**
- Sandra_Berkeley:** Hello Steve, thank you for your question. We will only accept scores that were taken on or before our application round deadline. If you are applying through the Consortium, you will need to take your test on or before their Round 2 deadline
- s123:** **Is there an upper limit to the maximum # of Indian male engineers will be admitted to Haas?** I am asking this as I am a part of that "over-represented group". Thus I am under the impression that I will be competing for only that limit and not the total class size.
- Brooke_Berkeley:** Hello, s123. There is no cut-off amount or maximum number of any type of ethnicity or job function for admissions. We read applications by country of undergraduate education, but the numbers of students from various backgrounds really fluctuates year to year. What we do try to do during our admissions committees is to make sure we have a diverse group of people we admit, in terms of industry, background, and thought.
- James:** Thanks for the session today. **How much weight does the Adcom put on management experience and having direct reports?**
- Candace_Berkeley:** Hi James. Since we have a holistic review process, we don't weigh anything. If you do not have direct reports have you lead in other ways? Have you held a leadership position in an extracurricular activity? Have you lead an initiative or a project? We know our applicants have diverse backgrounds; direct reports may be more likely in one industry over another. We welcome the diverse demonstration of leadership beyond direct reports.

Valentine: **I have noticed how passionate Haas alumni are about their experience in the program. I would love to hear your perspective on what aspects you personally love most about Haas.**

Brooke_Berkeley: Our Haas alumni really are passionate! What I love most about Haas is how open all of our students seem to be to learn about each other's backgrounds, ways of thinking, and lifestyles. Our students love to learn from one another, which creates a great community vibe even for staff and faculty members.

Vicky: **In the essays, is any preference given to professional, personal, or academic experiences in the response? In other words, if I were writing about a "difficult decision", should that be work related?**

Brooke_Berkeley: Hi, Vicky. Great question. For essay #2, you can really speak either from a personal or professional background. We receive great answers from both perspectives. So no, we do not have a preference for the tone in which you answer that question.

MValencia: **When in the application process is the applicant able to choose their interdisciplinary study focus?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello MValencia, the Berkeley Haas core curriculum provides a solid foundation, rooted in business fundamentals, such as marketing, finance, accounting, and operations. Beyond the core, you are able to tailor your education to meet your goals and interests through a wide variety of cutting-edge elective offerings and global opportunities. If you would like, you are able to use your essays to let us know what you are interested in focusing on.

Katie: **What is the admissions team's perspective on multiple attempts at the GMAT? Thanks!**

Brooke_Berkeley: Hi, Katie! We know that most students take the GMAT about three times, so as long as you don't reach burnout, we know it can take a few times to get the score that applicants may feel they deserve. That said, we really only consider your top score on the GMAT.

Lizzy_Moderator: Hi all! Thank you for joining us. The chat will be wrapping up in a few minutes. We greatly appreciate your questions. The speakers will continue to address some questions already in their queue, but we will not be forwarding additional questions.

Jeff: Thanks again. **Since the recommendation letter is something we have less control over and some finance managers/directors like to hold off things until after year-end, does the Jan 5th application deadline apply strictly to recommendation letters?**

Talin_Berkeley: Hi! We will still receive letters after that deadline; (knowing it's not in your control) however, please set up a reminder to check back in with the recommenders a couple of weeks before they're due...remind them of the deadline...they usually oblige. Your application will not be considered complete until they're in, so it will delay your review.

- Christopher:** **Is it at all bad if your GMAT score is outside the middle 80% on the high end? e.g. 780?**
- Brooke_Berkeley:** Hello, Christopher! I'm confident to say that, no, it isn't bad for your GMAT to be above the 80% range.
- s123:** **I am an engineer from India but not from an IIT and thus want to be realistic about my application whether I should apply to Haas or not. I have a masters' from K-State Uni., USA. Is there a database that lists the Indian universities from where people got admitted successfully to Haas? Can I have an access to that?**
- Candace_Berkeley:** Hi s123. Thank you for your question! I understand that it is a difficult decision to decide to apply to any one competitive university and given your background, I respect your desire for data to inform your decision whether or not to apply to Haas. Our review process is holistic and a list of universities does not inform you of work experience, career goals, strength of recommendation letters and other aspects of the application. Thus, your decision would be based on incomplete, possibly skewed data. Ultimately, please trust that we will read your entire application and look for information to support our belief that you would fit in with the class academically, professionally and culturally. Best of luck in your decision!
- Zaid Aziz:** **Undergraduate GPA what is the average of the previous class?**
- Sandra_Berkeley:** Hello Zaid Aziz, our entering Class Fall 2016 had an average undergraduate GPA of 3.64. We encourage you to review the profile of our students at: <http://mba.haas.berkeley.edu/community/classprofile.html>. This will give you a good reference point for measuring your qualifications in comparison
- Valentine Quadrat:** Thank you for your time with answering all our questions. **I was wondering if there are things incoming students typically do to prepare for the program the summer before their MBA experience?**
- Brooke_Berkeley:** Hi, Valentine. Some of our students take a refresher course the week before orientation to re-immense themselves in a couple of business school topics (especially with a quant focus). You will be offered these courses once you are admitted.
- Vicky:** Hi there. **I had my recommenders fill out the form on paper and plan to mail it in with the signature across the seal of the envelope. Is this still okay?**
- Sandra_Berkeley:** Hello Vicky, as long as your recommenders have submitted their letters in the
- Abhishek:** Hi. **I have an energy background and particularly interested in pursuing a career in the same field post MBA. Could you help advise on the opportunities and support at Berkeley for energy sector career paths?**
- Candace_Berkeley:** Hi Abhishek, Thank you for your question. I addressed this question earlier - please scroll up.

- Christopher:** On the application it says that you need official transcripts. I'm taking 2 classes this term for my MS program, I won't have grades for those until late December - it might be too late to get updated transcripts. What should I do?
- Sandra_Berkeley:** Hello Christopher, you are able to upload transcripts that indicate that classes are in progress. Once you receive your final transcripts, you want to submit that to us as soon as you can.
- Lizzy_Moderator:** Thank you again for joining us. The chat is wrapping up and shutting down. We really appreciate your questions and apologize if we didn't get to all of them. Please check back on our website within the next couple weeks for a transcript of today's chat and information on future chat dates. Go Bears!
- Talin_Berkeley:** Thanks, everyone! I enjoyed your questions and hope to connect again! Best of luck to all of you during this process!
- Brooke_Berkeley:** Thank you all for coming! I hope this was helpful. Best of luck!
- Jamie_Berkeley:** Thank you for joining us! Please feel free to contact the Financial Aid Office directly with any questions at finaid@haas.berkeley.edu.
- Sandra_Berkeley:** Thank you all for your questions, have a great day. Go Bears!
- Candace_Berkeley:** Thank you for your questions! Have a great day!