

## What makes a strong application?

- Context:
  - Academic
  - professional
- Good research:
  - Schools & programmes
  - Particular academics
  - Admissions criteria of programme of choice

## General Advice:

- ***Don't apply too early in your academic/professional career.*** If the course requires particular experience post-graduation, ensure that you have it. More generally, you will be competing against applicants whose academic and professional experience makes them strong candidates for their preferred programme. Why does it make sense for you to take this particular course of study, at this particular stage in your career? Use some of your personal statement to make this clear.
- ***Do your research thoroughly.*** MIT and Harvard have a lot of detailed information on their Graduate School/Department websites. Admissions Offices will answer questions and give good advice over the phone. You will not be seen as a nuisance! Please note that many Masters programmes at Harvard GSAS are integral to the PhD and cannot be taken as a free-standing course. MIT does still offer free-standing Masters degrees but you will need a clear academic context for your application to the institute.
- ***Identify particular academics whose research is of interest.*** Masters applicants, as well as PhD applicants, are expected to have identified those academics whose research interests match their own. Contact with those academics, at the least by email, to explore potential joint projects is an integral part of a strong application. Again, you will not be seen as pushy but rather as someone who has established why you are a good fit for this particular department. Your personal statement should include the names of those you hope to work with.
- ***GRE tests.*** These have to be booked and are only available on particular dates. *Do not leave it too late* to book yours or you may have to submit your US application without your results. UK Arts graduates will have to work at their Maths to ensure a strong enough Quantitative score. You can re-take the test to improve your score, if you have left yourself enough time. There is a charge to take these.
- ***Special Student/Non-degree?*** Can be an excellent option but you will need a compelling case for choosing it over a degree and at this stage in your professional/academic career.
- ***Visiting Fellowships as part of UK PhD?*** Possible, but both Kennedy Scholarships and Frank Knox Fellowships are less willing to fund these at present.
- ***Apply for both a Kennedy Scholarship and a Frank Knox Fellowship.*** Annie Thomas is the only person in common. These are totally separate awards with totally separate selection procedures.
- Call Annie Thomas with particular questions, once you have done some research re the award(s) and possible courses. She will not be able to 'write your application for you' but she may have very specific advice to give.