Info Sheet for UCI PhD in Pharmacological Sciences Applicants or Prospective Applicants

Who Should Apply?

In general, we're looking for candidates with a strong scientific and research background in areas related to the pharmaceutical sciences. First and foremost, we seek candidates with strong, relevant prior research experience, but we also look for relevant prior degrees, coursework, and/or training. We do accept candidates from rather diverse backgrounds or those moving into the field from another major, but the student's application package as a whole must make a case that they are prepared for graduate work in the pharmacological sciences. Our program typically attracts students from diverse backgrounds, including biological sciences, chemistry, physics, biomedical engineering, and other areas, even including public health and nursing, as well as farther afield.

Our application process is competitive, and we have a limited number of slots in the PhD program. For your application to be competitive, we expect it to demonstrate significant prior research experience (at least several semesters or quarters in a research setting, whether in academia or industry or both), ideally demonstrated by publications and/or presentations, as well as strong reference letters from multiple people who can speak to your potential as a research scientist. We do, on occasion, admit candidates with relatively little research experience, but in such a case, your application must make it clear as to why your research experience was relatively minimal (such as financial hardships resulting in the need to work extended hours to support undergraduate study) and how you know you'll be successful in a research environment (while indicating that you understand what that involves). Students without prior research experience will usually not be competitive for admission unless a compelling case is made. Your application should also speak clearly as to why you are applying to our program in particular, as opposed to another university or another program at UCI.

What We Look for in an Application

We look at your application package holistically, evaluating it overall. However, some factors we pay particular attention to include:
- Your letters of reference: These should be strong to outstanding and speak to your potential as a researcher. Ideally, your letter writers would also compare you to other students who they've had experience with, and do so favorably.
- Your statement(s): They should clearly address your background, how it prepared you for graduate school, what you're interested in working on here and why, and why UCI PharmSci is for you. Common mistakes include:

- - An overemphasis on what skills and techniques you've learned. We assume that you will need to learn new skills and techniques here, so an ability to learn and overcome challenges, as well as an overall interest in our program and UCI, is more important.
  - Inadequate discussion of the scientific motivation behind prior work: We're interested in people who love the science they are working on and can see (and communicate) how their everyday work fits into a bigger picture involving scientific discovery and eventual impact on public health. Usually, some applicants get mired in technical details and fail to communicate the relevance and motivation of their prior work.
  - No indication of why you're applying to our program in particular, rather than that elsewhere.
- Your research interests: These should be clearly communicated in your statements and need to mesh with what we currently need at UCI. For example, if you indicate that you're interested in working only in the labs of Profs. A and B, but both of these labs aren't taking students this cycle, then you won't be admitted, regardless of how strong your application is. Or, if your statement explains that you desperately want to work in Area 1 only, but you then explain you want to work with Professor W in a totally different area, and omit Profs. A and B in Area 1, that will also be a red flag. In short, we're after clearly explained research interests (even if these span multiple areas) and a clear indication that you know which faculty are working in those areas — you understand what they do, and you're interested in it. Ideally, you might also have contacted relevant faculty and confirmed that they are taking students this application cycle.
  - Note that faculty you mention in your application will likely be asked to review your application.
  - Please be sure to mention faculty who you are genuinely interested in working with who you would WANT to review your application.
- GPA in relevant science courses: In general, we tend not to pay that much attention to GPA (other than if the average is below 3.0 — that's somewhat of a concern), but we will check relevant science courses, and if you have a particularly poor track record in those, we'll worry about how you'll do academically in the program. You should make sure to address that in your statements.
- UCI and the School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences are committed to maximizing opportunities and inclusion for all members of our school so that we can use our potential to achieve academic, scientific, and clinical excellence. You will be asked, "What does diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) mean to you? How have you contributed to DEI at your prior institution and/or community?" In answering this question, we want to hear how you have demonstrated understanding and commitment to creating a welcoming living, learning, or working environment for those around you. There isn't a single right answer to this question; the important thing is to explain how you're helping or serving others and connect that to DEI.

When Should You Apply?

Be sure to submit your application by the deadline, to ensure full consideration.

After You Apply

After you apply (following the "applications should be received by" date), the process on our end looks roughly like this:
- We assign applications to our faculty for review (several faculty to each).
- We wait for reviews to come back.
- We evaluate the results of the reviews while scheduling an admissions committee meeting, usually during the second week in December.
- In this meeting, we seek to prioritize applicants based on potential and fit for our program. This is always a somewhat competitive process, as we have a limited number of slots. We generally divide applications into categories such as:
    - Likely admit (definitely interview)
    - Probably interview, but maybe with a pre-screening call first
    - Interview by Zoom (mainly for international students or others who can't visit)
    - Wait list
    - Reject
- Candidates being interviewed should receive an invitation to an interview (usually in-person or on Zoom), which will usually take place in late January.
- Candidates not on the interview list will likely receive a rejection letter at this point unless they are placed on the waitlist, in which case they may not hear for a significant amount of time (e.g. until March or April).
- Once interviews take place, we further categorize those interviewed:
    - Admit
    - Waitlist
    - Reject
- Again, waitlist candidates may not hear the outcome promptly.
- Admitted candidates receive an offer with a decision deadline of April 15. **The April 15 deadline is an [official US deadline by the Council of Graduate Schools](#) and relates to offers of financial support. In short, we expect that:**
    - All schools offer decision deadlines no earlier than April 15
    - Students can change their mind on financial offers up to but not after April 15
- **One key point is that waitlist candidates — at UCI and elsewhere — often do not hear until very late in the application process, perhaps after April 15.**
    - Specifically, many candidates don't submit their final decisions until April 15.
    - When this is the case, any additional slots may not become available until after April 15.
    - So, waitlisted candidates may not receive a final decision until after April 15.
- If you, as a candidate, plan to either accept or decline our offer, it will help waitlisted candidates if you let us know as soon as possible; otherwise, we will end up needing to wait until April 15 to know how many of our offers were accepted or declined and won't

be able to tell waitlisted candidates until they've already had to make their own decision on any other offers they might have.

Can I Request an Application Fee Waiver?

If you are a **US citizen, legal permanent resident of the US, or DACA/AB540, you may be eligible for a waiver.** Eligibility is based on program participation, financial need, or US veteran status and is determined by completion of the online graduate application. If based on information provided on the graduate application an applicant is determined to be eligible to apply for a waiver, instructions will be presented on the application itself. This will allow you to upload your required document(s) and submit your application. Requests for fee waivers are reviewed after the graduate application has been submitted. To be considered for a fee waiver, your graduate application must be submitted 5 days before the program's deadline (except for veterans). If your request for a waiver is denied, and if you wish for your application to be considered for admission, you will have to pay the application fee via credit card. Fee waivers are available for Fall quarter admissions only.

Who Needs to Demonstrate English Language Proficiency?

All graduate applicants are required to demonstrate English proficiency for admissions consideration. Applicants are waived from the English Language Proficiency requirement if they have earned an undergraduate or master's degree from an institution at which English was the sole language of instruction according to the World Higher Education Database (WHED). Please see WHED's instructions on how to search for your institution. If English is not the sole language of instruction listed, or if no language is listed at all, the waiver does not apply, and the applicant is required to take and pass an approved English proficiency test.

English Language Proficiency Requirements for Teaching Assistants can be found here: English proficiency requirement policy for Teaching Assistantships. Additional information related to English Language Proficiency requirements can be found here.
These are most important for admission; it is very unusual that students who cannot meet these English proficiency requirements will be admitted unless they are being accepted directly into a research group.

TOEFL Score Requirements for Admission Consideration:
- An overall minimum score of 80 for admission with a score of no less than 26 in the English speaking section.
- IELTS Score Requirements for Admission Consideration:
- An overall minimum score of 7 for admission with a score of no less than 8 on the English speaking section.