

# Only good CGPA and Research Papers can ensure both Admission and Funding from a good University

Dr. M. H. Kabir  
Assistant Professor, CSE Department, BUET

CGPA is the first criterion that matters in the admission in good universities, particularly in Canadian universities. You must have a good CGPA and a reasonable TOEFL score to get an admission in Canadian universities. Some of these universities say they prefer or require GRE on their web pages. Believe me, professors forget about GRE when they select their new students. During my PhD study in the University of Victoria (UVIC), Canada I served in different committees as a graduate student representative. One of such committees was Graduate Studies Committee. The main responsibility of this committee is to formulate the rules and regulations for the graduate studies in Computer Science department, including the rules and regulations for graduate admissions. This experience gave me the insight view of graduate admission process at UVIC. I believe the practices that I observed in UVIC are common in other Canadian universities. I also believe that some of these practices are common in Australian, British, and US universities.

When you apply to a Canadian university, your application goes to the Graduate Admissions and Records office. If you pay the admission fee with your application they open a file for you. If the application fee is not paid no file is officially opened though they keep your materials hoping you will pay the fee soon. Admissions and Record office checks whether you have submitted all the required documents or not. If some documents are missing they inform you to submit them soon. Admission office may verify your documents contacting BUET or your recommender. Ask your recommender to keep a copy of your recommendation letter for this purpose. Once your documentation is complete, admission office checks whether you have met the minimum admission requirements of your intended department. Of course, you do, since you had checked the minimum requirements yourself before you applied. Admission office sends a copy of

your documents to your intended department for the admission decision. Every department has a Graduate Secretary to deal with graduate student's matters. Graduate Secretary prepares a summary of your application and advertises your application to the faculties of the department. The summary includes the key information, such as your area of interest, CGPA, GRE and TOEFL scores, name of undergrad school (BUET), and publications. If you are a scholarship holder, such as Commonwealth, that information will also be included in the summary. Imagine! you will be hot cake then. All the faculties will jump to get you if your area of interest somehow matches with that of them. Their runs will be in the background; you will not know that. Only the winner will give you the offer. If you mention any faculty's name in your application, he will win the bid without any competition. Great! Isn't it? You control the deal.

If you are not a scholarship holder your application is waiting for the faculty bid (offer). Faculties, who want new students, screen the advertisements from the Graduate Secretary. If a faculty get interested in your summary, he/she will examine your application (all the documents) at the graduate secretary's desk. Your application may remain untouched if no faculty in the department get interested. You will eventually get a regret letter when the admission for a term is closed. Be proactive, so that your application does not blow. Contact a faculty whose area of interest strongly matches with the same of yours. If you know somebody from CSE BUET has done or is doing Masters or PhD under him/her, use that ex-BUET person as a bridge between you and the faculty. Most of the faculties who had students from BUET don't hesitate to take a new one from BUET. You can thank your fellow seniors for building this solid reputation.

By contacting a faculty, I meant to write him/her an email, saying you are interested in his/her research area and want to be his/her graduate student. Don't write to more than one professor in the same department in parallel. If the professor is not interested for you, it is likely that you will not hear from him. Some my dear type professors reply even they are not interested or not taking new student at the time you are inquiring. You can write to another professor after your first try fails. You should attach a short resume and a letter of intend (statement of purpose). By short resume, I really meant a short resume.

Professors are extremely busy, they will not read your resume and letter of intend if they are big. In my opinion, one page resume and one page letter of intend are suffice. Write your name, one contact address (postal, email, and phone) BUET result and the year of graduation, GRE and TOEFL scores, list of awards and scholarships, list of publications in your resume. If you have a large number of publications make a list of publications in a separate page. If your SSC and HSC results are excellent write them in the resume. If these results are mediocre they will not carry any weight, so, skip them from your resume. If you have job experience that is relevant to the area of research interest write it in the resume. If you are applying for PhD and have done your Masters, write about your Masters thesis in the resume. In any case, your resume should not exceed two pages.

Your letter of intend should say what (Masters or PhD) you want to do. You should justify that you are qualified to do it showing your BUET results and publications (if you have some). You have to say your area of research interest. Obviously, it should be one of the research interests of your target professor. You should do some research before you write your letter of intend to a professor. Browse his web page. Look at his current projects and recent publications. Give some thoughts about these. If possible read one or two of his recent publications. Try to understand what issues are dealt in these projects or publications, how far they have been resolved, how many things are still unresolved. Pick one or two unresolved issues. Give your idea or opinion how it can be resolved. You don't need to be 100% correct though; you need to show that you took it seriously.

Talking about a recent publication of a professor is another way to start communication with him. Even you can do it before you show your interest for graduate admission. In my opinion, this approach is even better. Since, most of the professors delete admission-seeking emails unless they don't know the applicants before. Being known to the professor at the first time from a foreign country is hard if somebody, who is very close to the professor, does not introduce you. However, everybody loves to get attention and to be famous. Professors are no different. If you start talking about their work, they feel their work is making them famous and you are giving your time on it. It makes them to give you some of their time. So why should you wait? Start communicating with your

target professor. Remember, you should not flatter, when you talk about a professor's work. Flattery does not work. Everybody can understand when it starts flattery. Be technical, positive, clear, and confident in your communication. Again, if your target professor is an ex-BUET or expatriate Bangladeshi your chance of making effective communication is very high. I saw, most of the ex-BUET or expatriate Bangladeshi professors are very helpful. You should remember, although he is ex-BUET or expatriate Bangladeshi, he is the professor and you are the admission seeker. Sometime, we forget to be professional when we communicate with our fellow countrymen. Please, don't do this mistake yourself. It will send a wrong message to the professor.

Well, if everything works fine you will get the professor offering you the admission and the financial support that you are waiting for. It seems a single step. Somebody writes the offer letter and sends it to you. Actually, it is not a single step. Once, a professor declares his offer or bid for a student it has been circulated among all the faculties in the department. Graduate Secretary waits to write the final offer letter for one or two weeks (Sorry, I forgot the exact duration). If another professor gets interested on the same applicant he has to bid higher, i.e., he has to offer higher financial support to the applicant; good for you if it happens to you; you will be richer. Most of the cases it does not happen. Graduate Secretary writes the final offer (financial) letter after the wait period is passed and sends it to the Graduate Admissions and Records office. Graduate Admission office writes the admission letter and sends it to you along with the financial offer letter. When you get it, you smile; your waiting is over.

I wrote at the beginning of this essay that professors in Canada forget GRE score when they select new students. That's right. They look at your institute (BUET's name will work fine for you), CGPA, letter of intend, letter of recommendations, and your publications. Yes, you should have publications if you are applying for PhD admission. Papers published in ICCIT or ICECE will work fine. If the papers are in your target area of interest that's great. Don't worry if they are not in your target area of interest. You need good recommendation letters. Sometime, we are not serious enough about the recommendation letter. You should be serious about your recommendation letters. Give

all of your best information to your recommender so that he can give a strong recommendation for you. A recommendation letter should say how your recommender knows you and for how long. It should highlight your undergraduate results, class performance, knowledge, ability to research, perseverance, and communication skills. All of these should be supported by evidence. It is not necessary to exaggerate. A simple recommendation letter works fine.

Hope, you got my points and they will be useful in your pursuit of higher study. I wish your success.

Email: [mhkabir@gmail.com](mailto:mhkabir@gmail.com)