

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Graduate Program in Modern Culture and Media (MCM)

**May I arrange a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss the program?** Unfortunately, we cannot interview prospective applicants, nor do we schedule individual visits; there would simply be too many for us to handle during a busy school year. (We do encourage and support visits once someone is admitted so that the applicant can make an informed decision about whether to accept our offer.) You are free to meet with any faculty, including the Director of Graduate Studies, during their regular office hours, which are posted on the department website. (This academic year (2024/25) the Director of Graduate Studies is **Ellen Rooney**. We advise you to check with any faculty members before showing up, to be sure there will be no change in their schedules for that week.

### **What criteria does the admission committee use in determining admission?**

The Graduate Admission Committee weighs a number of factors when considering candidates. The admission committee places great importance on a **candidate's personal statement** and **writing sample**. These pieces of writing must show, first of all, that the applicant would like to be a part of and is capable of succeeding in a graduate program whose goal is to train students to produce significant scholarly or hybrid work in media studies and cultural theory. We look for applicants who are asking provocative questions about media broadly conceived in relation to larger cultural and theoretical issues and who are interested in pursuing these questions in a rigorous intellectual environment. A candidate's **letters of recommendation** are also very important in determining admission.

**What are the requirements for admission to the Ph.D. program?** Applicants to the program should submit the application, 3 letters of recommendation, personal statement, writing sample, supplemental essay (**see below in the Application FAQ section for more information**) and transcripts. The TOEFL test is required for all non-native English speakers, **except** for those who hold (or will receive) a degree from an institution where the language of instruction is English.

**What are you looking for in a Personal Statement?** The Personal Statement should give the committee a sense of your interests and the trajectory you have taken in life to bring you to the point of this application. Among questions you might address are: Why are you wanting to apply to our program now? What are you hoping to gain by studying with us? What topics or areas of research drive your interests? Why this program in particular? Personal Statements should be no more than 1000 words.

**How long should the writing sample be, and what criteria do you use to evaluate the samples?** We have no official requirement regarding the length of the writing sample but we recommend a sample between 3000 and 7000 words. We ask that you send us a piece of your writing so that we can determine from this material if you have the necessary skills to succeed as a graduate student in Modern Culture and Media. Such skills would include an ability to produce a challenging and focused argument or compelling inquiry into something you can show some investment in or toward. Most applicants submit the equivalent of a term paper or seminar paper. You may also submit a chapter or chapters from an Honors Thesis, or a chapter from an M.A. thesis, perhaps with a brief introduction explaining the nature of the thesis as a whole. But again, if it is too long it likely will not be read in full. We do recognize that some applicants may not have had the opportunity to produce work in such formats, and they sometimes submit two or three shorter papers.

**Do I have to take the GREs?** No. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) will not be required for applicants to the Graduate Program in Modern Culture and Media.

**Are students admitted directly from undergraduate programs?** Yes, we do occasionally admit students directly from undergraduate programs, though we often advise our own students to take time off before returning to school. Speaking abstractly, any undergraduate major is acceptable, if the applicant has a way of showing good potential in fields of interest to us. We have admitted students with B.A.'s in East Asian Studies, in English, in Art History, in Africana Studies, in German Studies, etc., as well as in Film and Media Studies.

**Do I have to take the TOEFL exam if my native language is not English?** Yes. Brown University requires this exam, except for those who hold (or will receive) a degree from an institution where the language of instruction is English. At Brown, TOEFL requirements are set by the Graduate School, not the individual department, and the Graduate School administers the collection of application materials. Therefore, any questions about waivers should be addressed to the Graduate School.

**Can someone tell me in advance whether I am likely to be admitted to your program?** No. We get many letters asking us to tell prospective applicants whether their proposed projects match our program. There is no need to do this. Please refrain. If you think it might, then it most certainly might! We love to look at every application on its merits. Perhaps you will be suggesting something we had not thought of before, and that will interest us. We can not tell you that in advance.

**What financial support does Brown offer its graduate students in Modern Culture and Media?** Brown Doctoral students in the Humanities and Social Sciences are guaranteed six years of support including a stipend, tuition remission, a health-services fee, and health- and dental-insurance subsidies. First-year students are on fellowship.

Students in their second and third years work as TAs (one course per semester), leading a discussion section of a large lecture. Students in their fourth year design and teach their own section of MCM 0900 “Undergraduate Seminars in Modern Culture and Media.” Students in their fifth and sixth years usually are supported through a combination of TAs (again, one course per semester) and university fellowships.

**Do international graduate students receive the same type of funding as American graduate students?** International graduate students are funded in exactly the same way as students who are U.S. citizens. If you are admitted to the program, you will receive 6 years of funding through fellowships and teaching assistantships.

**If I submit an application online, how do I get the writing sample to you?** We prefer writing samples to be submitted with your online application. If for some reason you are unable to send a writing sample electronically, please email writing sample to Brown University, Graduate School. <[graduate\\_admissions@brown.edu](mailto:graduate_admissions@brown.edu)>

**Can I reactivate my application from one year to the next?** No.

**Can I take courses outside of the Department of Modern Culture and Media?** Students are encouraged to take courses throughout the University and many take advantage of courses in the departments of American Studies, Performance Studies, Africana Studies, English, German Studies, and Comparative Literature. Many of our Ph.D. students include a faculty member from outside the department on their preliminary exam committees and on their dissertation committees.

**Does the Ph.D. program require a media production component?** This aspect of our program recently changed. At least 13 courses taken while a graduate student are required of doctoral students. Up to three arts production courses, either in MCM or a related discipline, may count toward this total though none are required. Plans of study are individualized.

The dissertation project can be either a written book-length study or a hybrid project consisting of a written, scholarly component and a creative one. A hybrid approach should be imaginative and aim to tell stories or articulate theories in dynamic ways, for example through video, sound, multimedia installation, photography or exhibition, performance, digital art, or other experimental practices.

**Whom should I notify if the name on my transcripts, GREs, or other documents is different from the name on my initial application (maiden name, married name, etc.)?** Notify Maria Faria by email <[graduate\\_admissions@brown.edu](mailto:graduate_admissions@brown.edu)> in order to avoid any mishaps with admission materials submitted to the Graduate School.

### **Does the Department of Modern Culture and Media offer an MA program?**

The Department does not have a separate MA program and does not encourage applications from students who only wish to pursue the MA degree. Students can earn the MA on the way to the Ph.D. There is an [Open Graduate Education Program](#) that allows select Brown doctoral students to pursue a master's degree in a secondary field. All doctoral students are invited to propose their own combination of studies, free of any disciplinary barrier.

**What is your University code?** Our University code is 3094. The department code for Modern Culture and Media is 2999.

**When will I learn whether I have been admitted?** Decisions regarding admission and financial aid are made by mid-March. Applicants must make enrollment decisions by mid-April.

**Where can I get an application?** The Department of Modern Culture and Media does not have the applications. You can apply online at the [Graduate School Website](#), or request a paper application at the following address: Admissions Office, Graduate School, Brown University, Box 1867, Providence, RI 02912

**What kind of jobs do your students get after graduation?** Most if not all of our students in the Ph.D. program go on to work in academia, in positions as professors, teaching, and doing research. But all of them now have jobs in academia. This does not mean it would be impossible to go into some other profession--curating or working for a non-profit agency, for instance. But it is not the most likely outcome. We train students for work in academia. Here is a list of colleges and universities where our former graduate students now teach in tenure or tenure track positions (the majority) or in post-doctoral fellowship positions (those more recently completed):

An annual collection of data pertaining to the employment of Ph.D. alumni one, five, and ten years after graduating. [Read more.](#)

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## **Application FAQs**

**Am I eligible for a fee waiver and how do I apply?** Please see detailed instructions on how to apply for a [fee waiver](#) on the Graduate School's website. Please note, the official request for a fee waiver is submitted as part of the application, not by email. The fee waiver request must be submitted 14 days prior to your program's deadline. The option for a fee waiver request is located on the payment page after you click "submit and pay". The Graduate School is not able to review waivers without the submitted application.

**I'm having trouble uploading my transcript because it is security enabled.**

You may email your transcript to [graduate\\_admissions@brown.edu](mailto:graduate_admissions@brown.edu) after you have submitted your application.

**Do I need to upload an official transcript?** No, you may upload an unofficial copy, provided it includes your name and the name of the institution.

**Am I eligible for a waiver of the English Language Proficiency requirement?**

Please see Brown University's [Language Proficiency requirements](#), either TOEFL or IELTS.

**Can you waive the Language Proficiency requirement?** You may request a waiver by emailing [graduate\\_admissions@brown.edu](mailto:graduate_admissions@brown.edu) after you have submitted your application.

**Can I send my official language proficiency results after I am admitted?** They should be submitted during the application process.

**What will I be asked to submit for the Supplemental Essay?** The Graduate School is committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive academic community and educating and training a distinguished and diverse cohort of students. Exposure to a broad range of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences is essential to fostering both breadth and depth in intellectual knowledge and is an educational benefit.

At Brown, the term “diversity” is used in the broadest sense to encompass many dimensions of students’ backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. Brown welcomes applications to its graduate programs from all qualified individuals, regardless of race, color, religion, age, national or ethnic origin, caste, disability, status as a veteran, language, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, political ideology, or theoretical approach.

In your application, you will be asked to upload a document responding to one of the following prompts (in 300 words or less):

Discuss specific examples of how your background, knowledge, and life experiences would influence your ability to both benefit from and contribute to Brown’s inclusive academic community;

Discuss how you aspire to contribute to our mission to promote diversity and inclusion through your research, teaching, or service.

**What is the deadline for recommendation letters?** There is no separate deadline for recommendations, they should be submitted as close to the application deadline as possible for full consideration.

**The grading system in my country is different. Should I convert my grade point average (GPA) to the 4.0 scale?** No, there is no need to convert it. Simply report what your GPA is as a number or letter grade.