from Stacy Torian (internal) to Everyone:

Hello, and thank you for joining us! This is a very informal session where you can pose questions you may have about the application process. Please send your questions privately to the appropriate admissions staff member using the message box in the bottom right corner of your screen. Answers will be posted publicly along with the accompanying questions.

QUESTION: What makes a successful candidate?

ANSWER: The answer to this question will vary substantially depending on the department. I would recommend reading through the department website very carefully to determine exactly what they are seeking in their candidates. It is certainly important to submit your application materials by the appropriate application deadline.
QUESTION: I heard that some graduate school will first set a GPA limit, GRE score lowest limit and TOEFL lowest limit to screen out the applicants first and then look at the PS and recommendation, does Duke also do this?

ANSWER: Duke does not have a GPA or GRE lowest limit. All components of the application are considered when reviewing the application. The process is however competitive and you should take a look at the individual program statistics: http://gradschool.duke.edu/about/stats.php. Regarding the TOEFL, we do have a minimum of 90.

QUESTION: When will you let the applicants know the final decision?

ANSWER: Decisions about spring admission are usually made by the middle of November. Decisions about fall admission are typically made between late January and early March.

QUESTION: Who will read my application materials, the admissions staff or professors of department, or others?

ANSWER: Your application will be reviewed by both the department and the admissions staff. Decision recommendations are made by the department but formal offers of admission are sent by the Office of Admissions.

QUESTION: What is the cut off score of GRE?

ANSWER: Duke does not have a GPA or GRE lowest limit. All components of the application are considered when reviewing the application. The process is however competitive and you should take a look at the individual program statistics: http://gradschool.duke.edu/about/stats.php.

QUESTION: How much weight do the GRE scores count in the Admissions process?

ANSWER: While they are an important component, it is just one piece of the total application. The review process is a holistic one. That being said, it will vary by program how much weight is placed on the GRE. You can contact the program to which you are applying for more details.
QUESTION: I would like to work with particular professor who is affiliated with several departments. Is it ok to apply to several programs and how graduate school treats such applications?

ANSWER 1: It is ok to apply to multiple programs. Each application would be reviewed separately by the admissions committee in each department. In the case in which you would be offered admission by both departments, you would have to choose which department's offer to accept.

FOLLOW UP RESPONSE: The Graduate School will accept your application to multiple departments. However, we encourage you to think carefully about your research interests before doing so. How well defined are they? Each application should include a well thought out statement of purpose that clearly explains what you will bring to the graduate study field and what you hope to gain from being in the program. It would also be a good idea to speak with the professor with whom you plan to work before you submit your application.

ADDENDUM (FROM OUR WEBSITE): Your application must include a Statement of Purpose indicating your purposes and objectives in undertaking graduate study, your special interests and plans, and your strengths and weaknesses in your chosen field. Briefly describe any research projects or any independent research in which you have actively participated and indicate how this has influenced your career choice and desire to pursue graduate studies. If you have particular reasons for applying to Duke (e.g. you would like to work with a specific faculty member), please indicate these.

QUESTION: I am an international candidate (India). How shall I convert my marks obtained during my BS and MS into GPA?

ANSWER: You should calculate a separate GPA for your BS and your MS. We ask that you convert it to a 4.0 scale and information about how to convert it can be found at: http://gradschool.duke.edu/admissions/requirements/ugpa.php. If you have difficulty with the conversion, you can leave the field blank and we will do the conversion for you.
QUESTION: I think you have a interview process before making the decision right? when will the applicant know if he or she get the chance to interview?

ANSWER: Most departments will interview applicants before making the final decision. The interview timeframe varies by department. You will need to contact your department of interest for specifics.

QUESTION: For international applicants, do you need two transcripts? I mean, one in my language and the other in english. And also, my GPA is not in a 4 scale, do I have to convert it?

ANSWER: Yes. To be considered, all documents not in English must be accompanied by English translations from the issuing institution or a professional translation service.

QUESTION: And also, my GPA is not in a 4 scale, do I have to convert it?

ANSWER: Yes, please see http://gradschool.duke.edu/admissions/requirements/ugpa.php for details.

QUESTION: Follow up to the question on how to convert your GPA.

ANSWER: World Education Services provides an electronic GPA conversion guide that might be useful to you: http://www.wes.org/gradeconversionguide/

QUESTION: I'm currently applying for the East Asian Studies program. I notice that a writing sample is not required for application. However, may I submit one or is it not allowed to do so?

ANSWER: While you are allowed to submit additional materials not required by the application, we cannot guarantee that they will be considered by the department in your admissions decision.

QUESTION: Then, do I need to send an official transcript to the admission office now?

ANSWER: If you are offered admission, we will ask for confidential, official transcripts at that time. Do not send official transcripts prior to receiving an offer of admission.
QUESTION: What is the average time for doing PhD in Civil Engineering?

ANSWER: As of October 2012, the average time to degree for a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering at Duke is 4.9 years, compared to a 2010 U.S. median time of 7.9 years. Information can be found at: http://gradschool.duke.edu/about/statistics/ttdcee.htm

QUESTION: After being accepted, how is the process for international students (interviews of visas)?

ANSWER: You will receive an email from the admissions office on how to proceed with submission of an online visa form and details regarding the submission of documents. Information can be found at: http://www.visaservices.duke.edu/F1_Incoming.html

QUESTION: Is it bad to submit 4 letters of recommendation when 3 are listed as the requirement?

ANSWER: We try to discourage applicants from requesting more than the required number of recommendations. Extra recommendations may cause the admissions committee to view your application negatively. The best practice is to select three recommenders who can best attest to the specific skills and experience you’ll bring to the program to which you’re applying.

QUESTION: What is the average time for doing PhD in Immunology?

ANSWER: As of October 2012, the average time to degree for a PhD in Immunology at Duke is 5.8 years compared to a 2010 US median time of 6.6 years. Information can be found at: http://gradschool.duke.edu/about/statistics/ttdimm.htm

QUESTION: What is the most important part in application, GPA, GRE, Statement of purpose or letters of recommendation or others?

ANSWER: All aspects of the application are important, but different departments may weigh different sections of the application differently. Please contact your department of interest to determine which sections of the application carry more weight in their application review process.
QUESTION: Hi Stacy, Thank you for putting this opportunity together. I am applying to the PhD program in Anthropology. If you get accepted, when do you find out what your specific funding situation is?

ANSWER: Admitted students may receive a fellowship, a research assistantship, teaching assistantship, or some combination of these forms of support. Details about the financial support will be included in your admission letter, the Financial Aid tab of your Self Service account, or, in some cases, in a letter that comes directly from the department.

QUESTION: Is B.S. GPA more important for admissions than M.S. GPA?

ANSWER: They are both very important. However, the MS transcript may have more weight because it reflects your recent academic work. Note that a master's degree is not required for entry into a PhD program - the requirement is a 4 year bachelor's degree.

QUESTION: I am applying to clinical psychology PhD program. And the requirement says 3 or more letters of recommendation. If I submit 4 letters, is it favorable?

ANSWER: We try to discourage applicants from requesting more than the required number of recommendations. Extra recommendations may cause the admissions committee to view your application negatively. The best practice is to select three recommenders who can best attest to the specific skills and experience you'll bring to the program to which you're applying.

QUESTION: I am an International student. How can I get financial aid?

ANSWER: Financial aid options vary depending on the program and the degree sought. PhD students (international and non-international) typically receive tuition remission and financial support in the form of an assistantship or a fellowship or some combination of these forms of support. You do not have to complete a separate application to be considered for this support. Master's students are typically self funded, though some programs do offer limited financial assistance to master's students.
QUESTION: Do I have to wait until all of my recommendations are in before I can submit my application?

ANSWER: No, you should submit as soon as you have completed the application. We will add the letters of recommendation to your file as they come in.

QUESTION: Is there any weightage for job experience in the related field during evaluation of PhD application?

ANSWER: Relevant job experience may be directly considered by the admissions committee as a factor in their decision. It may also be an indirect factor if it has shaped your program specific goals or research interests in a way that suits the department.

QUESTION: If an applicant fails to be accepted to the DU grad school in a given year, and they apply for the following year, would that applicant have an advantage based on his/her obvious perseverance?

ANSWER: The likelihood of being admitted will vary depending on the strength of the applicant pool during a given year. For example, applying a second time will not put a person at an advantage unless the person's application stacks up better in relation to the second pool of applicants than it did to the previous pool.

QUESTION: I am an international candidate. Is there any requirement of the score of Speaking in TOEFL/IELTS, or a cut-off line? Does this affect the financial aid?

ANSWER: While we like to see similar scores across the components of the TOEFL, we do not have minimums for the individual components. Our minimum is 90 for the total score. This does not affect financial aid.
QUESTION: Am I subject to TOEFL requirements if I am an international applicant who studied in the USA full time, for more than 2 years?

ANSWER: TOEFL waivers requests should be submitted in the Additional Information section of the online application. To be eligible for a waiver you must have studied at an institution where the primary language of instruction is English and in a country where the primary spoken language is English. Due to the volume of applications we receive, your request will only be reviewed if you are admitted.

QUESTION: Is the earlier applicant more likely to be admitted?

ANSWER: Applicants who submit their applications by the priority deadline are entitled to full consideration. The deadline for PhD applications is December 8 and the deadline for master's applications is January 31. Late applications cannot be guaranteed full consideration, as they may be coming in after available spots have already been filled.

NOTE: The deadlines above apply to fall admission only. The spring deadline is October 15.

QUESTION: I am an international student want to apply for PhD in duke, I do have some research experince, but really do not match to the program I want to apply. When writing PS, should I pay more attention to my research experience or my interet of the program I want to apply.

ANSWER: This is a tricky question because many admissions decisions are based on how your interests will fit with the department to which you'll apply. Rather than focusing on either your experience or the interests of the program in your personal statement, you might consider writing about how your research goals have developed through your experience, and how those goals would contribute to your department. You may also find it instructive to contact specific professors with whom you envision yourself working.
QUESTION: The financial aid concerns me most. For Chemistry PhD Program, does every student who are admitted get financial aid? Thanks.

ANSWER: Yes, PhD students do. Per the department website: All Chemistry doctoral program participants in good academic standing are fully supported as either Research or Teaching Assistants during their studies. Good academic standing entails maintaining a minimum GPA of 3.0 or higher, reaching all program milestones in a timely manner, and making adequate progress towards degree completion. Chemistry doctoral support includes full tuition, fee, and health insurance coverage as well as a monthly stipend to cover living expenses.

QUESTION: If I hope to work with an adjunct faculty or associate faculty of my program, will it reduce my possibility of getting admitted? Thanks!

ANSWER: This particular question should be posed directly to the department; in fact, it would be a good idea to speak with the professor directly.

QUESTION: What types of financial aids a student can get? What are the criteria for getting specific types of financial aid, like teaching assistantship or Research Assistantship?

ANSWER: Financial aid options vary depending on the program and the degree sought. PhD students (international and non-international) typically receive tuition remission and financial support in the form of an assistantship or a fellowship or some combination of these forms of support. You do not have to complete a separate application to be considered for this support. Master’s students are typically self funded, though some programs do offer limited financial assistance to master’s students. You will need to contact your department of interest directly to determine the criteria for being awarded a particular type of assistantship.

QUESTION: Do you screen out the applicants according to the scores of Toefl first, or according to something else?

ANSWER: The TOEFL score is the only component where we do have a minimum requirement and therefore do not typically admit applicants with a score less than 90. All other parts of your application are reviewed as part of a competitive process.
QUESTION: Stacy et al: I am applying to the PhD program in Art History, and my BA is in Communications. Will several years of self-directed study in AH count towards admissions consideration? (70 volumes read, 350,000 words transcribed.)

ANSWER: All experience and education is taken into consideration during the application review process.

QUESTION: Is the TOEFL scores requirement for PhD higher than MS?

ANSWER: No the required minimum is the same.

QUESTION: You said" Late applications cannot be guaranteed full consideration, as they may be coming in after available spots have already been filled ". What does the "late applications" refer to, the one who applies overdue to the deadline?

ANSWER: Late applications are those that are submitted after the stated deadlines.

QUESTION: I am the U.S. permanent resident will my application be considered as international one and will I have to ask for TOEFL waver in even I studied in the USA for more than 2 years?

ANSWER: As a permanent resident, you will not need to apply for a visa.

FOLLOW UP RESPONSE: As a permanent resident you will not need to submit a TOEFL

QUESTION: Who will read my Statement of Purpose?

ANSWER: Your statement of purpose will be read and assessed by the department.