

Tips for a Strong PhD Application

Department of Health Policy and Management

The ideal application should allow us to assess your ability to complete the PhD program and become an independent researcher as well as your fit with our Department. In particular, we seek students who can identify their research interests with enough specificity to match those interests to one or more faculty members who would be a good advisor and, ultimately, dissertation chair. To that end, here are some tips for a strong application:

1. Describe your interests and fit with our Department as specifically as possible: A personal statement with very broad description of your research interests is less helpful.

2. Write clearly: Have someone review your personal statement and other parts of the application before you submit it.

3. Look at faculty members' interests on our website. Read through 3-4 of their recent publications to get an idea of recent projects and interests. Contacting faculty members before applying is entirely optional and you do not need to find your own advisor, the program will do it for you. Your input on who the best matches in interests are is helpful in the process. Once you have identified faculty members with potential overlap, describe that in your personal statement.

4. Choose one, or at most two, minor areas: Your willingness to pursue a minor in more than two areas signals that you are unsure of what you want to study.

5. Select references with a purpose: Identify individuals who can speak to not only your skills and work habits, but also your potential and desire to become an independent health policy or health services researcher. Also, be sure these individuals are aware of application deadlines.

6. Meet deadlines: Check the website periodically to be sure your application is complete. This includes transcripts, letters, any required test scores, etc. We cannot admit students until the UNC Graduate School considers the application complete.