

Standard 5: Admission

Standard 5.1

In each professional preparation program, applicants are admitted on the basis of well-defined *admission criteria* and procedures, including all Commission-adopted requirements.

ADMISSION CRITERIA

STEP uses a similar process to evaluate candidates applying to all of its credential programs: Single Subject, Multiple Subject (without bilingual authorization), and Multiple Subject (+bilingual authorization).

Admission requirements, aligned with commission-adopted requirements, are clearly articulated on the [STEP website](#). Applicants to STEP use the online [CollegeNet](#) admission portal to submit required materials.

In addition to the website resources, STEP provides clear information and guidelines to applicants via a range of additional tools including the following:

- [**admissions webinars**](#) hosted by the STEP program officer and credential analyst (who also manages the STEP admissions efforts),
- **onsite STEP information session events,**
- **offsite recruiting events,**
- **direct communication** between potential applicants with program staff and faculty, including STEP's program officer and credential analyst, STEP faculty directors, and other STEP faculty and staff.

Of note, STEP and the GSE are committed to encouraging diverse applicants to our programs and utilize a wide range of information and recruiting tools for this purpose.

Applicants to the Single Subject program must demonstrate **relevant content knowledge**, such as a major in their target subject area or significant number of undergraduate classes within that subject area. Multiple Subject (all) candidates are expected to have completed an undergraduate program of study that includes a broad liberal arts education, a completed undergraduate major, and a **well-rounded competence** in all subject areas relevant to elementary teaching. In order to be considered for admission to STEP, candidates must have **earned a bachelor's degree** or expect to have received the degree prior to enrolling in STEP. Notably, Stanford offers a [Co-terminal Bachelor's and Master's Degree Program](#), which permits current Stanford undergraduates to study for a bachelor's and a master's degree simultaneously, in the same or different departments. Co-term applicants to STEP must have earned a minimum of 120 units toward graduation (UTG) as shown on the undergraduate unofficial transcript and, in keeping with state requirements, must have their bachelor degrees conferred before the start of STEP.

The standardization of admissions materials and requirements, as well as STEP's procedures for reviewing applications to the Multiple Subject (all) and Single Subject programs, ensures that all candidates for admission are evaluated according to consistent criteria. First, each application file is read by at least two Stanford faculty members and as many as three additional reviewers. The

additional reviewers are comprised of GSE faculty, STEP Clinical Associates and other instructors who teach in STEP. Faculty and other reviewers rate each application on the criteria below and then offer a recommendation to the Faculty Directors:

- 1. Academic preparation:** Reviewers consider the rigor and quality of each candidate's undergraduate (and graduate) study, including an appraisal of the applicant's overall grades and grade point average, the quality of the undergraduate institution, standardized test scores, and academic letters of recommendation. Because admissions decisions are made based on a holistic review of each candidate's application materials, STEP does not employ specific minimum scores for GPA or GRE. Instead, test scores, grades and general academic preparation are important data points considered along with the other information in the application portfolio.
- 2. Commitment to teaching & professional goals:** Through each candidate's statement of purpose, resume, and letters of recommendation, reviewers assess the clarity of the applicant's writing as well as the connections between the applicant's experience, proposed teaching area, and future career plans. Reviewers seek to determine if there is a match between the candidate's interests and experiences and STEP's mission and goals.
- 3. Interpersonal & leadership skills:** Through a careful review of each applicant's statement of purpose, resuming, and letters of recommendation, reviewers consider each applicant's leadership potential and indicators of their ability to interact successfully with diverse populations (students, families, and colleagues).
- 4. Experiences (professional and other):** Through a careful review of each applicant's statement of purpose, letters of recommendation, and resume, reviewers consider the quality and relevance of each applicant's professional experiences, personal endeavors, work with youth, and their commitment to the teaching profession.
- 5. Contribution to diversity and cross-cultural awareness:** Through a careful review of each candidate's statement of purpose, letters of recommendation, and resume, reviewers assess the candidate's potential contribution to the diversity (broadly defined to include demographic diversity, as well as perspectives, and prior experiences) of the STEP cohort, as well as their commitment to working with diverse populations.
- 6. Overall assessment of promise at Stanford & STEP:** Admissions decisions are made based on a holistic review of each candidate's application. Together this information helps reviewers determine if a applicant is likely to be successful both academically and personally in a rigorous graduate program at Stanford University and as a member of the teaching profession.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Applications to STEP are due mid-January and decisions are usually posted to Stanford's online student portal, [Axess](#), by March 1st. Between those dates, the STEP Directors and staff use clearly defined and consistent admissions criteria and procedures to accomplish a holistic review of each

applicant. As described in detail in the next section, STEP requires all applicants to submit a portfolio of materials, which includes transcripts, GRE General Test scores, three letters of recommendation, and a statement of purpose essay that addresses their interest teaching and their preparation for graduate study in education. All applicant files are reviewed by at least two faculty and as many as three additional reviewers. The additional reviewers are comprised of GSE faculty, STEP Clinical Associates and other instructors who teach in STEP.

The STEP Faculty Directors, with the support of the STEP program officer and credential analyst (who also manages the STEP admissions efforts), aggregate the results of application file reviews. Results are discussed with the relevant faculty and Clinical Associates in each separate content area to determine each finalist's potential to become a teacher candidate. Often there are more qualified applicants than there are openings in STEP; some qualified applicants are put on a wait list for each subject area.

Prior to making final decisions, the STEP Faculty Directors work with GSE Academic Services Officers, led by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, to determine a target number of admission offers for each program. Currently, STEP targets a yield of approximately 24 STEP Elementary candidates and 65 STEP Secondary candidates.

To ensure quality control and process fairness, a list of finalists and wait listed applicants, including key qualifications and results of application file reviews, are all submitted by STEP Directors to the Associated Dean for Student Affairs for approval before final decisions are reached.

Standard 5.2

Multiple measures are used in an admission process that encourages and supports applicants from diverse populations.

STEP intentionally recruits and supports diverse candidates to all of its credential programs: Single Subject, Multiple Subject (without bilingual authorization), and Multiple Subject (+bilingual authorization).

Thinking broadly about the admissions process, STEP employs a range of efforts and utilize multiple measures to encourage and support diverse applicants to our programs via (a) admissions requirements, standards, and processes; (b) applicant recruitment; (c) admitted candidate recruitment; and (d) data collection and analysis for program monitoring and improvement. We describe our efforts in each of these categories below.

The results of our efforts are evident in the diversity represented in our program cohorts. See demographic information for the recent STEP cohorts ([Secondary/Elementary\(all\)](#)). The demographic diversity of the candidates across our programs regularly exceeds that of the present California teaching workforce. Additionally, we consider diversity broadly to include not only demographic features such as race/ethnicity and gender, but also to include a range of prior academic, professional, and personal experiences and circumstances, language backgrounds, socioeconomic class, religion, and sexual orientation.

Below we describe in more detail the range of efforts and multiple measures STEP uses to encourage and support diverse applicants and candidates to our programs:

(a) Admissions requirements, standards, and processes

- Perform a holistic review of broad range of applicant materials:**

STEP's admissions process allows for the holistic review of each applicant to ensure that individuals from a variety of backgrounds are able to receive due consideration. As discussed in the previous prompt (see **Standard 5.1**), applicants to STEP submit a broad portfolio of information, all of which receives careful review in the admissions process. Admissions portfolios include academic transcripts, a statement of purpose, a resume, three letters of recommendation, and a statement relating to applicant's contributions to diversity and community.

Resumes allow candidates, such as career changers, those with untraditional educational experiences, and candidates who might be reentering the workforce after raising families to demonstrate the range of experiences with which they might enter the program. In addition, candidates are required to submit a 750-1200 word essay describing their educational background, experience working with youth, and interest in teaching. This essay allows the program to gain insights into a candidate that might not be evident through test scores or grades alone. In this essay, candidates often describe how features of their identities have impacted their educational experiences or even how they view teaching as a form of social justice.

As discussed above, when evaluating these essays and applications, the program staff and directors seek to understand the applicant holistically and attempt to gage whether his/her experiences and goals align with STEP's mission and its commitment to preparing educators who will create equitable and excellent classrooms. In addition to the STEP-specific essay, all applicants to Stanford's graduate schools may speak to the prompt, "How would factors such as your background, work and life experiences, special interests, culture, socioeconomic status, race, or ethnicity contribute to the diversity of the entering class, and hence to the experience of your Stanford classmates? Please describe these factors and their relevance." As the prompt suggests, the university construes diversity broadly and each member of Stanford is expected to contribute the community's diversity. The [online application](#) also asks optional demographic questions about candidates' racial/ethnic backgrounds, language background, as well as their parents' educational level. Though these questions are not mandatory, they provide insight into demographic diversity of STEP applicants. Nearly all applicants complete this information on their application forms and the results are reported in our admissions data reports ([Secondary/Elementary \(all\)](#)) prepared by the STEP program officer and credential analyst for the faculty directors, STEP Steering Committee, and GSE deans.

- Decision making process relies on multiple measure and multiple reviewers**

As described in detail above (see **Standard 5.1**) STEP relies on multiple measures of competence for determining admission to the program and relies on multiple reviews of

each applicant's file to ensure fairness and reliability in decision-making. All of these measures help to ensure the encouragement of a diverse applicant and admit pool.

Criteria for admission included all of the following: Academic preparation, Commitment to teaching & professional goals, Interpersonal & leadership skills, Experiences (professional and other), Contribution to diversity and cross-cultural awareness, and Overall assessment of promise at Stanford & STEP.

(b) Applicant recruitment (to encourage diversity of the applicant pool)

- **Centralize information about admissions on the STEP website:** STEP's [website](#) serves as an invaluable resource for all potential applicants. The STEP website provides information on the program, clear information about the application process, and useful information about STEP fellowships and other sources of financial support. Also, as mentioned elsewhere, the website has information on admissions deadlines, admissions events, and webinars.
- **Engage in targeted outreach of historically underrepresented groups:** During the admissions process, the program engages in a variety of outreach practices both to garner a broad applicant pool and also to specifically engage diverse applicants. STEP specifically encourages applicants from historically underrepresented backgrounds. Recently, the GSE has established new initiatives to expand outreach to HBCUs and Hispanic serving institutions, which will also enhance our outreach to diverse applicants in STEP. In addition, STEP has formed partnerships with national organizations that identify high school students and undergraduates of color who show high academic promise and who have expressed an interest in teaching. For example, each year representatives from STEP participate in events with the [Phillips Academy Institute for Recruitment of Teachers](#) and in the [Breakthrough Collaborative](#), two organizations that support young students in becoming teachers. Program representatives also attend [Idealist Grad Fairs](#) across the country to meet applicants interested in public service and education careers. In addition, the program cultivates ongoing **relationships with faculty members** at local and state universities, such as San Jose State University, CSU East Bay, and San Francisco State University, who teach undergraduates from diverse backgrounds interested in pursuing careers in education.
- **Offer a variety of opportunities for prospective applicants to engage with the program:** Through a range of outreach strategies, the program aims to connect with a wide swath of qualified potential applicants. STEP representatives—including STEP directors and the program officer and credential analyst—**attend graduate and career school fairs** at Stanford and at other universities and institutions across the country, update the appropriate [websites](#) to ensure broad and effective outreach, offer ease of contact via phone, email, and Skype to interested applicants, conduct **in-person meetings** and [webinars](#) with potential applicants, and **hold numerous information sessions** for the general community. For example, [on-site information sessions](#) are typically held in the late evening for students and working professionals, and STEP is also considering holding an

additional session during a weekend day to accommodate individuals who have untraditional schedules or other personal and professional obligations in the evening.

Again, STEP takes a broad view to diversity, and therefore aims to create opportunities for candidates from a range of backgrounds and with a range of experiences to learn more about the program. In particular, the **webinars** and **off-site recruitment events** support STEP's work to increase the geographic and socio-economic diversity of each cohort: in recognition of the fact that not all applicants can attend on-campus information sessions, these efforts allow potential applicants from around the world to engage with the program. For that reason, the program places no limit on the number of webinar participants, allowing anyone interested to join.

Finally, the program officer and credential analyst, as well as other STEP staff and faculty, **respond individually**—via email, phone, and in-person meeting—to applicants who have questions about the application process, financial aid support, or about the STEP year broadly. Potential applicants receive personalized attention and support as they decide whether to pursue candidacy at STEP. The availability of information to all potential candidates through these different channels supports STEP's belief that resources should not impede qualified applicants from pursuing a career in education.

- **Offer fee waivers to applicants as needed:** The program seeks to attract and admit all qualified applicants, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. Stanford and STEP are committed to a need-blind admission process, which also helps to strengthen the diversity of our programs. Therefore, the program and university provide application fee waivers for individuals with demonstrated need. (See <https://graddiversity.stanford.edu/graduate-fee-waivers> for information on fee waivers.)

(c) Admitted candidate recruitment (to ensure diversity of the yielded cohort)

- **Provide sufficient funding to support the matriculation of historically underserved groups:** As mentioned elsewhere, in recent years Stanford University and the GSE have garnered substantial new funding for **fellowships** and **Stanford-based forgivable loans** that support STEP candidates. At all information sessions, the STEP informs potential applicants of their options for financing the STEP program and provides an overview of the application process and STEP year. Stanford's significant financial commitment to STEP teacher candidates is an essential tool in the recruitment and yield of a diverse program cohort.

(d) Data collection and analysis for program monitoring and improvement

- At several points during the year, the faculty directors consult with key constituents to **review the previous year's admissions data ([Secondary/Elementary \(all\)](#))** and plan for the upcoming admissions season. Data reviewed includes the diversity of both the applicant pool and the admitted pool to ensure that efforts across the admissions system

(recruitment, admissions procedures, admissions yield) are all encouraging a diverse cohort of candidates. Admissions data are reviewed and discussed by STEP faculty directors, STEP program officer and credential analyst, STEP Steering Committee, and the Dean for Student Affairs. Additionally, in the late spring program staff, directors, and the STEP Steering Committee review data from the admissions process, with a particular focus on the yield relative to the total number of admission offers. The **demographics of the incoming class** also receive scrutiny so that STEP can adjust its recruitment efforts as needed to maintain a diverse cohort. During the admissions process, STEP also begins collecting data on the qualifications and competence of the incoming candidates.

Through its exhaustive recruitment strategies and its comprehensive admissions process, STEP is able to attract a highly qualified applicant pool and select candidates from a range of backgrounds who are committed to becoming professional educators able to serve the academic and social-emotional needs of all learners. Our resulting admitted cohorts are diverse across a range of relevant features, more closely approximating the demographic makeup of California's K-12 students than the current population of California's teachers.

Standard 5.3

The *unit* determines that admitted candidates have appropriate pre-professional experiences and personal characteristics, including sensitivity to California's diverse population, effective communication skills, basic academic skills, and prior experiences that suggest a strong potential for professional effectiveness.

STEP employs multiple measures during the admissions process to ensure that admitted candidates have the experiences and professional and personal dispositions appropriate for beginning teachers. (See <https://ed.stanford.edu/admissions/application-reqs/step-secondary> (Single Subject) and <https://ed.stanford.edu/admissions/application-reqs/step-elementary> (Multiple Subject) for a complete list of STEP's application requirements.)

STEP's design assumes that much of the initial grounding in subject matter will be acquired during the undergraduate years; therefore, both Single Subject and Multiple Subject applicants must demonstrate a high level of academic achievement and subject matter competence during the application process. As mentioned earlier, applicants to the Single Subject program must demonstrate relevant content knowledge, such as a major in their target subject area or significant number of undergraduate classes within that subject area. Multiple Subject candidates are expected to have completed an undergraduate program of study that includes a broad liberal arts education, a completed undergraduate major, and a well-rounded competence in all subject areas relevant to elementary teaching. Applicants must submit transcripts from any institution in which they completed at least one year of study. In addition, all candidates must also submit a Transcript Summary in which they group the courses they have taken by subject area.

In addition to their transcripts, candidates must demonstrate their readiness for graduate-level work by completing several standardized tests. All STEP applicants are required to submit GRE General Test scores. Admitted STEP students are academically on par with other graduate students in the

GSE. (See [Admitted Students Data](#).) As the table also shows, applicants for whom English is a second language must also complete the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), unless they have completed a four-year bachelor's degree or two year master's program in the United States.

During the application process, each candidate must also specify how s/he will meet subject matter requirements—either by completing subject matter examinations or by completing an approved subject matter program at a California institution. With rare exceptions, students who elect to take the CSET are expected to have passed a minimum of one half of the subtests before starting STEP in June. Students who are completing an approved subject matter program must have completed 80% of the coursework prior to beginning STEP in June. Applicants are informed that all students admitted to STEP must meet basic skills requirement. One avenue for fulfilling this requirement is taking the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST). California residents must pass the CBEST prior to the beginning of their program in June. Non-California residents may take the test upon arrival in California but must pass it during the summer quarter. When candidates apply to STEP they complete the [Supplemental Information Form](#), which specifies these program requirements, as well as subject matter verification and other requirements. Taken together, these test scores, along with the transcript summary and transcripts, demonstrate whether candidates have sufficient content matter preparation.

In addition to transcripts and test scores, each candidate must also [submit](#) three letters of recommendation—often from professors, supervisors, or others who can speak to the candidate's promise—academically, interpersonally, and professionally. The program reviews these letters to ascertain characteristics such as the candidate's intellectual vitality, personal maturity, and interpersonal skills. Reviewers also look for evidence that applicants are collaborative and cooperative, and have strong potential for success in the teaching profession.

STEP seeks applicants who have demonstrated experience with and a commitment to working with youth and communities. Applications are reviewed for evidence that candidates have had meaningful experiences working with youth across a range of settings, such as camps, substitute teaching, tutoring, theatre and sports teams, and the like. Evidence for these activities are gleaned from resumes, statements of purpose, and letters of recommendation.

The STEP application asks candidates to discuss their ideas about teaching by responding to the following prompt in a statement of purpose essay:

Please specify your interest in teaching a particular subject matter area at the secondary level (STEP Secondary, single subject program) or your interest in teaching at the elementary level (STEP Elementary, multiple subject program). In addition, explain your views on the role of education in society and your reasons for wanting to enter the teaching profession. Indicate how your talents, skills, and experiences might contribute to the STEP community.

Candidates may also choose to submit an optional second essay answering the prompt on the Stanford University's online graduate admissions application system or additional materials of

their choosing, such as essays detailing an aspect of their experience not covered elsewhere in their application. Through these essays and documents, candidates are able to contextualize their academic, professional, and personal experiences and are able to provide insight into extenuating circumstances that may have impacted other areas of their application (such as their transcript). Moreover, candidates are able to describe their orientation to teaching, their commitment to social justice and equity in education, and their reasons for entering the profession. STEP's application reviewers use these essays to glean the candidate's readiness to assume the professional responsibility of educating all children in California's classrooms.