



IT:U Master's Program Admissions Rubric – Valid as of September 1, 2026

(adapted from Cornell Communication Department Graduate Admissions Rubric)

This document describes the process of evaluating applicants, including:

- Application materials
- Scoring System
- Rubric

As a reminder, the rubric aims to facilitate our admission discussions by helping us connect the application materials to the qualities we are looking for in applicants. Please use the whole scale. If too many applicants have a top rating, we will need to assign a further round of reviews.

Score according to your confidence whether the applicant meets our criteria rather than as judgments of applicant qualities, per se. So, an applicant with a lower score may be a less ideal fit for this particular cohort, but their application is not inherently “worse.”

Distinct members of the admissions committee may use different heuristics for assessing these. So, sub-questions and suggested indicators should be viewed as prompts to aid staff and faculty in their assessment, not requirements.

Application Materials

Please annually review what we ask applicants to provide:

Motivational Letter (ML):

FORMAT

In English only, max. 1 page/approx. 500 words. Motivational letters that exceed this maximum will not be immediately rejected, but only the first page of the motivational letter will be read and considered.

CONTENT

The motivational letter should introduce the applicant (background and future goals), describe why the applicant is motivated to study at IT:U, and which of the four specializations (Designing Interactions; Digital Earth, Society, and Networks; Digital Humanities, Health, and Life Sciences; Future Industries) the applicant is interested in pursuing. The applicant can also surprise us and share if there is anything else the applicant thinks we should know about the applicant's background, identity, interests, or talents.

Video Submission (DM):

FORMAT

In English only, must be 2-3 minutes in length. Submissions under 2 minutes will automatically lose points. If a submission is longer than 3 minutes, only the first 3 minutes will be considered, and the video will not be reviewed further. Submissions must include a video of the applicant speaking and using his/her/their own voice.



Video submissions may be submitted directly to our application platform and must be in .mp4 video format. Submissions may also be submitted to one of the following hosting sites (YouTube (public or “unlisted”), Google Drive (ensure that share settings are “Anyone with the link”), WeChat (post to your channel), RedNote (post to your channel), DropBox (ensure share settings are set to “Anyone with this link can view”). Note: If the applicant does not provide a viewable link, the application will be marked as incomplete and will not be considered further.

CONTENT

The applicant should respond to the following questions: Why you are a good fit for the program and why the program is a good fit for you; what you imagine to be the most interesting, challenging, and/or rewarding part of this program; what is an industrial, societal, and/or global challenge that you are passionate about, and how will this program help you address this challenge?

Curriculum Vitae (CV):

The CV must be written in English, well-formatted, and follow a logical, coherent structure. There are no formal length, content, or format requirements.

English Proficiency:

IT:U requires students to have minimum C1 level English as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Applicants will be asked to complete a self-assessment as part of the application. Note: a language certificate is **not** required as part of the application.

The motivational letter, video submission, and CV will all be assessed for English proficiency. This will help provide the admissions committee with an initial understanding of an applicant's English level. If the applicant fails to submit any of the aforementioned materials in English, their application will be rejected.

The interview will be the ultimate assessment of an applicant's English level. During the interview, the interviewers should consider if the applicant can:

- understand and respond to a wide range of questions and recognize implicit meaning.
- express ideas fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.
- use language flexibly and effectively, particularly as it relates to professional and academic purposes.
- produce clear, well-structured, detailed speech on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.

Scoring System

The following components of the application will be scored:

- Fit With IT:U (numbered scale)
- Past Achievement/Future Potential (numbered scale)
- Motivational Letter (numbered scale)
- Video Submission (numbered scale)
- English Proficiency (yes/no)



Based on the evaluation of the initial application (submitted application materials), applicants will be either invited to an interview or rejected.

If the applicant is invited to and completes an interview, the entire application will be evaluated and scored with an “accept”, “accept - conditional”, or “reject” based on the following scale and rubric criteria A, B, and C as listed below.

- Accept: The applicant has shown adequate or exceptional evidence to be accepted into the program.
- Accept – conditional: The applicant has shown adequate or exceptional evidence to be accepted into the program, but will be required to submit updated proof of CERF C1 or equivalent English proficiency.
- Fail: The applicant has shown inadequate evidence to be accepted into the program.

Rubric

The rubric is structured as follows. There are 3 criteria (A, B, C). Each criterion is accompanied by a set of sub-questions whose answers contribute to the assessment of the applicant. For each sub-question, there are suggested indicators for phase 1 (application) and phase 2 (interview). These are suggestions—admissions should feel free to develop/discover their own indicators (and explain them to the rest of us!).

Example:

Criterion A – Academic Preparedness, (Past) Achievements, and (Future) Potential

Why? We want applicants who have the ability and baseline training to succeed within our program. Suggested sub-questions and ways of answering them:

Can this applicant handle the rigors of the IT:U master's program?

- Suggested Indicators: Phase 1 – Written
 - Do transcripts show high marks in rigorous classes?
 - Do transcripts indicate they have strong academic capability?
 - Do the CV and ML describe past accomplishments and enthusiasm for further growth?
- Suggested indicators: Phase 2 – Interview
 - Can the applicant handle challenging questions?

Criterion B – Teamwork, Leadership, Flexibility

Why? We want applicants to thrive under our educational model. Some students may prefer to work more independently, in which case, they may struggle to succeed as members of a project group. In addition, we want students to succeed while working in diverse groups. Project group members will come from a variety of academic, personal, professional, and cultural backgrounds. Suggested sub-questions and ways of answering them:

Will the applicant be able to work well in a close-knit team?

- Suggested Indicators: Phase 1 – Written
 - Does the CV, ML, or DM show the applicant's capacity for teamwork and leadership?



- Does the CV, ML, or DM show a range of diverse experiences?
- Does the CV, ML, or DM demonstrate a self-motivated approach and/or the applicant's capacity for approaching problems from various perspectives?
- Suggested Indicators: Phase 2 – Interview
 - How does the applicant respond to questions regarding difficult/challenging teamwork scenarios?
 - How does the applicant respond to questions regarding working with peers from different backgrounds?

Criterion C – Fit with IT:U

Why? We want applicants to pick the right master's program for their goals/interests. In addition, applicants should demonstrate that they have an understanding of interdisciplinary study and research. Suggested sub-questions and ways of answering them:

Do the applicant's interests fit with the IT:U master's program interests?

- Suggested Indicators: Phase 1 – Written
 - Does the CV, ML, or DM demonstrate an understanding of interdisciplinarity?
 - Does the DM show the applicant's excitement for the potential chosen specialization?
 - Does the ML show strong interest in interdisciplinary learning or solutions?
- Suggested Indicators: Phase 2 – Interview
 - How does the applicant respond to questions regarding interdisciplinarity?
 - Do the interviewers notice a strong interest in interdisciplinary learning and a commitment to how studying at IT:U will equip the applicant to solve societal/industrial/global challenges?
 - Does the applicant show interest in project-based, personal learning in an international environment?