

How to Get into a Top Ph.D. Program in IS or Accounting

1. **Enroll in either the MISM or Macc pre-Ph.D. Track** -- You do not need to enroll in pre-Ph.D. track courses to get into a Ph.D. program. However, the more you prepare ahead of time, the more likely you will be able to get into a good program and know you are making a good decision. With more preparation you will be more likely successful in your Ph.D. experience and should be able to complete it more rapidly. These tracks DO NOT require more credits to graduate, so this is a low-risk option.
2. **Get some research experience** -- If you conduct research (especially publishable research) prior to applying to a Ph.D. program, you will have greater chances of being accepted. Thus, your overall goal should be to get some kind of research experience before leaving BYU. The easiest place to look for such experience is at the Rollins Center for e-Business in 575 TNRB, which always has a substantial amount of research activities in which students can get involved. (Contact Dr. Dean for more information on e-Business Center Research). As you take classes and get more experience, you can also try to work as a research assistant (RA) for an IS professor. RA work is an excellent way to develop research experience; the opportunities are just more limited than those available at the e-Business Center.
3. **Get Strong Academic References Before You Leave BYU** -- You should also work on getting three strong academic references before you leave BYU. References are very important to getting into Ph.D. programs—much more important than a high GPA. Ph.D. programs essentially want academics to vouch that you are capable of doing Ph.D.-level thought and research. Make sure you talk to professors about your desire for references before you leave BYU so they can make the positive notes to help you later on when you need a reference. Better yet—work with a professor on a research project!
4. **Get a high GMAT Score** -- GMAT scores are very crucial to admission to top Ph.D. programs, and are significantly more important than GPA's because they are standardized whereas GPA's are not. If you want to get into a top Ph.D. program, you will generally need a GMAT of 680 (possibly as low as 660 or 640 if you have substantial strengths in other areas) or higher. You can retake the GMAT, and studying for it and taking preparation courses (especially Kaplan) and significant raise your score. Most programs have application deadlines in December and January, and some are as late as February; thus, you should generally retake your GMAT no later than November if you need a higher score. However, there are many opportunities in lower-tier Ph.D. programs if you have a lower GMAT score; especially if you want a teaching-oriented career.
5. **Do your Homework** -- Spend a significant amount of time visiting the Websites of programs in which you may be interested. Find out in what research areas they are strong. Start looking around for a mentor at BYU to do research with. The sooner you know decide on a mentor the better off you will be. If possible, do site visits to some of your preferred Ph.D. programs as you are applying to them (this is not required, but helps you get in, and helps you make a better decision). As you visit some programs make sure you meet with some of the current Ph.D. students, they will be able to tell you what the program is really like.