

Slate Faculty User's Guide: Graduate Application Review System

Slate is UC Merced's graduate admissions system, to replace TargetX starting Fall 2018. It has four main components that we are currently using: 1) forms and emails for managing inquires from prospective applicants; 2) application submission system; 3) application review system; and 4) application decisions, letters, and reply forms. This document is a basic reference guide for the application review system, known as the **Slate reader**.

Slate Reader Overview

The Slate reader allows users to view applications, review them by adding comments and other input, and move them through the review stages. It has one interface for viewing lists of applications organized, sorted, and filtered in various ways, and another interface for viewing individual applications.

Applications move through three stages of review, expressed as "bins" in Slate, before possibly being recommended for admissions: 1) Faculty Review bin; 2) Committee Review bin; and 3) Chair Review bin. The basic model of application review is "forward or deny by default"—applications start in Faculty Review, and they may advance to Committee Review if applicable, or directly to Chair Review for graduate groups that do not have an admissions committee. Applications that do NOT advance will be denied admissions later in the review cycle. Therefore, only applications that review positively need to be advanced through the stages.

All faculty members can view all and only applications to the graduate groups they are members of. Faculty users can view their applications at all stages of review and admission. However, the information and functions available to users depend on their assigned roles. The roles for faculty are:

- Regular Faculty reviewers can add comments and input at the Faculty Review stage only. They cannot move applications through the review stages.
- Admissions Committee reviewers can add comments and input at both Faculty and Committee Review stages. They cannot move applications through the review stages.
- Admissions Committee Chair reviewers can add comments as above, and they can move applications into Committee Review and Chair Review.
- Graduate Group Chair reviewers can do all of above, and also add comments and input at Chair Review, as well as move applications into Admit for administrative review and dean approval of admissions offer.

When an application is submitted to a graduate program, the application is automatically placed in the **queues** of all faculty members of that graduate program (as recorded in Slate). An application must be in a user's queue for the user to add comments and input, and faculty may use their queues as personal "to review" lists. Applications do not need to be queued just to view them. When a user submits input for a queued application, Slate automatically removes it from the user's queue. Users can "re-queue" and "un-queue" applications at any time.

Brief Slate Reader Instructions

First, log into Slate using here: <https://applygrad.ucmerced.edu/manage/reader>

Use your UC Merced single sign-on, after which most faculty users will go directly to this screen:

The screenshot shows the Slate Reader interface. On the left is a navigation sidebar with 'slate' at the top and a list of menu items: Home, Browse, Search, Queue, Recent, Share, Classify, Help, and Exit. The main content area has a header 'Hello, Chris Kello.' and three primary sections:

- Application Review Instructions:** A list of steps for reviewing applications, including clicking 'Queue', 'Search', 'Review Form', and 'Send to Bin'.
- Applications by Citizenship:** A pie chart showing 45.8% US Citizen (blue) and 54.2% Foreign National (green).
- The Slate Reader:** A section titled 'Navigating the Interface' and 'Using the Keyboard' that provides detailed instructions on how to use the application, including mouse and keyboard shortcuts.

There are very brief instructions on the left, and basic navigational instructions on the right (the pie widget will change over time, but it will show basic stats about current applications). You can always return to this home screen by clicking the **Slate logo** at top left.

From here, faculty can see all assigned applications (regardless of queue status) by clicking on the **Search** tab on the left. The **Queue** tab shows all applications in the user’s queue, and the **Browse** tab sorts applications according to their stage of review. Here is an example list of applications from **Search**:

slate	Applications (24)						Build Query	Classify	Refresh	-5	+5	Add to Queue (0)
Home	Name	Email	Program	Degree Objective	Submitted	Bin	Grad Div Review Completed					
Browse	UOMTest Abeigas, Brazen	applyvcn18+abeigas@gmail.com	Electrical Engineering and Com.	PHD	06/15/2018 08:44 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
Search	UOMTest Alvo, Cassandra	applyvcn18+alvo@gmail.com	Physics	PHD	06/15/2018 06:52 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
Queue	UOMTest Bieber, Justin	applyvcn18+bieber@gmail.com	Chemistry and Chemical Biology	PHD	06/15/2018 07:44 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
Recent	UOMTest Carey, Mariah	applyvcn18+carey@gmail.com	Environmental Systems	PHD	06/15/2018 05:48 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
Share	UOMTest Clooney, George	applyvcn18+clooney@gmail.com	Mechanical Engineering	PHD	06/15/2018 02:35 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
Classify	UOMTest Collins, Phil	applyvcn18+collins@gmail.com	Environmental Systems	PHD	06/15/2018 02:49 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
Help	UOMTest Coolidge, John Calvin	jccoolidge@example.com	Political Science	PHD		In Progress						
Exit	UOMTest Cruise, Tom	applyvcn18+cruise@gmail.com	Quantitative and Systems Biology	PHD	06/15/2018 06:07 PM	Faculty Review						
	UOMTest Fox, Megan	applyvcn18+fox@gmail.com	Quantitative and Systems Biology	PHD	06/15/2018 08:20 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
	UOMTest Hanks, Tom	applyvcn18+hanks@gmail.com	Environmental Systems	PHD	06/15/2018 03:48 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
	UOMTest Hayek, Salma	applyvcn18+hayek@gmail.com	Sociology	PHD	06/15/2018 08:36 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						
	UOMTest Henley, Don	applyvcn18+henley@gmail.com	Quantitative and Systems Biology	PHD	06/15/2018 08:03 PM	Awaiting Fee Waiver						

These are just some test applications, but the columns are self-explanatory—as noted in the overview, bins are stages of review. Faculty will not see applications in pre-review stages as shown above (e.g. Awaiting Fee Waiver).

You can sort on any of the columns by clicking on the column label. You can filter by graduate group by clicking on the “Default” dropdown list at the right, and choosing the desired group. You can also filter by review stage using the “All Bins” dropdown (or by click Browse), and you can create more specialized filters (e.g. by citizenship) using the Filter button.

To view an application, click on the **pages icon** in the right-most column of the search list. You should then see a version of the following screen:

The screenshot shows the Slate application review interface. On the left is a navigation sidebar with tabs: Applicant, Program, Resumes/CV, Transcripts, Test Scores, Purpose State..., Personal History, Rec Letters, Email Careers, Pre-Review (highlighted), Faculty Input, Cores/Chair, and Admissions. The main content area displays the applicant's information for '676017002 UCMTest Cruise, Tom'. The header includes 'UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA MERCED GRADUATE DIVISION' and 'Date Submitted 08/15/2018'. The applicant's name is 'UCMTest Cruise, Tom' with email 'applyuom18+cruise@gmail.com' and degree 'Quantitative and Systems Biol PhD'. Personal details include City: Norman, CA resident? No, Sex/DOB: M 04/01/1965, State: OH, UCM Undergrad?, Citizen: United States Citizen, Visa: UCM Undergrad?, Country: United States of America, Race/Ethnicity: White. The 'Academic Background' section lists School: UC Santa Cruz, City: Santa Cruz, Region: CA, Degree Date: Bachelor of Science 01/2005, School: UC Irvine, City: UC Irvine, Region: Out of, Degree Date: Out of. GRE Scores are Verbal: 155 %, Date/Type: 01/2017, Quant: 155 %, Self-Report, Writing: 4 %. TOEFL Scores are Listening: Reading: Writing: Speaking: Date/Type. Research Interests are listed under Topics (Microbiology and Immunology, Population Ecology, Genetics & Genomics, Systems Ecology) and Faculty (Dawson, Barlow, Jensen, LiWang, Blos). At the bottom left, there are buttons for 'Add to Queue' and 'Displaying Copy'. At the bottom right, there is an 'Additional Information' panel.

The cover page shown here is designed to capture the most relevant applicant info in one page. Click on the tabs on the left to see different parts of the complete application, and scroll left and right if there are multiple pages for a given tab.

To put the application in your queue, click on the **Add to Queue** button at the bottom left. Then click on the **Review Form / Send to Bin** button at the bottom left (not shown above, but it will be there if the application is in your queue). A form will appear on the right, and the content of the form will depend on the review stage and user role. For example, here is what a regular faculty member will see when an application is under Faculty Review:

The screenshot shows the Slate application review interface with the 'Faculty Review Processing' form open. The applicant information is the same as in the previous screenshot. The 'Additional Information' panel on the right contains the following fields: 'Level of Interest' (a dropdown menu), 'Strengths' (a text input field), 'Weaknesses' (a text input field), and 'Comments for Committee / Staff / Chair' (a text input field). Below these fields is a note: 'Add your input above and hit the SEND button, ignoring any messages or fields below.' A bullet point states: 'Hitting SEND will also remove the application from your personal queue. You can find it again through the search and browse functions.' A yellow warning box contains the text: 'This application currently resides in more than one queue. The application cannot be sent to a different bin or user until the other reviews have been completed.' At the bottom of the form, there are buttons for 'Send' and 'Draft Saved'. The bottom of the interface shows 'Current Bin: Faculty Review' and a 'Review Form / Send to Bin' button.

All faculty, including chairs, can add their level of interest, strengths and weaknesses, and any other comments for applications to their graduate programs. Inputs will be saved automatically, but not made visible to other users until clicking on the **Send** button. As instructed, regular faculty can ignore the highlighted message (we are unable to remove the message, but we have asked Slate to change their code base to remove it). After clicking **Send**, faculty input becomes available on the **Faculty Input** tab.

Faculty who are assigned as admissions committee members will see a similar input form when an application is at the Committee Review stage (i.e. bin). The Committee Review input form asks for an admissions recommendation among other self-explanatory inputs. Other faculty who are not chairs do not have access to the Committee Review input form, nor can they see the inputs submitted by admissions committee members—these inputs can only be seen by committee members.

Instructions for Chairs

Chairs have access to the forms and functions described above. In addition, chairs can advance applications to Committee Review or Chair Review by choosing from the “Next Bin” dropdown list at the bottom right, before clicking the Send button. By default, applications are not moved—they remain in the current stage of review.

NOTE! If a Chair wants to advance an application, but the Send button is not showing, that means the application is still in the queues of other faculty users. The Chair can remove the application from other queues by clicking on the applicant’s name at the top left, and then click on the Edit Bin/Queue link shown in red below as an example:

The screenshot displays the Slate application review interface for Justin Timberlake (UCMTest 786376973). The interface is divided into several sections:

- Contact Information:** Email: anolyucm18+timberlake@gmail.com, Phone: +1 209-228-4723 (mobile), Address: 12 W 9th, Merced, CA 95340, United States.
- Biographical Details:** Sex: Male, DOB: December 1, 1985 (Age 32), Citizenship: United States.
- Application Details:** Status: Applicant, Submitted: August 15, 2018.
- Application Status Table:**

Application	Status	Submitted
F19GR	Awaiting Decision	08/15/2018
- Deny Disposition(s) Dropdown:**
 - Below Program Standard
 - Incomplete File
 - Lack of Funding
 - Low Test Scores
 - Mismatch with Program
 - No Primary Advisor Available
 - Not Competitive
 - Unable to Accommodate
- Warning Box:** This application currently resides in more than one queue. The application cannot be sent to a different bin or user until the other reviews have been completed.
- Current Bin:** Faculty Review
- Buttons:** Send, Draft Saved

Slate will display a list of users who have the application in their queues, and the Chair can remove them just by hitting the X next to each name (not shown here, but easy and self-explanatory). Once the application is ONLY in the Chair’s queue, then the review form will show the Next Bin dropdown list. Simply choose where to advance the application and then click Send.

Slate also shows chairs an additional “Deny Disposition(s)” multi-select list. Applications that are eventually denied admissions must have associated rationale for auditing purposes. Chairs can add this rationale to applications at any time. Remember to submit your rationale by clicking Send.

When an application advances to Chair Review, only the Graduate Group Chair can add input and further advance an application to the Admit bin. The inputs include a multi-select list to nominate an application for one or more recruiting fellowships, along with paragraph text boxes for comments on the applicant’s fellowship qualifications and the graduate group’s fellowship selection process. The text entered or pasted in will be made available to the fellowship review committee(s), along with the application itself. Once again, chairs must click Send to submit their inputs and make their nominations. Here is an example that shows the Chair Review form with fellowship inputs and the Next Bin dropdown:

The screenshot displays the Slate application review interface for UC Merced Graduate Division. The main content area shows the following information:

Applicant Information:
 Applicant: Justin Timberlake, Justin
 Email: applyucm18+timberlake@gmail.com
 Date Submitted: 08/15/2018
 Faculty Review: Environmental Systems, PhD

Personal Information:
 City: Merced, CA resident? No, Sex/DOB: M 12/01/1985
 State: CA, UCM Undergrad? Yes
 Citizen: United States Citizen, Visa: First Generation? Yes
 Country: United States of America, Race/Ethnicity: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Academic Background:
 School: UC Merced, City: Merced, Region: CA, Degree Date: Bachelor of Science 05/2004
 GPA: 3, Out of: [blank], Degree Date: [blank]

GRE Scores:
 Verbal: 150 % (01/2017), Quant: 150 % (Self-Report), Writing: 3 %

TOEFL Scores:
 Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking

Research Interests:
 Topics: Ecology, ecosystems & biodiversity; Faculty: Cisneros

Additional Information Panel:
 Fellowship Nominations: Chancellor's, Earle C. Anthony, Fields Family, Grad Dean Recruitment, [selected], [selected], John and Victoria Ella, Renewable Energy, Southern Cal Edison
 Fellowship Qualifications: Enter qualifications here, as long as needed
 Fellowship Selection Process: Summarize process here, as long as needed
 Deny Disposition(s): Below Program Standard, Incomplete File, Lack of Funding, Low Test Scores, Mismatch with Program, No Primary Advisor Available, Not Competitive, Unable to Accommodate
 Send to Bin: Current Bin: Chair Review, Next Bin (required): Admit, Next Reader (optional): [blank]
 Send, Saving in 10s...