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:

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:

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 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:
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:

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: