

Name: Shamanth Chedde

UTORID: cheddes

Student #: 1003253445

A3 Formative Research Results

Summary

Number of Responses: 14

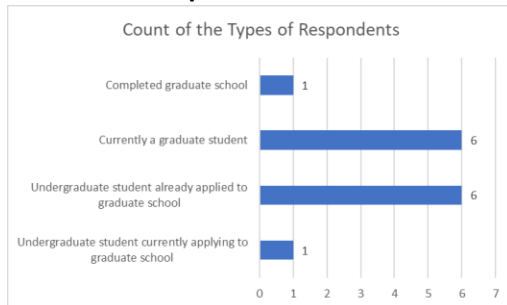


Figure 1: Classification of the Types of Participants

Participants were asked to select which graduate school they applied to. The total responses may be greater than the total number of participants because they were asked to select all that applied.

4 responded Professional School.

12 responded Master's Program

1 responded PhD program.

13 people responded "Yes" they were accepted into graduate school while 1 responded "No".

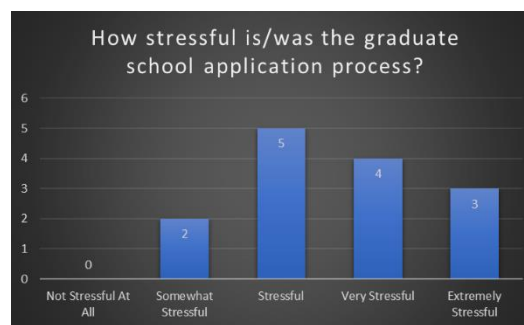
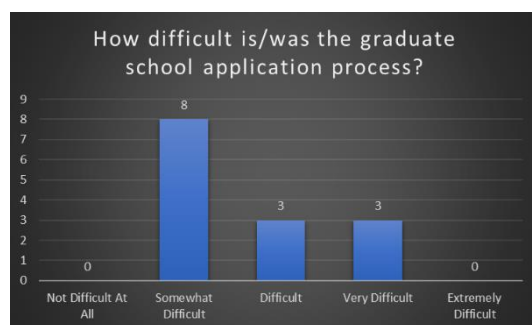


Figure 2: Participants response to how difficult and how stressful the application process was.

The two graphs above show how participants responded to rating how difficult and how stressful the graduate application process was. The tables below show the totals of how participants ranked the different parts of the graduate school application in terms of difficulty and stress (1 = least difficult/stressful, 5 = most difficult/stressful). The totals do not match the total number of responses (14) because some participants did not need to submit certain pieces for their graduate school application. The tables also show the mean, median and mode of the scores. Since some pieces did not need to be submitted as part of an application, it is important to take into account the total number of responses for that piece when considering the mean, median and mode of the scores.

Level of Difficulty	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Letters of Recommendation	2	2	5	2	2	13
Personal Statement	1	2	4	6	0	13
Interviews	1	2	2	1	1	7
Admissions Exams	0	0	1	1	2	4
Resume/CV	4	6	3	0	0	13

Level of Stress	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Letters of Recommendation	5	1	5	1	1	13
Personal Statement	1	2	5	4	1	13
Interviews	0	1	1	3	2	7
Admissions Exams	0	1	0	1	2	4
Resume/CV	7	5	1	0	0	13

Level of Difficulty	Mean	Median	Mode	Total
Letters of Recommendation	3.00	3	3	13
Personal Statement	3.15	3	4	13
Interviews	2.50	2.5	2	7
Admissions Exams	4.25	4.5	5	4
Resume/CV	1.92	2	2	13

Level of Stress	Mean	Median	Mode	Total
Letters of Recommendation	2.69	3.00	2	13
Personal Statement	3.15	3	3	13
Interviews	3.86	4	4	7
Admissions Exams	3.20	4	5	4
Resume/CV	1.54	1	1	13

Table 1: How participants ranked the difficult and stress of a piece of an application (left) and the mean, median and mode of those scores (right).

Below are some of the major themes that were identified in the following qualitative questions. Each response was analyzed, grouped according to major themes (e.g. Letters of Recommendation, Writing Resource) and, if possible, were sub-divided under those themes.

Name: Shamanth Chedde

UTORID: cheddesh

Student #: 1003253445

8. For the part that you ranked the most difficult (5), briefly explain why you found it the most difficult.

11. For the part that you ranked the most stressful (5), briefly explain why you found it the most stressful.

The top two themes were “Letters of Recommendation” with **6** related responses and “Personal Statement” with **3**. Two participants who ranked “Letters of Recommendation” as the most difficult found it hard to build rapport and select professors who would give good recommendations after only knowing each other for a short amount of time. The other four participants noted that time was an issue. Giving professors enough time to write a recommendation, professors not submitting the letters on time, and professors forgetting and having to chase them down were the major issues that were highlighted. One person noted that IT issues prevented them from submitting their letters on time. The three participants who ranked “Personal Statement” as the most difficult all found it difficult to articulate their interest for a field of study in a short and concise manner. When asked to elaborate on which piece they found the most stressful, participants cited the same reasons as to why it was difficult.

14. If you answered Yes to the question above, please specify some of the resources available to you.

Students were asked to specify if there were any resources available to them with their application. **10** participants responded “Yes” and they all similarly stated academic advisors, mentors, academic and careers offices, professors, friends and classmates, coworkers, workshops, and info sessions as resources.

15. If there were some resources that you didn't use, briefly explain why you didn't use them.

8 participants said they used the resources available to them while **6** said they did not. 5 participants elaborated on why they did not use some of the resources available to them. 2 participants said that available writing resources were closed, 1 person could afford to pay for the resources available, 1 respondent found misleading information about their program of choice online and 1 person felt the application process for them was straightforward.

Insights

From the research article selected for the literature review *Kisses of Death in the Graduate School Application Process*, the authors found that the two biggest reasons for a poor application were “Damaging Personal Statements” and “Harmful Letters of Recommendation.” It is evidenced in the survey results that students had difficulty with these two important pieces. *Table 1* shows that 9 and 10 participants ranked the difficulty of the “Letters of Recommendation” and “Personal Statement” respectively in the 3-5 range. However, *Table 1* shows that students were more stressed about the “Personal Statement” than the “Letters of Recommendation.” This could be explained because students do not need to complete the recommendation letters, but in questions 8 and 11, participants did express anxiousness when waiting for their references to submit their letters. *Figure 2* also supports this as it shows that even though most students did not find the application process too difficult, they were certainly stressed by it. This could be because the instructions to preparing an application may have been straight forward, however trying to complete individual tasks like personal statements, interviews and exams, and factors outside of the students’ control, such as waiting for professors to submit their letters and IT issues, could have contributed to the stress. The data from questions 8 and 11 show that students had difficulty with the personal statement because of the lack of knowledge and confidence in writing a strong one. This is a conclusion that was also reached in the research article. It is also no surprise that most students expressed very little difficulty and stress with “Resumes/CVs” as they probably have the confidence in creating one at this level of education. Lastly, students highlighted many writing resources which could be used to help them with their personal statements, interviews, and exams, however no tools were mentioned regarding the collection of reference letters.

Name: Shamanth Chedde

UTORID: cheddesh

Student #: 1003253445

Appendix

The raw data can be accessed via this link to a Google Spreadsheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PbEH39N0QiBtqL8nSSQ1BXjG2IvD8uR8hZMTAmeEI78/edit?usp=sharing>

References:

Appleby, D. C., & Appleby, K. M. (2006). Kisses of Death in the Graduate School Application Process. *Teaching of Psychology*, 33(1), 19–24. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top3301_5