Agricultural and Biological Engineering – Purdue University Frequently Asked Questions

Note: Many frequently asked questions have to do with application requirements. These are listed on our Application Requirements page. See also the Graduate School's FAQs page.

General Program Questions

What would I study in the Agricultural and Biological Engineering department?

Our department encompasses a number of disciplines. Our faculty and students are engaged in research on everything from biosensing for cancer detection to GIS mapping for watershed management, from computer modeling of fluid power systems to heat and mass transfer in food, and much more! To learn more about the breadth and depth of our department, see our Research Areas.

Application Materials

What application materials do I need to submit?

The following application materials are required:

- Online application – which should include:
  - Resume/CV
  - Statement of purpose - Please provide a statement of approximately 500 words that addresses the following:
    1. Describe your broad scientific interests, including what motivates you to pursue them.
    2. Describe your future career plans or goals as they relate to your scientific interests in (1) and explain why you need to pursue graduate studies to achieve them.
    3. Describe your technical background such as courses, internships, or research that inform your decision.
    4. Describe specific research interests in the Agricultural and Biological Engineering Department, including up to three potential mentors and how their programs relate to your broad scientific interests in (1).
    5. Provide additional background information that may support your success in graduate school (e.g. communication or organization skills that were acquired from academic and non-academic activities). Also explain any extenuating circumstances that help understand your application.
  - -
- 3 letters of recommendation
- Official transcripts for all institutions attended (even if no degree was/has been earned)
  - International applicants:

- Include degree and/or diploma certificates as applicable.
- Please include original language version(s) and certified English translations if your original is not in English.
- International applicants: Official TOEFL (reporting code 1631; no departmental code is needed), or IELTS (academic module) scores.

For further details on application requirements, score reporting codes, etc., visit our application requirements page.

Do I need to have all my materials ready before submitting my application?

No. You may submit your application any time after the mandatory information from you has been entered (your contact information, degree information, etc., and payment has been made).   Letters of recommendation can be submitted later, either using the SLATE online system. It *is* recommended, however, that you submit your resume/CV and statement of purpose with the online application.

Do I need to submit all supporting documents at the same time?

No. You may submit each document when ready and we will collect all documents into a complete file.

How will I know when/whether my materials have been received?

We will update your application record in Purdue's online application system as materials are received. It can take up to a week to note items once received, as materials are reviewed and catalogued periodically. We appreciate your patience in the process. You may check your application at any time to see if any materials are missing.

Do electronic documents need to be sent in hard copy form as well?

No. Anything submitted online (resume, statement of purpose, official test scores, recommendations) does not need to be duplicated in paper form.

Should I complete the Diversity essay?

This essay is a requirement for eligibility for some fellowships; therefore, applicants to ABE who received their high school diploma from an accredited U.S. high school are encouraged to complete the Diversity Essay in the Graduate School application. For more information on some of the fellowships available that require this essay, visit the fellowship information overview and the fellowship FAQ.

How should recommendation letters be sent to ABE?

The best way is for recommenders to use the SLATE online application system to upload their recommendation. You will have the opportunity to input an email address for each of your recommenders when you complete the online application. If that is not possible, recommenders may email recommendations directly to our Graduate Program Administrator. See our application requirements page for current contact information.

Should I list specific faculty members with whom I would like to study, on the application?

Yes. While this application field is optional, it is very helpful to us in considering your application, since students are not admitted just to the department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, but to a specific professor's research group. Visit our Faculty by Area of Interest page.

What is the institution code and department code for reporting test scores?

Exam reporting requirements, options, and codes are available on our Application Requirements page. Please note that for scores reported to the university electronically, no department code is required. However, if your test administration does not allow for leaving the department code blank, any entry will be fine. Regardless of which department code you enter, we will be able to access your scores if received electronically by Purdue.

I am an international student who is currently studying at a U.S. institution or who previously earned a degree from a U.S. institution. Do I still need to submit TOEFL scores?

The Graduate School will routinely waive the TOEFL/IELTS for applicants who have received a baccalaureate degree or graduate or professional degree, within the last 36 months **at the time of recommendation for admission**, from a school where English is the primary language of instruction in a country/location where English is the native language.

Note that this policy states that the degree was **previously earned**. For students *currently* pursuing a degree in one of the above-listed countries, admission will be conditional upon receiving, by the first day of classes, either (a) proof of a conferred degree or (b) a letter from the Office of the Registrar or Graduate School (or equivalent offices) indicating that all degree requirements have been met.

I took the TOEFL previously. Do I need to re-take it?

TOEFL scores are valid for two years at the time the recommendation for admission is received at the Graduate School. If your scores are older than this, you will need to re-take the TOEFL (or other approved language exam) and have scores sent to Purdue.

Application Process

What is the department's application review process?

Our review process has two stages. In the first stage, a student's application materials are reviewed for overall admissibility. For those approved at this stage, the application is made available to department faculty members. In the second stage, faculty members with open positions review these approved applicants (i.e., those who have passed the first stage) to determine if a suitable match is possible. At the same time, approved applicants should directly contact faculty members whose research interests them.

When do I need to submit my application? (What is the application deadline?)

For Fall admission, the deadline is Dec. 1. Our application deadlines are posted on our [Application Requirements](#) page.

Should I contact faculty members? When?

Yes! You may contact faculty members at any time, but bear in mind that most faculty will prefer that you first demonstrate serious interest in our department by applying for admission. Therefore, we suggest that you first learn from our website about faculty research programs, then begin contacting faculty members while working on the application for admission.

How long does the application review process take?

Depending on when you apply, and once we have received **all your application materials**, initial review of your application takes from two to three weeks—but see also [What is the department's application review process?](#)

I am interested in multiple departments at Purdue. How should I apply?

At Purdue, each applicant is able to select up to three programs or departments to be considered for admission. ABE will consider applications whether they are a student's first, second, or third choices.

Admission (Rates, Selectivity, etc.)

My GPA is _____. Can I be admitted? Can I receive funding?

We review applications holistically, considering not only GPA and test scores but also research and work experience, strength of fit with our department (research interests), and other items. Therefore, there are no set minimums which guarantee admission or funding. However, a 3.0 undergraduate GPA is required for admission, with very few exceptions.

What is the department's selectivity/admission rate?

The rate of admission varies among our research areas and between faculty members. Please note that strong interest from an ABE faculty member who has funding for you is the easiest way to ensure admission. Please reach out to the faculty to inquire about open positions and research projects.

My bachelor's degree was not in engineering. May I still apply?

Yes. (1) Our Agricultural Systems Management degree is a non-engineering degree and thus does not require an engineering bachelor's degree. (2) In addition, it is sometimes possible to gain admission to one of our engineering degrees with a non-engineering bachelor's degree. This may require additional engineering coursework (see our current [graduate manual](#)). You will need strong support from an ABE faculty member in order to be admitted by this path.

Funding

What kind of funding is available to applicants?

The majority of funding for students in our program is in the form of research assistantships, funded through research grants obtained and managed by individual faculty members. Additionally, some of our most distinguished students are funded by fellowships. There are few teaching assistantships available, and these are typically awarded to students already enrolled in our department. In addition to these sources, you are encouraged to apply directly to outside fellowship bodies, such as the National Science Foundation.

May I be considered for funding (assistantships, fellowships, etc.)?

All applicants to ABE are automatically considered for a variety of funding options as part of the application review process. We do not, however, make "pre-determinations" regarding funding (or admission). Fellowship eligibility is based on the requirements set forth by the funding source. Requirements can be found on the Fellowships Office website.