

FALL 2026 ENTRY TERM

Instructions for Completing a Graduate Program Application for Admission

W&M's Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences at VIMS

Key Dates

- Online Application Open Date – Monday September 15, 2025
- Application Deadline – Monday December 1, 2025
 - **Online Application**
 - **Recommendation Letters**
 - **Transcript**
 - **Blocked Question Responses**
 - **Resume/CV**
- Round 1 Review: Application Review by Faculty – Begins Friday December 5, 2025
- Round 2 Review: Application Review by Admission Committee – Begins Monday January 5, 2026
- Round 3 Review: Invitations for Interview/Campus Visit – Begins Friday January 30, 2026
- Notification of Admission Decision – Begins Friday March 6, 2026; Concludes Wednesday April 1, 2026
- Offer of Admission Acceptance Deadline – Wednesday April 15, 2026

Application Evaluation Rubric

As indicated above, your submitted application packet will contain many elements. These collective components will aid the Admission Committee in evaluating the following attributes as part of their rubric. Please be sure to keep these traits in mind as you complete your application.

- **Perseverance, Maturity, and Independence** - Demonstrates ability to succeed in spite of challenges and/or ability to balance potentially competing obligations/workload.
- **Leadership and/or Contribution** - Shows initiative by taking key roles in activities or events and/or participates in optional activities linked to service, volunteerism, research, etc.
- **Collaboration** - Evidence of ability to collaborate in group/team settings.
- **Communication** - Demonstrates the capacity to effectively communicate, using written or oral skills, in a professional setting (e.g., scientific audiences, journals, the general public), or a record of improvement that suggests potential.
- **Institutional educational and research alignments** – Experience and coursework thus far suggests that applicant can succeed in the education and research setting at the Batten School & VIMS, or can readily address any gaps to enable success (e.g., through additional trainings, mentoring, coursework).

Application Components

1. Starting an Online Application (Required)

Use the link "Apply Online" on the left sidebar of the Admissions webpage to access the online application, or use this URL: <http://www.vims.edu/education/graduate/admissions/index.php>

Once you create a username/password, you will be able to begin your application. Please make sure that you select the "Batten School of Coastal & Marine Science and VIMS" option when the portal asks you to identify which school you would like to apply to. Your application can be completed in one or more sessions before it is submitted. You will also be able to use the application portal to check the status of your application package once your application has been submitted.

You may only apply to one of our available graduate programs.

- Master of Arts (M.A.)
- Master of Science (M.S.)
- Master of Science (M.S.) with intention to bypass to Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

2. Letters of Recommendation (Required)

Letters are requested automatically through the online application portal. These recommendation letters must be received no later than the same date as the application deadline, Monday December 1, 2025.

It is very important that you ask your referees for letters early and explain to them that they will receive a direct request for a letter from W&M's Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences at VIMS. We strongly suggest you contact your references no later than early November in order to meet the Monday December 1, 2025 submission deadline.

You will need three (3) letters of recommendation from individuals qualified to judge your scholarly and professional capabilities/potential. Requests for letters will be sent automatically as soon as you enter the contact information for your references and then select "Save and Continue" within the online application. Your references will receive an email notification directly from the system with instructions on how to complete the letter of recommendation using our online portal.

Occasionally, recommendation letter requests will be sorted into the junk email folder. Therefore, it is always good practice for you to follow up with each referee to ensure receipt of the request from our system. If the person providing your letter of recommendation indicates that they did not receive an email from W&M's Batten School at VIMS, please ask them to first check in their junk folder. Any questions may be directed to admissions@vims.edu.

3. Transcripts (Required)

You must include a transcript for each college or university attended regardless of the number of credits completed. Transcripts are not required for any high school dual enrollment credits.

Official vs. Unofficial Transcripts

Applicants are encouraged to submit an official transcript as part of their application materials. While unofficial transcripts are acceptable at the time of application, official transcripts will be required prior to the start of classes for all individuals entering the graduate program.

Transcripts are only considered “official” if sent directly from your college or university to W&M’s Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences. Most institutions, particularly those in the United States, provide official transcripts through a certified electronic platform. The two most common platforms are the National Student Clearinghouse and Parchment. Instructions on how to request a transcript will be available on your college or university’s website. If submitting an unofficial transcript, you will upload the file(s) as part of the application process.

The Admission Committee may request updated transcripts for any student who completed coursework in Fall 2025 once final grades are available.

International Transcripts

To expedite the evaluation of records of students educated outside the United States, English translations of transcripts must be provided. The translation should include degree enrolled or completed, dates/terms of enrollment, course/modules taken, credits attempted, credits earned, and grades earned. Where transcripts do not give these details, the transcripts must be accompanied by an official statement explaining how the scholastic record may be compared to that of William & Mary. Details must be given as to whether the courses are given on a semester system (15 credits per semester, 30 per year, 120 for graduation), quarter system (15 credits per semester, 45 per year, 180 for graduation), or another basis. In addition, the grading scale must be explained showing the grade equivalence in terms of A (highest), B, C, D (passing), and F (failing).

Review of Transcripts

Previous academic performance is one measure used to assess if an applicant can succeed in a rigorous graduate program. The most successful applicants to our program have a GPA of 3.25 or better on a 4.00 scale, and have taken sufficient mathematics and science coursework to enter an intensive graduate science program.

All applications are holistically reviewed to assess preparation for graduate-level study in marine science. The Admission Committee recognizes Grade Point Average (GPA) may not fully reflect an applicant's ability or academic preparation. Applicants may use the optional block question contained in the application to provide any additional contextual information related to their academic preparation, particularly as it may relate to academic performance or extenuating circumstances.

4. Blocked Questions in Application (Required)

Each applicant is required to submit responses to five block questions as part of their application. M.A. applicants must also respond to a sixth question. Each individual question response is limited to 250 words. The use of AI is forbidden when responding to these questions.

Applicants are encouraged to write their responses in Microsoft Word (or another text platform) and then copy and paste those responses directly into the online application.

Required Questions (All Applicants)

- Explain how you have been able to succeed in spite of challenges and/or you were able to balance potentially competing obligations.
- Describe a time when you took on the role of leader or key contributor in an activity or project related to any professional or personal endeavor.
- Describe your experience with communication, written and oral, in a professional setting, and what audience(s) you have engaged.
- Tell us how your education and job/volunteer experiences have prepared you for a graduate degree in marine science.
- Explain what interests you about the graduate program at VIMS, why you selected your prospective advisor(s) (for M.S. or Ph.D. applicants only) or your topic of study, and how a graduate degree in marine science fits into your future career goals.

Required Question (M.A. Applicants Only)

- What specific areas of research at the Batten School & VIMS are most interesting to you as an M.A. student? How could you see these fitting into an M.A. Capstone project that leverages your expertise and interests?

Optional Question (All Applicants)

- Please let us know if there is any other pertinent information, not already contained in your other materials, that provides context for aspects of your application that you feel needs more explanation.

5. Resume or CV (Required)

Each applicant must submit a professional resume or CV that highlights your education, experience, and other relevant information. This document is uploaded by you as a .pdf file within the online application.

6. English Language Proficiency (Required for International Applicants Only)

Each international applicant must demonstrate English language proficiency in one or more of the following ways: completion of a bachelor's or master's degree for which the primary language of instruction was in English, TOEFL exam score, Duolingo exam score, or IELTS exam score. Supporting documentation should be uploaded as part of your application as a .pdf file.

Questions?

Please reach out to us if you have any questions!

Office for Academic Affairs – Admissions
W&M Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences at VIMS
admissions@vims.edu
(804) 684-7256