INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in the SANS Technology Institute’s master’s degree programs. The application process typically requires several hours of work to prepare the necessary documents, write the required outcomes statement and leadership essay, and create the short admissions video presentation. This document leads you through the required steps in the process, and may be used as a checklist for completion.

REQUIRED STEPS IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Before you complete the application materials, please confirm you meet the criteria required of all applicants:

- You have earned a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university (or the international equivalent), with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.8.
- You have at least 12 months of professional work experience in information technology, information security, or audit.
- You are currently employed or have access to an organizational environment that allows you to apply the concepts and hands-on technical skills learned during the master’s program.

The following are the required steps to complete your application to the SANS Technology Institute:

1. Fill out the Personal Information Form (www.sans.edu/downloads/personal_information_form.pdf).
2. Update your resume.
3. Write the Application Essays & Writing Samples (see page 3).
4. Create the Short Video Presentation (see page 4).
5. (Optional) If you will be applying for one or more waivers, include a description of the waivers you anticipate after reading the “Admissions Process – Guide to Waivers” form, available at www.sans.edu/downloads/guide_to_waivers.pdf.
6. (Optional) TOEFL or IELTS scores, if English is not your native language (see page 5).
7. Submit the above items to admissions@sans.edu.
8. Request that your college/university submit official transcripts* directly to:
   The SANS Technology Institute
   Attn: Graduate Admissions
   PO Box 124575
   San Diego, CA 92112
9. Acquire and submit a letter of recommendation from your employer, or one of your customers or partners if you are self-employed (see page 4).
10. Pay a non-refundable application fee of US$100. A check or money order, payable to the SANS Technology Institute, may be submitted to the following address (8120 Woodmont Ave, Ste 310, Bethesda, MD, 20814), or you may call 301.654.7267 to arrange for credit card payment.

*International Students must first have their transcripts evaluated by World Education Services.
AFTER YOU SUBMIT YOUR COMPLETED APPLICATION

The Admissions Committee will only begin evaluation of an application upon final receipt of all necessary components. Once an application is complete, the admissions committee typically takes 30-60 days to finalize a decision.

If the Admissions Committee votes to approve your application, you will receive a formal “Offer of Admission,” requiring your signature and return. The “Offer of Admission” letter will be contingent, however, on the scheduling and completion of a discussion with the Provost or another student advisor. This discussion has two purposes:

1. Create the plan you will follow during your first year. During this discussion, you will create a detailed Course of Study Plan for the your first twelve months in the program, noting where and when you intend to take courses, including how any waivers might apply or affect the timing of required activities. This Course of Study Plan, together with your outcomes statement, will be used to review your progress during and after the first year of your enrollment.

2. Confirm you are able to invest the time and resources required to engage in the program. Your discussion with the Provost or another student advisor will review your ability to engage in your Course of Study Plan, given the time and funding required to complete the program.

Once the applicant and Provost (or another student advisor) agree and mutually approve your Course of Study Plan, the applicant will return the signed Offer of Admission letter and the signed Course of Study Plan to admissions@sans.edu, at which point you will be formally matriculated into the master’s program.

Upon matriculation, you will have 60 days to begin registering for courses, and must register and pay for at least three credit hours in order to confirm your matriculation.

CONCLUSION

The SANS Technology Institute aspires to be the preeminent graduate institution translating contemporary information security practice and scholarship into effective educational experiences. Attracting and selecting the very best candidates for our program are critical elements to achieve this goal. We thank you for your interest, and wish you success with your application. Should you have questions during the application process, please email admissions@sans.edu.
Application Essays & Writing Samples

OVERVIEW

Applicants to the master’s programs are required to submit two short essays. In the first essay, the applicant should describe his/her desired goals for applying to the program. In the second essay, the applicant should describe his/her management skills and past demonstrations of leadership. These topics will enable us to evaluate the match between your goals and skills and the type of graduate we seek to develop: a person who seeks to design and implement security defenses in their organization, and has the technical proficiency, along with the team management, communication and persuasion skills, to be effective.

In addition to allowing us to learn more about you, the review of these essays is an essential tool in our ability to evaluate the quality of your writing, including your ability to organize unstructured information, to frame an argument, and to persuade others of your point of view. Our evaluation of your application essays ensures that we admit students only when we believe they are sufficiently prepared for the multiple applied research papers in the master’s programs, and that they have or can develop the writing skills necessarily required of an effective manager.

FIRST ESSAY – GOALS AND OUTCOMES STATEMENT

Provide an organized and thoughtful Outcome Statement in two pages detailing your expectations for a return on your investment in earning a master’s degree in information security. Why are you choosing to do this? Your goals should be specific, realistic, time-related, and if possible, measurable. Integrate how your professional and/or personal background and experiences led to this choice, and how they relate to your desired outcomes.

SECOND ESSAY – LEADERSHIP AND CYBERSECURITY

We aspire to develop engineers and managers who can be leaders in our industry. To help ground so broad a term, the Past President of the SANS Technology Institute, Stephen Northcutt, wrote a Leadership Essay to help characterize and expand upon our definition of leadership. Please read his essay and explore some of the resources he suggests. Then, write two to three single-spaced pages in your own words about your own preferred definition(s) of leadership, some competencies where you believe you have strengths, and also the competencies you would most like to develop. Relate each competency to personal and/or professional experience, or discuss how you intend to use the master’s program and your work experience over the next three years to further your leadership goals. Include a discussion of why ‘leadership’, rather than just ‘engineering’ or ‘management’, is particularly important in the information security field at this time.

FORMAT FOR THE ESSAYS

Please list at the top of the first page the relevant title (above), your name, and the date. Please use single-spaced paragraphs with a double space between them. Font should be 11 point, in Times New Roman, or Calibri, or Arial. Of course, be mindful of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and syntax, which are essential fundamentals to our evaluations. Please save the final documents in pdf format.
Video Presentation Sample

OVERVIEW

An important part of developing leaders to strengthen enterprise and global information security is ensuring the ability to communicate. The STI Master’s programs are designed to improve both written and oral presentation communication skills while providing a strong, hands-on technical base to candidates. Your leadership essay and outcome statement provide us with a baseline on your written communications skills, and this 3-5 minute video presentation will baseline your oral presentation skills.

REQUIREMENTS

Please prepare and record a 3-5 minute video on any subject of your choosing. You can make a video presentation of your outcome statement or leadership essay, create a how-to video, describe a belief or opinion you hold, or tell us about something of interest to you. The subject of the video and its quality is less important than the video's role in enabling the admissions committee to sample your current oral presentation and speaking skills in a professional environment. Please feel free to use a phone or even your computer's webcam to execute the video. Slide presentations are neither required nor encouraged.

When complete, please upload the video into Vimeo and submit the appropriate URL and password for viewing. Please see the Vimeo website for acceptable video recording parameters.

Letter of Recommendation

OVERVIEW

The letter of recommendation is required to provide a candid viewpoint of an applicant’s personal characteristics, performance and experience, strengths, capabilities, and professional promise. The optimal recommendation is written by someone who has supervised your work, served as a mentor, or worked closely with you, and has been in a position to observe your performance.

REQUIREMENTS

The writer should explain his or her relationship with you, and in particular should highlight whether that relationship was managerial or academic or other and describe the amount of time they were able to observe your performance. The recommendation would optimally include commentary not just on your technical skills but important personal characteristics such as integrity, initiative, and judgment. It should also address specific areas of strength or special experiences/projects on which the candidate has worked, and how well you work with other people on teams. In lieu of writing a separate letter of recommendation, the person recommending you may submit our Employer Recommendation Form. In either case, the recommendation should be submitted directly to the SANS Technology Institute by mail to the above address or to admissions@sans.edu (referencing your name in the subject line).
If English is not your Native Language

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is required for Applicants whose native language is not English. We require a minimum score requirement of 100 (Internet-based test) over-all with each of the sub-categories (Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing) preferred to be at a minimum of 25 each. The test scores must be sent to us directly by the testing agency.

IELTS can be used as a substitute for TOEFL. We require a minimum score requirement of 7.5 over-all with each of the sub-categories in IELTS preferred to be at a minimum of 7.5 each. IELTS scores must be sent to us directly by the testing agency.

In addition, the writing quality of the Outcomes and Leadership essay is an important element in our evaluation of any student’s application, and we have found that TOEFL scores are not always consistent with graduate-level writing skills required by our program, so we encourage non-native English speakers to consider the strength of the written English skills as well as their oral communication capabilities.