

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 essays, 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.

Admission Requirements

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

- Have at least 12 months of professional work experience in information technology, information security, or audit.
- Be employed or have current access to an organizational environment that allows you to apply the concepts and hands-on technical skills learned during the master's program.
- Have earned a baccalaureate degree from a recognized accredited college or university, or the international equivalent), with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.8.
- Applicants who have attended SANS training events in the past and/or hold current GIAC certifications or select industry-recognized certifications should review the [Guide to Waivers](#).

Application Process

All application materials, with the exception of the application fee and official transcripts, will be submitted electronically. All applicants must submit the following:

- A. Application Form
 - To log into the graduate application portal, you must create a SANS account at <https://www.sans.org/account/create>. If you already have an account, please log into the graduate application using your SANS credentials.
 - The application can be found online at apply.sans.edu and you will be directed through each step. The application will not be reviewed for admission until all supporting documents arrive.
- B. Current Resume
 - Please submit a current resume that highlights your related work experience in information security.
- C. Letter of Recommendation
 - Request a Letter of Recommendation from your employer, or one of your customers or partners if you are self-employed. Applicants will request this through the application portal and you will need the recommender's email address. See page 3 for further instruction.
- D. Essays and Writing Samples
 - Goals and Outcomes Statement (see page 3 for instruction)
 - Leadership Essay (see page 3 for instruction)
- E. Video Presentation

- Students should record and submit a video sample (see page 4 for guidelines)
- F. Official Transcripts
- Students must submit official transcripts from all colleges or universities where a degree was conferred.
 - Digital copies of official transcripts may be submitted to admissions@sans.edu. Transcripts must be sent directly from a school or authorized sender.
 - If your school does not allow for electronic delivery, you can request official transcripts be mailed directly to:

SANS Technology Institute
Attn: Graduate Admissions
P.O. Box 124575
San Diego, CA 92112
 - If submitting a transcript using FedEx or UPS, please contact admissions@sans.edu to request the alternate mailing address.
- G. Application Fee
- Applicants must submit the non-refundable application fee of \$100 before an application will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee. You can submit your application fee online through our [payment suite](#).

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 recommender 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, you will submit an electronic request through the application portal. Your recommender will receive an email with a form to complete.

Application Essays and 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.

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 master's degree in information security. What drives you to pursue this degree program? Your goals should be specific, realistic, time-related, and if possible, measureable. Integrate how your professional and/or personal background and experiences led to this choice, and how they relate to the desired outcomes. This should be 1-2 pages in length.

Leadership Essay

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 describe 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. This should be 2-3 pages in length.

Essay Format

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

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.

Note: Reading directly from a prepared script is discouraged and is viewed negatively by the admission committee.

Requirements

Please prepare and record a 3-5 minute video on a skill that you possess or something of interest to you. This can be a technical skill related to information security or non-technical such as a hobby or trade that you enjoy. Examples include: Address resolution protocol, mining search engine results, or hobby skills such as how to tie a knot or bake a cake.

The video serves as a 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.

Application Review and Admissions

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 days to finalize a decision.

If the Admissions Committee votes to approve your application, you will receive a formal "Offer of Admission" letter via mail and electronic notification in the application portal. The Offer of Admission will be contingent on the scheduling and completion of a discussion with your assigned 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 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 your Course of Study Plan is approved, the applicant will accept the Offer of Admission through the application portal 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.

Requirements for International Students

Transcript Evaluation

Students who completed their undergraduate degrees outside of the United States must submit transcripts for evaluation to [World Education Services \(WES\)](#) before completing their application package.

Non-native English Speakers

Admission to the master's degree programs at the SANS Technology Institute requires that applicants are not merely proficient, but fluent, in standard written and spoken English. Certain courses include long-form research papers -- written and graded in English -- and public, oral presentations at SANS conferences where the effective communication of often subtle technical and non-technical topics is critical to success. Generally, because we are not equipped to accommodate papers or presentations that are written in a foreign language, we typically dissuade non-native speakers from applying when they are notably shy of fluency. We wish that we were able to offer our programs in different languages, but our faculty is made up of primarily native English speakers, which precludes us from working with students who may in all other respects be a good match.

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.

We ask for two essays as part of the application process to supplement the submission of TOEFL scores in part because we have found that TOEFL scores are not always consistent with graduate-level writing skills required by our program. We encourage non-native English speakers to consider the strength of their written English skills as well as their oral communication capabilities.

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.