

Accelerated Master's-ASPECT PhD Sequence

First year Master's students currently enrolled and in good-standing in a Master's program at Virginia Tech (preferably a Master's program from an ASPECT Core Department) and conducting Master's-level research related to ASPECT's interdisciplinary and theory-oriented programmatic concentrations can submit a **pre-application** to the ASPECT PhD program at the end of their first year of Master's coursework. The pre-application is due no later than **May 1**.

If the ASPECT Graduate Admissions Committee determines that the student seems to be a good match for ASPECT, it will offer the student a **provisional recommendation**. The student will then be encouraged to submit her/his full and final application to the ASPECT PhD program the following year and will be given full consideration for admission on the condition that she/he eventually completes her/his Master's degree and that her/his final application is deemed competitive and worthy of admission by the ASPECT Graduate Admissions Committee. Please note that a **provisional recommendation** is **neither** a promise of admission **nor** a guarantee of funding should the student eventually be admitted. These decisions can only be made during the normal review of the full and final application by the ASPECT Admissions Committee and the Graduate School, which once again takes place after the completed final application has been received, normally in year 2 of a Master's student's course of study (and by February 1 of that year).

Requirements for pre-application:

First year students in a Master's program at Virginia Tech must submit the following documentation:

1. A cover letter/statement of purpose (about two pages long) that explains the student's interest in the ASPECT PhD.
2. A copy of the student's undergraduate transcripts and of the partial Master's transcript at VT.
3. A term/research paper produced in one of the student's Master's level courses (and which the student deems representative of her/his graduate level work/research).
4. Two (2) letters of recommendation, including at least one letter from a faculty member at Virginia Tech who can speak to the student's coursework at the graduate level.
5. Pre-application materials are due no later than May 1 in the ASPECT office. They cannot be submitted through the Graduate School application system.

Criteria for eligibility:

- The accelerated Master's-ASPECT PhD sequence and pre-application process is open to full-time Master's students only.
- Master's students must be in good standing at the time of their application and have a minimum 3.40 GPA in their current Master's program.
- Students can pursue the Master's-ASPECT PhD accelerated sequence with or without departmental or ASPECT funding.

- Master's students who are on GTA funding at the time of their pre-application will normally be funded by their home (Master's granting) department while they are Master's students.
- Master's students who are pursuing the ASPECT Certificate program are eligible for this ASPECT pre-application process.
- Undergraduate students on a departmental BA-Master's accelerated track are not eligible for the Master's-ASPECT PhD sequence.

Possible timeline for accelerated Master's-ASPECT PhD sequence:

Year 1: Student enters Master's program, preferably in one of ASPECT's Core Departments.

Second semester of Year 1 (normally, Spring semester): Student submits pre-application to ASPECT PhD program by May 1 (see above requirements and eligibility criteria).

Year 2: If student has received encouraging feedback and recommendation about her/his potential for success in ASPECT PhD based on review of pre-application, student can complete the full regular application for ASPECT via the Graduate School system by no later than February 1 (please note that the full application to ASPECT requires more materials than the Master's-PhD sequence pre-application). Master's student may be encouraged to take a few ASPECT relevant courses in Year 2. Student must complete Master's degree prior to starting ASPECT PhD program. Note: a Master's student who has been encouraged to pursue application for ASPECT based on pre-application review may be considered for ASPECT GTA funding, if available, and following consultation with Master's-granting department.

Year 3: Admitted student has obtained her/his Master's degree, starts ASPECT PhD program, and continues required coursework. Student may or may not be on GTA funding through ASPECT. Student should be able to complete most coursework by end of Year 3 (or second full semester in ASPECT).

Year 4: Student should have completed all ASPECT coursework, defended the dissertation proposal, and taken preliminary written and oral exams by end of Year 4 (officially, end of Year 2 in ASPECT).

Year 5: Student continues to work on dissertation and defends dissertation by end of Year 5 (officially, end of Year 3 in ASPECT). Student should be able to graduate by end of Year 5.

[Year 6, if needed: student continues to work on dissertation with a view to defending it and graduating asap. Student who was funded by Master's program and/or ASPECT in previous years may petition ASPECT for another semester of funding, if needed, and if student is in good standing (must be at least ABD and close to dissertation completion). Student may also be able to petition a Core ASPECT Department for funding. No guarantee can be offered ahead of time regarding funding during year 6].