

# GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

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# SOME GENERAL TIPS

- Know what you are doing & why you are doing
  - ▶ Academic career? Business career?
- Consult with your professors
  - ▶ Online rankings can be outdated, gossips can be wrong . . .
  - ▶ Schools can be great in some sub-fields, but not in others
  - ▶ You may have better prospects in specific schools
- Plan & organize ***well in advance***
  - ▶ Keep it tidy, keep it classy, keep it error-free
- Mainstream route toward an academic career varies over disciplines
  - ▶ In *Economics* . . .
    - ▶ Undergrad ~~→~~ PhD
    - ▶ Undergrad → Master's → PhD

# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- The only part of your application to explain yourself
  - ▶ Use it wisely, use it concisely
- Express your *motivation*, *enthusiasm* and *strengths*
  - ▶ Don't repeat what's already on your transcript or CV
  - ▶ Don't be apologetic
    - ▶ Everyone fails
    - ▶ How you handle failure makes all the difference
  - ▶ Don't show off with fancy English
    - ▶ Show that you can express yourself properly
  - ▶ Display evidence on what you write whenever possible
    - ▶ Your philanthropy claim (e.g. for a development economics program) will be more credible if you have first-hand experience (e.g. tutoring poor pupils)

# STANDARDIZED TESTS

- Different applications require different tests
  - ▶ TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, GMAT
  - ▶ Plan well in advance (things *can* go south!)
- Necessary but not sufficient
  - ▶ No institution will admit you *only* because of your TOEFL or GRE scores
  - ▶ They could make a difference for border-line decisions, funding . . .
- Fields can have specific preferences, and evaluators do know their applicant pool
  - ▶ For a graduate program in economics
    - ▶ Ace the Quantitative Reasoning part of GRE! (167+)
    - ▶ Try to do your best on the Analytical Writing part of GRE (4.0+)
    - ▶ Try not to fail terribly on the Verbal Reasoning part of GRE (151+)
    - ▶ Score no less than 100 on TOEFL IBT
    - ▶ 25+ on the Speaking part of TOEFL IBT could help for funding/assistantship

# U.S. VERSUS EUROPEAN GRADUATE PROGRAMS

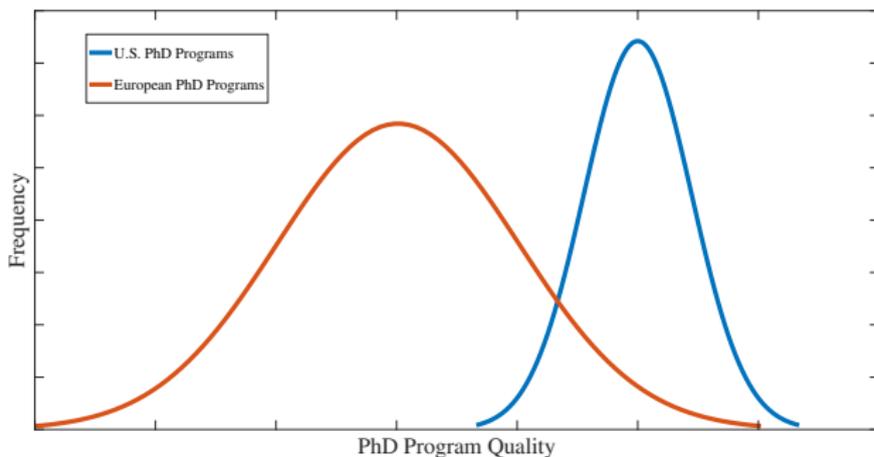
- Important Transatlantic differences in Master's vs PhD Programs
  - ▶ For a **PhD** in Economics, we tend to recommend American programs over European ones
  - ▶ For preparation towards an academic career in economics, we recommend *select* European **master's programs** over American ones
    - ▶ LSE, UCL, Cambridge, Oxford, Warwick, Bonn, Mannheim, Humboldt, Tilburg, Tinbergen, UPF, Bocconi, PSE, Toulouse, Sciences Po, ...
- European master's programs tend to be more *academic-oriented* than American ones (except for a few, e.g. Duke, ...)
- Funding, scholarship, assistantship ... opportunities tend to be more generous in continental Europe
- Beware the **culture shock!**
  - ▶ Grad school is tough enough already! Further layers of difficulties can be tough to deal with all at once
  - ▶ Top Turkish master's programs *do* prepare well for academic career

# U.S. VERSUS EUROPEAN PHD PROGRAMS

- Many would agree that frontier research takes place at top U.S. schools
  - ▶ PhD is mostly about research!
- American PhD programs tend to be more competitively-designed, rigorous & well-structured
  - ▶ Rigorous PhD courses, prelims, field exams/papers, 3<sup>rd</sup>-year paper, brownbag seminars, ...  $\implies$  competitive standards
- European PhD programs tend to be more diverse in quality & less-structured
  - ▶  $\implies$  Outcome depends *A LOT* on advisors

# U.S. VERSUS EUROPEAN PHD PROGRAMS (*cont'd*)

FIGURE: A *Hypothetical* Illustration of PhD Program Quality Distribution



† Source: *Hypothetical!*

# SKYPE & IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

- You have made thus far, be proud & confide in yourself!
  - ▶ Evaluators wouldn't waste their time unless you had a *real* shot
- Often, it's *less* about your technical knowledge & more about your motivation, competence in expressing yourself in English
  - ▶ Brushing up on what you learned wouldn't hurt
- Anything you submit in your application is fair game
  - ▶ **Never** lie or exaggerate on your application
- Do your research about the department, faculty & program
  - ▶ That you know what you are up to can make a difference
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