Applying to graduate school

Choosing to attend graduate school as part of your career path is a complex process. First, determine if graduate school is right for you at this time or in the future. Once you’ve determine the timeline, begin to research and choose the best program for your needs, and prepare to submit a strong graduate program application.

Is graduate school right for me?

Things to consider

- What type of graduate or professional program do you want to pursue?
- How do you envision that this program will help you progress in your professional goals?
- How do you envision that this program will help you progress in your personal or educational goals?
- When would you like to start a graduate program?
- What are the pros and cons of starting a graduate program right after finishing your undergraduate degree versus applying after obtaining professional experience?

I’m ready, now what?

Research a range of programs

- Review a list of schools and programs in your academic area. What are the three schools that are highest on your list? Why have you ranked these programs highly?
- What are five more schools that are still attractive, even though they are not your highest priority? What is appealing about these schools?
- Research and connect with professors who teach within the program. Does their research align with your passion of what you want to study?
- Does your program have a campus tour or an info session you can attend to ask questions and learn more about the institution and program?

Consider your strengths as an applicant

- What are your strongest assets as an applicant? Consider factors such as academics, previous employment, standardized tests, and extra-curricular involvement.
- What are your potential weaknesses as an applicant and how can you improve in these areas through the program?

Prepare your applications

- When are your applications due? Most graduate programs require applications be submitted no later than January for a Fall Semester start date. Some programs, such as medical school, require much earlier application submission dates.
- When are you going to take your graduate admission exam for your chosen program? Some exams, can be taken any time, but there are some that are only offered at certain times during the year. (GRE, GMAT and LSAT).
- When and how will you ask faculty members and other professional contacts for letters of recommendation? You should allow one month for someone to write a quality letter. You should typically allow one month for someone to write a quality letter.
- When do you want to begin and finish writing your personal statement? This is really the only piece of the application in which you have complete control. Take your time and get feedback from people you trust throughout the process.
- Make sure that you are looking through all the requirements for the application process. Graduate programs might have different steps and requirements ranging from essay questions, interviews, and a range of prerequisite courses.
- What costs are associated? Application fees, shipping costs, and travel expenses should be taken into consideration. Do you need to apply for scholarships or grants to off-set the cost of applying?

Helpful resources

US News Graduate School Rankings
usnews.com/nest-graduate-schools

Petersons Guide to Graduate Schools
petersons.com/graduate-schools

Free Application for Federal Student Aid
fafsa.ed.gov

The Princeton Review Test Prep Courses
princetonreview.com/partner/asu

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