



GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Applying to graduate/professional school is hard work, so it is important to think ahead and plan your application strategy. When thinking about graduate/professional school, you need to consider: your interests, skills and experiences; knowledge of the occupational field; schools offering programs of interest; and admission requirements.

Self Knowledge

- Are you interested in continued study for the purpose of immersing yourself into a subject area for pure knowledge or for employment opportunities?
- Are you burned out academically and need to take some time off?
- Are you postponing the job search by going to graduate school?
- Can you identify your interests, skills, and experiences and describe how they relate to an occupational field?
- Can you balance continued education with other life roles?
- Are you motivated to continue your study for another two or more years?

Field Knowledge

- Do you have accurate, research- based information about the field of interest?
- Have you talked with professionals to see if an advanced degree is necessary for entry into the field?
- If an advanced degree is important, are there several options available in terms of programs?
- If there are several options available, would it be wise to work for a year or two to decide which route to pursue?
- Do you have related experience through an internship, externship, or summer job?

Some resources available to help you gain knowledge of a chosen field include: MyPlan, LinkedIn, informational interviews, internships, research with faculty, volunteering, and books on particular occupations.

Information on Specific Programs

- Have you explored schools which offer programs related to your field?
- Have you talked with people in the field to get their suggestions on schools/programs?
- Do you know the admission requirements for schools and programs of interest?
- Have you taken the appropriate graduate admission test (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT)?
- Have you researched schools and programs of interest?
- Have you started thinking about who to ask for recommendation letters?

For a directory of programs by discipline both domestically and internationally, visit gradschools.com or petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx.

Applying to graduate school takes time and consideration. The earlier you begin your graduate school search, the smoother the process will be. The remainder of this handout will contain timelines which lay out the ideal time frame for applying to graduate school. Be sure to check with each graduate or professional school for exact deadlines because they will vary from program to program.

Items to prepare for graduate school: Resume, personal statement, 3 letters of recommendation, standardized test score and transcript.

GENERAL GRADUATE SCHOOL TIMELINE

Summer Before Senior Year

- Begin browsing through graduate school guides, such as Peterson's Guide to Graduate and Professional Programs. Research schools for program information, applications, and financial aid and assistantship information. Determine if there are any special admissions requirements.
- Start working on a general personal statement.
- Begin studying for the standardized test.

September

- Ask professors for letters of recommendation. Provide them with your resume; share the submission processes for each program and stamped addressed envelopes if necessary. Discuss your goals and motivations for wanting to attend graduate school so that they have a better idea of your intentions.
- Sign up for required standardized tests. Prepare for tests by familiarizing yourself with the instructions and types of questions. Use sample practice books and prep courses, such as those offered by Kaplan.

October

- Take the standardized test.

November

- Request copies of your official transcript. Verify that the registrar's office can send transcripts and fall semester grades to designated graduate schools in time for the appropriate deadline.
- Put finishing touches on your personal statement and have it reviewed by faculty, staff, the Writing Commons, and Career Services Office.

December

- Complete your application forms.
- Retake the standardized tests if necessary.
- Contact professors to verify that they have submitted recommendations.
- Send a thank you note to professors.

December/Early January

- Send in financial aid information.

February

- Contact graduate programs before the deadline to verify that applications are complete.
- Visit as many schools as possible; accepting a graduate school offer without visiting the campus is like buying a car without test driving it! Talk with the respective faculty and current students.
- Set up appointments for admissions interviews as well as assistantship interviews. Be sure to follow up with thank you notes.

April

- If you are applying for financial aid, you may need a copy of your income tax return.
- Sit back and wait for the acceptance letters to start rolling in!