

Applying to Graduate School

Comparing Programs: Things to consider

- **Curriculum:** Does it have the depth and breadth you want? Does the primary emphasis suit your career goals? Do the courses look interesting? Are specializations offered that interest you? Are there cooperative programs with other educational, cultural, and research institutions available?
- **Internships or Practical/Clinical Experiences:** Does the program include any practical experience in its requirements? Is there help in securing it? Is there adequate supervision and guidance?
- **Faculty:** What is the student/faculty ratio? Are there faculty members with specialties that interest you? Do faculty research interests match yours? Is the faculty diverse?
- **Facilities:** How extensive are their resources? Ex. library, labs and computer facilities? Are there specialized research facilities?
- **Student demographics within department and school:** Geographical representation, ethnic diversity, average entering age, male/female ratio. How many are in the entering class? What is the attrition rate?
- **Location:** Is the geographic location of the school consistent with the lifestyle you want for the next few years? What will housing cost and is there housing on campus? Don't rule out an unfamiliar city or state prematurely; focus on where the programs are that best meet your needs.
- **Employment of Alumni:** What types of positions have recent graduates obtained? What types of services are available to assist graduate students with the job search?

Completing the Application Package

most graduate and professional schools require the following items from applicants:

1. *Essay or Personal Statement:* Here's your chance to express why you want to go to graduate school, and why you are specifically interested in this department or program. It is a good idea to solicit comments from faculty members and others whose judgment you respect. Show your first draft to people who know you well; show the next draft to as many faculty as you can get to read it. Make sure to edit and proofread carefully. Most schools expect a 1-2 page statement.
2. *Transcripts:* Request official transcripts from the registrar's office. If you have taken college courses elsewhere, you will need to submit transcripts from those institutions as well.
3. *Standardized Tests:* GRE (for most academic disciplines), LSAT (law), GMAT (business), MAT (sometimes used for education and psychology), and MCAT (medicine).
4. *Letters of Recommendation:* Most graduate schools request three or four letters from faculty members to support your application.

* Some schools require interviews as well. Depending upon the type of program, you may also be asked to submit work samples or a portfolio, or to perform an audition.

Websites for Graduate School Information

GRAD SCHOOL TIPS

www.gradschooltips.com

owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01

SITES WITH GENERAL INFORMATION AND SEARCHES

www.petersons.com

www.gradschools.com

graduate-school.phds.org

www.gradview.com

grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/grad

www.graduateguide.com

www.princetonreview.com/graduate-school.aspx

www.fastweb.com

Graduate School Timeline

Junior Year - Summer Before Senior Year

- Research graduate programs, request information from schools that interest you
- Set up a timeline of deadlines for each program that you may be applying to
- Look over the coursework required for each program and the interests of the professors teaching there
- Take a practice test for any standardized test you may be required to take
- Consider utilizing a test prep service or purchase a test prep workbook
- Talk to your advisor and favorite professors about graduate school programs

May-August

- Register to take standardized graduate admissions test for your field
- If you would like the opportunity to retake the test if you are not pleased with your score, make sure to sign up for the test early enough to allow yourself to do this
- Contemplate key people to ask to write letters of recommendation
- Finalize list of graduate programs and request application materials and be aware of deadlines and requirements
- Identify faculty with shared interests from the programs you are interested in
- Begin to research forms of financial aid and assistance
- Check with programs to see the availability of assistantships/fellowships you could apply for

Senior Year

September-October

- Take standardized tests and confirm that scores will be sent to the schools you are applying to
- Begin drafting personal statements and any essays required of graduate programs
- Complete applications forms
- Request all transcripts be sent to graduate schools
- Ask for letters of recommendation or distribute recommendation forms
- Provide recommenders with your resume and other supplemental information
- Contact professors or students from your prospective schools and try to arrange a visit if possible
- If an interview is an option, set one up and begin to prepare for it

November

- Finalize personal statements and essays tailored to each graduate program after getting feedback on them from your advisor or favorite professor -- or other key professionals

December

- Mail completed applications -- only after carefully proofreading all materials (keep copies)

January

- Follow-up with all graduate programs to make sure your all application materials have been received
- Fill out FAFSA and look into private loans, grants, and fellowships
- Begin looking into possible graduate assistantships (research, teaching, etc.)

February

- Consider visiting your top graduate school choices
- Research or visit the surrounding areas: where would you be living? Shopping? Working?

March-April

- Discuss acceptance progress with your advisor or favorite professor and thank your recommenders
- Notify each program that accepted you of your intentions and thank them
- Keep in mind almost all applicants receive at least one rejection – all you need is one acceptance!!!
- Determine the application timeline for graduate assistantships