

GRADUATE SCHOOL INFORMATION

Reasons to pursue graduate school:

- To expand knowledge in a particular subject
- To prepare for a career in a specialized field
- To receive a promotion or increase your competitiveness within your field

Reasons NOT to pursue graduate school:

- Family or friends think you should
- You want to say you have the degree
- You don't want to have to look for a job or work full-time yet

First, take time to assess your goals and decide if the amount of time, work and money you must commit to a graduate program is worth it to you. Ask yourself some of the following questions: Am I ready to continue being a student? Do I have sufficient financial resources? Do I know enough about the field to make this commitment? Would it be more appropriate to work first and then return to school? Are there other options that I should consider? Is this the best career path for me?

Next, meet with a career counselor to discuss conducting informational interviews with professionals to get an inside look at what it could be like to work in that field or hold a position requiring a terminal degree.

For more information, check out the following:

Between undergrad and grad school- break or no break?

<http://www.gradschools.com/Article/pre-grad-break/74.html>

Masters or PhD- which is right for you?

www.gradschools.com/article/mastersorphd/89.html

CHOOSING A GRADUATE PROGRAM TO FIT YOUR NEEDS

Once you make a decision to pursue a graduate degree, apply to several schools. Talk to faculty advisors and professionals in the field to determine the best programs for you. Also consider the following components:

Institution

-Do the institution and specific department have a good reputation?

Evaluate the quality of the academic department itself. Remember that while a university as a whole may hold an excellent reputation, each department within the institution will be ranked differently. A lesser known or lower-rated institution may offer an excellent department in a particular area of study. Search www.usnews.com for schools' ratings based on statistics and expert opinion.

Faculty

- Who are the faculty members? What is their work experience within the field? What have they published?
- What are their areas of specialization? What are their specific research interests?
- What is the faculty to student ratio?
- What type of personal contact will you have with faculty?

Good sources of information are college and department websites are good sources of this information. You can also request more detailed information directly from the department or set up a phone or in-person meeting with an admissions counselor.

Program Content

- Does the program fit my personal goals and educational interests?
- Does the program utilize an interdisciplinary approach to the field or focus on one specific approach?
- What are the philosophy and methods of instruction?
- What is the retention rate into the second year of the program?
- Are internships or assistantships a required aspect of the program?
- If certification or testing to graduate is required, what percentage of the class passes?

It may be possible to view students' final projects or papers, or even sit in on a class to understand the methods of instruction. Admissions counselors and current or former students are the best people to talk to regarding program content.

Facilities

If possible, visit the institution to get an idea of campus life. Ask about the libraries, laboratories and research facilities as well as any cooperative arrangements with other research educational and professional organizations. Also consider housing facilities and common areas- are there places set aside for graduate students to meet and socialize?

Students

- What do graduates of the program go on to do? Where are they employed?
- What do graduates conduct their theses/dissertations on?
- Is the school selective with regard to admissions?
- What is the demographic make-up of the student body?

A. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

1. Do you prefer an urban or rural environment?
2. A hot, cold, or mild climate?
3. Will the location offer an outlet for your individual interests and activities?
4. What is the distance from home?

B. COSTS AND FINANCIAL AID

1. Do tuition and fees fit your budget?
2. What type of work-study programs, loans, scholarships, research opportunities, and assistantships are available?
3. Can you qualify for these?

C. ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

1. Do you know the admissions procedures?
2. Are any advanced exams required?
3. Will you have to complete any prerequisite coursework?
4. Will you have to take the GRE or any other entrance exams?

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Find out the application deadlines for each school in which you are interested. By that deadline, each school will want to have a completed file on you, containing all the information required in order to consider your application.

The Application Form

An application packet must be individually requested from the Graduate Division of each school you are considering. Be sure to read the instructions carefully and to fill out the form completely and neatly. Some departments have additional departmental forms, so when requesting an application packet, specify the program in which you are interested. Also, keep in mind that some schools have early decision programs and it is to your advantage to apply early to these.

Personal Statement

Often the graduate school application requests a personal statement. This should be a concise, well-written essay which demonstrates your ability to organize and present ideas clearly. Your statement of purpose should reflect your background, qualifications and goals in positive. For detailed information on this topic, refer to the "Developing Your Personal Statement" section of this booklet.

Tests

Most graduate programs require scores from standardized admissions tests. Below are the common tests -- be sure you have read the requirements for admission carefully so that you are aware of all the tests necessary and the deadline dates for submission of the test results. Application materials, for most tests, are available in the Career Development Center.

If you are applying to:

Graduate School (most programs)
Law School
Business School
Medical or Podiatry School
Dental School
Veterinary School
Optometry School
Pharmacy
Psychology, Education, Social Service

You should take:

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
Law School Admission Test (LSAT)
Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT)
Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
Dental Aptitude Test (DAT)
Veterinary Aptitude Test (VAT)
Optometry College Admission Test (OCAT)
Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT)
Miller Analogies Test (MAT)

GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test-Business School
GMAC	(Graduate Management Admission Council)
LSAT	Law School Admission Test-Law School
LSAC	(Law School Admission Council)
MCAT	Medical College Admission Test-Medical or Podiatry School
AMCAS	American Medical College Application Service
GRE	Graduate Record Examination-Graduate School
Subject GRE	(Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Literature in English, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology)
California State Credential Information	
CBEST	California Basic Education Skills Test-California Education
California Commission of Teacher Credentialing	
CSET	California Subject Examination for Teachers-Teaching
Praxis Series	Teacher Licensure Certification
RICA	Reading Instruction Competence Assessment-Reading Education
SSAT	Single Subject Assessments for Teaching-
Miller Anthology Test	(MAT)-Psychology, Education, Social Service
DAT	Dental Aptitude Test-Dental School
VCAT	Veterinary College Aptitude Test-Veterinary School
OAT	Optometry Admission Test-Optometry School
PCAT	Pharmacy College Admission Test-Pharmacy

Transcripts

It is your responsibility to have an official copy of transcripts sent to each school to which you are applying. Requests for official transcripts should be filed with the Registrar Office at least ten working days before desired mailing date. There is a \$5.00 fee for each official transcript requested.

Letters of Recommendation

Although some institutions no longer require confidential letters of recommendation, many still do. Letters of recommendation should be requested from professors, advisors, employers or other individuals who are familiar with your work, undergraduate preparation, commitment, motivation, and/or potential. Choose people who view your work positively. Ask them if they feel they can write you a good letter.

When requesting a letter, it is much better to talk to your potential letter writer in person and provide all the necessary information, i.e., a copy of your personal statement, unofficial transcripts, list of classes or experience that individual has had with you, special projects or reports in classes with that individual, and school activities. Letters which reflect a personal knowledge of you as an individual are much better than generalized, impersonal letters which only describe your academic performance in class.

FINANCING GRADUATE SCHOOL

There are several kinds of financial assistance available for graduate students. These include fellowships, scholarships, teaching and research assistantships, loans and grant-in-aid. Some of these are through the school and others are from outside agencies. Financial aid application deadlines are frequently earlier than the general application deadline. If you are currently receiving financial aid, you may also request that the application fee be waived.

Fellowships: On the graduate level, the equivalent of a scholarship is a fellowship. It is usually a straight monetary award given on the basis of scholastic achievement. Fellowships are often tax-free unless they involve teaching or research; in these cases the recipient will more than likely be required to report them for income tax purposes. Specific institutions have their own fellowships, which you may identify by contacting the school's financial aid office and the department to which you are applying. The federal government also supports some fellowships, for which applications may be made through the institution to which you are applying.

Assistantships: Teaching or research assistantships are often available through the academic department or program of study. Assistantships usually involve working 10-20 hours per week in exchange for some stipend and/or fee remission. Although fee remission are common, be aware that in accepting a graduate assistantship, you still may be responsible for partial payment of your tuition and/or fees. Requests for information on graduate assistantships and applications should be made directly to the department or program of interest to you.

Resident Assistantships: Some institutions have programs in which graduate students earn a stipend, room and board, or both by working as assistants in undergraduate residence halls. If you do not receive information on such a program, along with your application materials, you might contact the school's director of housing and residential life to inquire about such possibilities.

Long Term Educational Loans: Most institutions have loan programs for which graduate students may be eligible. Such programs include private, state, and federally-sponsored student loans. The institution's financial aid office will be able to explain these loan programs to you.

A Word of Caution: Financial support of graduate education may vary widely from institution to institution. Therefore, it is essential for prospective applicants to thoroughly investigate the availability of financial aid in all its various forms as they go about the admissions process. Both the sources and amounts of financial aid are important considerations. This is another of the reasons why students considering further education should begin the process early.

CAN YOU AFFORD GRADUATE SCHOOL?

I.	Project your yearly costs (tuition & living)			
	Tuition, fees, books, and supplies			_____
	Housing, food, utility costs			_____
	Transportation (insurance & repairs)			_____
	Medical and Dental costs (average)			_____
	Miscellaneous			_____
II. Other Expenses				
	Spouse (living costs, tuitions, etc.)			_____
	Dependents (children, parents, etc.)			_____
	Extraordinary medical and/or other			_____
III. Available Resources				
	Bank		Investments	_____
	Spouse's Income	_____	Real Estate	_____
	Support	_____	Your Income	_____
IV. Need Estimate				
	Total I		\$	_____
	+ Total II		+	_____
	Estimated Cost Per Year		=	_____
	- Total III		-	_____
	Total Need Per Year		=	_____

*Adapted from Guide to Graduate Management Education

WAYS TO FINANCE YOUR GRADUATE PROGRAM

1. Teaching assistantships
2. Research assistantships
3. Fellowships/scholarships - similar to grants

DRAWBACKS

1. Takes time away from classes

CONTACT

1. Department chairman
2. Financial aid office

APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Senior Year Timetable

SEPTEMBER

- Talk to ULV faculty and career counselors at the Career Services Center about Graduate School plans and alternatives.
- Write to schools you have selected to request admissions and financial aid applications.
- Find out when graduate transcripts must be sent and what other materials are required with applications.
- Register for needed entrance examinations.

OCTOBER

- Take required examinations.
- Make contact with administrators, students, faculty and/or alumni at each institution you are considering for helpful information.
- Talk to graduate recruiters at the various institutions you are considering.
- Visit, if possible, the schools you are interested in. Talk with admissions people, faculty, and students.

NOVEMBER

- Secure needed letters of recommendation.
- Begin preparing any required financial statements. These are often required at the same time or earlier than admissions applications.

DECEMBER

- Take required examinations this month if you didn't do it in October.
- Send admission applications in this month.
- Check on the transcripts and letters of recommendations to see that they have been sent.
- If you have not done so, visit the schools to which you are applying.

JANUARY

- Last chance to take the required tests for fall admission (may be too late for some schools).
- Check with each school to see that they have received all materials, including test scores and financial statements. If some of your application materials are missing, you might be eliminated from consideration.

FEBRUARY

- Wait (might seem like forever) to hear whether you have been accepted.
- Continue to make contact with representatives of the schools to which you have applied to check on the progress of your applications.
- Finish outlining contingency plans in the event you are not accepted.

IF YOU DON'T GET ACCEPTED

- Talk to a Career Counselor to determine reasons and whether you should change your goals.
- Take heart! Realize that students are sometimes accepted on their second or third try, or when they choose a different goal or choice of study.

DEVELOPING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Applications for graduate or professional schools often include a section requiring you to write a Personal Statement, an essay about your background, and your reasons for wanting to pursue advanced study in the field or profession you have chosen. If the application asks you to respond to certain questions or cover certain topics in your statement, make sure that you do so.

Your essay should be clear, concise, and well written. Talk about yourself and your experiences in positive terms. The Personal Statement is important to admission selection committees; it provides them with a sample of your writing skills and your ability to present ideas in clear, coherent language. As you write it, ask yourself, "Would I be inclined to admit myself to graduate school?" Before submitting the statement, seek constructive comments and criticism from friends and advisors. The following is a sample outline which might be used in writing a Personal Statement:

- I. **OPENING PARAGRAPH:** State your general reasons for pursuing graduate study and introduce yourself to the selection committee. Make it interesting; the committee members will read many applications, so be sure yours gives them a sense of your particular talents and individuality.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** Concentrate on those experiences that have served as a foundation for your forthcoming graduate work. Describe your community and family background and tell how your interest in, and knowledge of, your chosen field developed. Giving examples, describe any personal attributes and qualities that would help you complete graduate study successfully, such as determination in achieving your goals, initiative and ability in developing ideas, and capacity for working through problems independently.
- III. **QUALIFICATIONS:** Describe those experiences that will serve as a foundation for your forthcoming graduate work. Discuss (1) your expertise and accomplishments in your major field, (2) your undergraduate studies in general and how they relate to what you intend to do in graduate school, (3) specific learning experiences that demonstrate your motivation and inspiration for continued study, and (4) other relevant experiences such as jobs for community activities, including names of organizations and other concrete detail.
- IV. **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**
 - A. Short term -- what specific area do you want to study in graduate school?
 - B. Long term -- how do you intend to combine your knowledge and experience with your graduate work to achieve goals?
 - C. What impact will you have on society, community, etc., with your advanced degree (i.e. M.D., J.D., M.A., Ph.D., etc.)?
- V. **CLOSING PARAGRAPH:** It should pack the punch -- that is, leave the reader with a strong sense that you are qualified and that you will be successful in graduate school. (You should combine this with your qualifications.)

Personal Statement Websites:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/>

http://gradschool.about.com/od/essaywriting/All_About_the_Graduate_Admissions_Essay.htm

HINTS

1. Be clear and concise.
2. Talk about yourself positively, avoid negative experience.
3. Start with an outline. After you have written your first draft, pretend you are on the selection committee. Would you accept yourself on the basis of your statement? If not, why? Work out problems and rewrite.
4. If you want someone to check your statement, have an advisor, a faculty member and/or friends, etc., read it and ask for constructive criticism.

General Sites:

www.phds.org

www.gradschools.com

www.collegesource.org/home.asp

www.graduateguide.com

www.finaid.org

www.gradschooltips.com

www.petersons.com

<http://gradschool.about.com/>

<http://www.gradview.com/index.jsp>