



Thinking about Graduate or Professional School?

1. Graduate/Professional School or the Job Search?

Many students face the decision of pursuing an advanced degree immediately after their undergraduate studies or moving directly into the job market. Making the decision requires some self-searching. Typical questions you may want to ask yourself are:

- Why am I going to graduate school?
- Am I ready to focus on one specific field of study?
- Do I enjoy being a student? Will I commit to long hours of graduate study?
- What are my alternatives?
- Is this the best time? Would I benefit from starting immediately or getting some job experience first?
- Do employers in my field of interest encourage employees to pursue advanced degrees?
- Do I need an advanced degree in my field?

2. Where can I find information about Graduate Schools?

The Career Services Office has many resources available about Graduate Schools:

- Peterson's Annual Guides to Graduate Study
- Register of Higher Education
- Peterson's Guide to MBA Programs
- GMAT Guide
- Graduate School Funding Handbook
- How to Write a Winning Personal Statement
- Making it in Medical School
- Medical School Admissions
- The World Wide Web

3. What should I look for in a Graduate School?

- General reputation: Faculty and other professional people are usually aware of the best graduate schools and/or programs for your field. Ask for their input. Graduate school catalogs and Web pages can provide course descriptions, prerequisites and specialties of the faculty. Visit the campus and talk with faculty and students to get a more personalized view of the school.
- Requirements: All graduate schools and programs have different requirements. Most graduate schools require specific, related undergraduate courses and a special entrance examination (GRE, LSAT, GMAT, etc.). To identify requirements, read the catalog and/or ask questions at an on-campus interview.

NOTE ALL DEADLINES AND MEET THEM!

4. How do I know what tests I should take?

The test you should take depends on the program and institution to which you are applying. Schools may require one or more of the following:

GRE – Graduate Record Examination

MAT – Miller Analogies Test

DAT – Dental Admissions Test

MCAT – Medical College Admissions Test

GMAT – Graduate Management Admissions Test

VAT – Veterinary Admissions Test

LSAT – Law School Admissions Test

PCAT – Pharmacy College Admissions Test

OCAT – Optometry College Admissions Test

NTE – National Teachers Examination

AHPAT – Allied Health Professional Admissions Test

Information on many of these tests and which schools require them is available in the Career Services Office.

5. When should I apply?

Apply early to each school so that the selection committee will have adequate time to consider you. Apply early if you are requesting financial aid. Deadlines and specific time schedules for applications are listed in the graduate school catalog. Check if your school or program has a rolling admissions plan and will accept applications as long as there is space in the program. If they do not have a rolling admissions plan, your application must be in by the deadline. If you are applying to a number of programs, develop a list of each institution's admission schedule.

6. How do I fill out the application?

Complete the application very carefully. Making a copy to try out the spacing may be helpful before typing your final essay. The PERSONAL STATEMENT or ESSAY requested on most applications is very important. Read the question (s) carefully and respond to what is asked. In most cases, you are expected to present a coherent rationale for why you want to pursue a particular course of study at this time in your life. Describe your accomplishments with confidence and name your educational and professional goals. Have someone review your personal statement or essay – a faculty member or one of the Career Services staff.

7. What do graduate/professional schools look for in recommendations?

Most schools have their own recommendation forms because they have specific criteria for evaluating applicants. Choose people who can speak to your ability to meet those criteria. Generally speaking, you should ask person who is able to attest to your success-potential as a graduate student. This will most likely be a faculty member who can comment favorably on your academic performance. Do not include character references (ministers, neighbors, etc.) unless specifically requested. Though well intentioned, they could weaken your case.

8. Can I get financial aid? If so, how do I apply for it?

Several types of aid are available for graduate study including grants, fellowships, teaching assistantships and research assistantships. To apply for aid, use the forms provided by your institution. Due dates may be before admissions applications and deadlines. If you are awarded a fellowship or assistantship, find out if it includes tuition remission and if it is tax exempt. Investigate your undergraduate loans to see if they may be deferred while you are in graduate school.

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