

SO...YOU'RE THINKING OF GRAD SCHOOL?

Graduate (or "grad") school refers to an advanced or specialized program of study beyond a bachelors degree that focuses on a specific academic discipline or profession.

Some careers require a graduate degree, while others do not. It's important to be sure of your future career path before deciding to invest time and money into a graduate program.

You should not feel the need to rush into a graduate program immediately after completing your undergraduate degree. It can be beneficial to take some time between programs to research your options and work on applications.

TYPES OF GRAD DEGREES

Specialist degrees: Typically earned in addition to a master's degree and require additional coursework, training, or internship experience. Specialist degrees prepare students for professional certification or licensing requirements (such as a teaching credential).

Master's degrees: Awarded upon completion of a course of study demonstrating mastery of a specific field of study or area of professional practice. May be a prerequisite to a doctoral program. Common master's degrees include: Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), and Master of Business Administration (MBA).

Doctoral degrees: These are the highest degrees possible. Doctoral degrees usually require the creation of new knowledge via independent research and a written dissertation.

Depending on degree types and program requirements, the average length of completing a program can vary.



HOW IS A GRAD PROGRAM DIFFERENT THAN AN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM?

UNDERGRAD

- ✓ Broad course of study
- ✓ Larger class sizes
- ✓ Lecture-style classes
- ✓ Test-based assessments
- ✓ Many elective options
- ✓ Flexible class schedules
- ✓ Moderate workload

Average completion time: 4-5 years
Average age of peers: 18-22

GRAD

- ✓ Highly focused course of study
- ✓ Smaller class sizes
- ✓ Discussion-style classes
- ✓ Project-based assessments
- ✓ Few elective options
- ✓ Less flexible class schedules
- ✓ Intense workload

Average completion time: 2-3 years
Average age of peers: 30+

FINDING THE RIGHT PROGRAM FOR YOU

Preparing for grad school begins with research. Ask yourself: **Which programs am I interested in - and which schools offer those programs?** Throughout your research, you're likely to discover new programs you haven't heard of before.

Admission requirements, application windows, and deadlines will vary by program. Be sure to understand all of the requirements and to be aware of upcoming deadlines.

Questions to consider during your research include:

- *Do I have to complete a standardized test, such as the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)?*
- *Do I have to complete any pre-requisite courses?*
- *What application materials are required?*
- *What is the minimum GPA requirement?*
- *What costs are associated with each program?*
- *Will I need to apply for financial aid or scholarships? When are those deadlines?*
- *When is the deadline to apply for this program?*

HELPFUL WEBSITES:

gograd.org
gradtrek.com
graduateguide.com
gradschoolmatch.com
petersons.com
princetonreview.com

COMMON APPLICATION MATERIALS



Resume and/or CV: Crafting a resume for grad school is generally more comprehensive and more academically focused than a resume you would use to apply for a job. Similarly, a CV or "Curriculum Vitae" should contain a combination of your professional and academic history.



Personal Statement or Admissions Essay: Your personal statement is an essay detailing your interest in a specific program, your past experiences, and your future goals. Some programs may provide an essay prompt. Page lengths and word counts will vary by program.



Letter(s) of Recommendation: Most grad programs will require up to 3 letters of recommendation that come from a professional or academic reference. Your reference can be a boss, supervisor, manager, professor, or faculty. It's important to request letters far in advance so that your references have plenty of time to complete them.



Official Transcripts: You will have to request official transcripts from all undergraduate institutions you've attended. Official transcripts are sent directly from your previous school(s) to your prospective schools. Most schools charge a small fee to request transcripts. Be sure to request transcripts in advance.



Writing Sample: Grad schools want a sense of your writing style. Types of writing samples you can submit include essays, narratives, published articles, blogs, or press releases. Any writing sample you submit should be free of any grades or comments. If your writing sample is too long, you can submit only a portion of it. Be clear that your writing sample is part of a longer piece.



Graduate Record Examination (GRE): The GRE is a standardized test required by most graduate programs. To take the GRE, you will have to register far in advance to allow ample time to study and to ensure a test date is being offered near you. For more information, visit ets.org/gre.

HOW TO PREPARE DURING UNDERGRAD

✓ GAIN EXPERIENCE

Find internships and volunteer opportunities that give you valuable experience and enhance your resume and application materials. Consider taking a leadership role in an on-campus club or organization, or work on a research project with a faculty mentor.



✓ BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Get to know the faculty members in your major. Meet with them to discuss coursework and your long-term goals. These faculty members will serve as strong references when you need a letter of recommendation in the future.

✓ RESEARCH

Look into which types of programs you are interested in and which schools offer those programs. Identify all the admission + application requirements including what standardized exams (if any) are required. Create a list of these programs and keep track of important requirements and deadlines.



✓ LIST PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

Narrow down the list of programs you plan to apply for and keep track of the admission requirements for each program. Creating a list of each program with their respective requirements will help you stay organized when applying to multiple programs.

✓ PREPARE YOUR MATERIALS

It's never too early to begin drafting a personal statement - most grad programs will require one. You will need to persuade the admissions committee why you want to be a part of their program - think about what factors make you a unique and strong candidate.



✓ WATCH OUT FOR DEADLINES

Pay attention to important dates including: GRE test dates, FAFSA application dates, scholarship deadlines, and application windows.

Adapted from the McNair Scholars Handbook for Graduate School Applications by Dr. Carolyn Smith.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

MONTH-BY-MONTH TIMELINE TO STAY ON TRACK WITH YOUR APPLICATIONS

Application deadlines vary by school and program. Deadlines will also vary depending on if you choose to apply for the fall or spring semester. Below is a suggested timeline for individuals planning to apply for graduate programs.



12 MONTHS BEFORE DEADLINE

- Begin researching grad programs that interest you
- Begin studying for the GRE exam
- Build relationships with professors and faculty who can offer advice and write your letters of recommendation

6+ MONTHS BEFORE DEADLINE

- Register for a GRE prep course
- Continue researching program and connecting with professors and faculty
- Create an application tracking sheet (see example on next page)

5 MONTHS BEFORE DEADLINE

- Request information from prospective programs by reaching out to program directors
- Continue studying for the GRE exam
- Register for the GRE exam

4 MONTHS BEFORE DEADLINE

- Take the GRE exam
- Begin drafting your personal statement and other application materials
- Consider visiting prospective schools

3 MONTHS BEFORE DEADLINE

- Register for another GRE exam (if necessary)
- Finalize your list of prospective schools
- Request letters of recommendations from your references
- Continue reviewing your personal statement and other application materials

2 MONTHS BEFORE DEADLINE

- Request official transcripts from your undergraduate institution(s)
- Follow-up with your references to remind them about your recommendation letter
- Have peers, professors, and career advisors review your application materials

1 MONTH BEFORE DEADLINE

- Finalize your personal statement and other application materials
- Conduct a final review your application(s) with a career advisor
- Submit your application(s) earlier rather than later, if all materials are ready

APPLICATION DUE!

- Submit your application(s)
- Send a thank you note or email to the program director/admissions committee of each program you've applied to

RESOURCES & TOOLS

THE CAREER CENTER

Career advisors are here to help you navigate your journey to graduate school! Advisors can help with the initial process of discovering programs as well as help develop your application materials such as a CV, resume, or personal statement. Advisors can also serve as professional references.

YOUR PROFESSORS

Your college professors went to graduate school! Not only can professors offer advice and program recommendations, they can connect you with colleagues that will broaden your professional network. Additionally, professors can write your letters of recommendation.

ALUMNI & OTHER STUDENTS

Connect with alumni and students who are on a similar academic/career path as you. This includes students currently in your prospective graduate programs. They can provide further insight on their experiences and feedback about the program. Consider creating a **LinkedIn** profile to stay connected with others.

PROGRAM WEBSITES

There is a lot of information on the internet - it can be overwhelming! The best way to obtain accurate and current information about each program you are considering is to spend time on their website. Graduate program websites usually have detailed information, FAQ's, coursework requirements, admission requirements, and more.

APPLICATION TRACKER

Create a list to track all the programs you are interested in, especially when you plan to apply to multiple programs. Below is an example of some things you may want to note for each program. Keeping an organized list will help you compare the different programs you are considering.

Program Name	School	Application Deadline	Application Link	Application Materials	Program Contact	Tuition	Application Submitted? Y/N