

GRADUATE SCHOOL PLANNING

Are you considering graduate or professional school? If so, use this handout to help with your decision making and planning. It provides guidelines and resources essential to continuing your education.

MAKING YOUR DECISION

Before you apply, ask yourself:

- What is it that I am hoping to gain from a graduate program?
- Will it be better to enter graduate school directly after college, or after I gain work experience?
- Can I meet the demands of another degree program?
- Is it worth the time and money?
- What are my long and short-term career goals?
- Is a graduate degree necessary for me to enter my chosen field?

Graduate school is a good option if:

- The career I am interested in requires an advanced degree.
- I am passionate about learning more about a specific subject matter.
- I am “reasonably” sure of my career aspirations.
- I have thought about my options and am certain that this would be my most beneficial choice.

Reconsider graduate school plans if:

- I am trying to postpone the job search.
- Friends or family are pressuring me to attend graduate school.
- I think there are no jobs for someone in my major.
- Getting full-time work experience will help clarify my career goals.
- I am afraid of entering the “real world.”

TIMELINE

Many deadlines for the fall's entering class are between December and March of your senior year. However, make sure to check with your program for specific deadlines and adhere to them. Also consider the benefits of gaining a few years of full-time work experience before applying to graduate school.

Junior Year

- ✓ Assess your career goals before considering a graduate program.
- ✓ Research graduate school programs through books, websites, discussions with faculty, career counselors, and current graduate students.
- ✓ Request catalogs, application materials and financial aid information.
- ✓ Attend USD's Graduate School Fair offered in the fall semester.
- ✓ Narrow your graduate school programs through careful evaluation.
- ✓ Prepare and register for graduate admission tests.

Between Junior & Senior Year

- ✓ Visit the graduate schools that interest you the most.
- ✓ Write your admissions essay. Have career counselors, faculty, family members, and/or the writing center review your essay for content and grammar.

Senior Year – Fall Semester

- ✓ Take the graduate admissions test required by the schools to which you are applying.
- ✓ Request letters of recommendation from faculty and employers at the beginning of fall semester – at least several months before they are due.
- ✓ Request official transcripts from the One Stop Student Center.
- ✓ Mail your applications on time! Submitting them early is highly recommended.
- ✓ Research loans, fellowships, assistantships and work study options.
- ✓ Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application.

Senior Year – Spring Semester

- ✓ Call the graduate schools before the deadlines to verify that all of your application materials have been received.
- ✓ Schedule interviews and additional campus visits.
- ✓ Select a school that has accepted you and mail a deposit.
- ✓ Send thank-you notes to those who wrote you letters of recommendation and inform them of your graduate school plans.
- ✓ Inform the graduate programs that have accepted you of your decision to attend another graduate school.

MAJOR TEST INFORMATION SOURCES

Test registration information is available online at the following web sites:

Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

Requested by many liberal arts graduate departments.
Educational Testing Service

www.gre.org

Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT)

Required by management programs.
Educational Testing Service

www.gmac.com

Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)

MCAT Program Office

www.aamc.org

Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)

Law School Admissions Service

www.lsac.org

TEST PREPARATION COURSES

Testing organizations offer free practice exams online and bookstores sell study guides. If you are interested in test preparation courses, here are a few options:

USD Test Preparation Office, Barcelona, Room 204 (619-260-4579)

Information on the LSAT, GMAT, and GRE

www.sandiego.edu/testprep/

Kaplan (1-800-KAP-TEST)

Information on LSAT, GMAT, GRE, MCAT, DAT, OAT, and PCAT

www.kaplan.com/TestPreparation/Graduate/

Princeton Review (1-800-333-0369)

Information on LSAT, GMAT, GRE, MCAT

www.princetonreview.com

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

- Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form.
- Contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- CollegeAnswer.com offers guidance on the educational loan process:
www.collegeanswer.com.
- Check for scholarships at sites such as www.FastWeb.com.
- Many universities offer scholarships, so always contact the financial aid office, graduate admissions office, and individual programs at each school to which you are applying.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Books Available in the Career Services Library

Complete Book of Business Schools

Complete Book of Law Schools

Complete Book of Medical Schools

Directory of Graduate Programs in Human Resource Management

Financing Graduate School

Get Into Medical School

Graduate Admissions Essays

Graduate School Admissions Adviser

Guide to Undergraduate and Graduate Education in Urban and Regional Planning

Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology

Law School Without Fear

Perfect Personal Statements

Peterson's Graduate & Professional Programs, Books 1-6

Preparing for Graduate Study in Psychology

Career Services Handouts

Request a handout on *Graduate School Admissions Essays* in Career Services.

General Information Websites

GradSource.com

Information on graduate schools, career profiles and articles.

www.gradsource.com

Princeton Review

Advice on preparing, applying and financing your graduate education.

www.princetonreview.com

Directories of Graduate Schools and Programs

Peterson's

www.petersons.com/gradchannel/

Graduate School Directory

www.gradschools.com

CollegeSource

Has over 14,000 on-line catalogs, plus testing and grad school planning information.

www.collegesource.org

Campus Tours

Take virtual tours of college campuses

www.campustours.com

Ratings

College and University Rankings: An overview and listing of various ranking services

www.library.uiuc.edu/edx/rankings.htm

US News Graduate School Rankings

www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/rankindex_brief.php

Customized rankings of graduate programs based on National Research Council data

www.phds.org/