



Considering Graduate School?

Graduate school is advanced study in a particular academic discipline or profession with a much more narrowly focused curriculum than undergraduate work. It may be at the master's or doctoral level and may be academic or professional in nature.

Academic degrees (MA, MS, PhD) involve acquiring and communicating new knowledge through original research and are awarded in virtually all liberal arts disciplines (e.g., arts, humanities, sciences, social sciences, etc.).

Professional degrees stress the practical application of knowledge and skills and may be acquired in such areas as business (MBA), law (JD), medicine (MD), and education (MEd). Other fields offering professional degrees include the fine arts (MFA), library science (MLS), public policy (MPP), and social work (MSW) and many more.

Use the information and resources in this section to help discover career options that will be the best fit for you.

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VIDEO RESOURCES

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[Choosing the right program](#)

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HELPFUL LINKS

[Petersons Online](#)

[Gradschools.com](#)

Applying to Graduate School

Applying to Graduate or Professional School can be a daunting and complex process, from deciding on programs of interest to preparing and finalizing your application. Career counselors can assist with all aspects of the Masters, PhD, and professional school application processes, including:

- Providing information about various fields of interest and the roles that advanced degrees play in achievement within those fields
- Anticipating the steps, timetable and required standardized tests in the application process
- Researching pre-requisites for specific graduate or professional schools
- Considering what graduate programs best coincide with your career plans
- Identifying specific schools
- Determining your strengths and weaknesses as a candidate
- Reviewing your personal statements, addendums, and essays
- Preparing for school interviews
- Deciding between graduate school offers

For additional information and assistance, **contact the Career Development Center at 360-867-6193 to schedule an appointment with one of our Career Advisors.**

Timetable

To ensure you meet graduate school application deadlines, start early! It takes time to research schools and programs, complete application materials and essays, prepare for and take graduate admission tests, arrange for letters of recommendation, and apply for scholarships. Depending on what institution and/or graduate program you are applying to, **the process can take 18 months to two years** before your date of matriculation (admission).

Application deadlines range from August for early decision medical schools using the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) to late spring or summer for a few programs with rolling admissions. Most deadlines for fall entry are between January and March.

In all cases you must meet formal deadlines. Be aware that many schools with rolling admissions encourage and act upon early applications. The timetable below represents the ideal for most applicants.

Six months prior to applying

- Research areas of interest, institutions, and programs
- Talk to advisors about application requirements
- Register and prepare for appropriate graduate admission tests
- Investigate national scholarships
- If appropriate, obtain letters of recommendation

Three months prior to applying

- Take required graduate admission tests
- Write for application materials or request them online
- Visit institutions of interest, if possible
- Write your application essay
- Check on application deadlines and rolling admissions policies
- For medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use

Fall, a year before matriculating

- Obtain letters of recommendation
- Take graduate admission tests if you haven't already
- Send in completed applications

Winter, before matriculating in the fall

- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the CSS Financial Aid Profile, if required

Spring, before matriculating in the fall

- Check with all institutions before their deadlines to make sure your file is complete
- Visit institutions that accept you
- Send a deposit to your institution of choice
- Notify other colleges and universities that accepted you of your decision so that they can admit students on their waiting list
- Send thank-you notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success

You may not be able to adhere to this timetable if your application deadlines are very early, as is the case with medical schools, or if you decide to attend graduate school at the last minute. In any case, keep in mind the various application requirements and be sure to meet all deadlines. If deadlines are impossible to meet, call the institution to see if a late application will be considered.

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Application Materials

To obtain application materials, visit an institution's graduate Admissions website for instructions on how to apply. If you want to contact a particular faculty member about your background and interests in order to explore the possibility of a graduate assistantship, feel free to do so, but *do not ask a faculty member for an application*. All application correspondences should be done through Admissions.

National Application Services

Some professional fields use national services to assist with part of the application process. These services include the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS), American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS), American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS), American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine Application Service (AACPMAS), and American Association of Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS).

Many programs require applicants to use these services to simplify the application process for both the professional programs' admissions committees and the applicant. The role these services play varies from one field to another. The LSDAS, for example, analyzes your transcript(s) and submits the analysis to the law schools to which you are applying, while the other services provide a more complete application service.

Meeting Application Requirements

Requirements vary from one field to another and from one institution to another. The importance of reading each program's requirements carefully cannot be overemphasized.

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Graduate Admission Tests

Colleges and universities usually require a specific graduate admission test, and departments sometimes have their own requirements as well. Scores are used to evaluate the likelihood of success in a particular program (based upon the success rate of past students with similar scores). Most programs will not accept scores more than three to five years old. For more information about a particular graduate admissions test, select the appropriate link below:

[Graduate Record Examination \(GRE\)](#)

[Miller Analogies Test \(MAT\)](#)

Professional schools usually require that applicants take a specific admission test such as:

[The Dental Admission Test \(DAT\)](#)

[The Graduate Management Admission Test \(GMAT\)](#)

[The Law School Admission Test \(LSAT\)](#)

[The Medical College Admission Test \(MCAT\)](#)

[The Optometry Admission Test \(OAT\)](#)

[The Pharmacy College Admission Test \(PCAT\)](#)

[The Veterinary College Admission Test \(VCAT\)](#)

Many graduate schools of education ask applicants to take the [Praxis Series](#) tests. Virtually all graduate and professional schools ask students whose native language is not English to take the [Test of English as a Foreign Language \(TOEFL\)](#), and some also ask for TOEFL's Test of Written English (TWE) or the [Test of Spoken English \(TSE\)](#).

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Transcripts

Admissions committees require official transcripts to evaluate your academic preparation for graduate study. Although grade point averages (GPAs) are typically an important consideration, because they are not examined in isolation but along with the rigor of your coursework, course load, and the reputation of your undergraduate institution, Evergreen students are just as likely to be accepted into graduate programs as students from other institutions. If you encounter any issues related to GPAs, contact the Faculty Deans' Office for assistance. To have your college transcript sent to graduate institutions, contact the college registrar.

Letters of Recommendation

Choosing people to write recommendations can be difficult, and most graduate schools require two or three letters. While recommendations from faculty members are essential for academically oriented programs, professional programs may seriously consider nonacademic recommendations from professionals in the field.

It's best to choose references who know you through your programs, extracurricular activities, and jobs. A good reference should have a high opinion of you, know you well in more than one area of your life, be familiar with the institutions to which you are applying as well as the kind of study you are pursuing, be able to make a favorable comparison of you with your peers, and have good written communication skills. No one person is likely to satisfy all these criteria, so choose people who come closest to the ideal.

Contact potential references early in the process, such as early in the fall quarter of your senior year. Meet with them in person to confirm that they know you well enough to write a good letter. Provide recommendation forms, and any supporting materials such as your resume or a copy of your application essay that may assist them in writing a good, detailed letter.

If you will not be applying to graduate school as a senior, but plan to pursue further education in the future, consider seeking letters of recommendation before graduating, as it may be difficult to obtain letters of recommendation from professors later. If you've already been out of school and working for several years, contact the graduate schools you are applying to and ask what their policies are regarding your situation. Program policies vary considerably, so it is best to check with each school.

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