

The decision to attend graduate school needs to be calculated and determined after close examination. Are you simply prolonging the job search or do you need an advanced degree to enter your chosen field? Carefully determine your reasons for going to graduate school and make sure that you have a clear goal of what you hope to accomplish. Most people choose to attend graduate school to further advance their knowledge in a field or gain the education necessary to change careers or to advance professionally. Graduate school is different from undergraduate study. Classes are more focused, admission is more selective and there are higher standards expected from your academic work. Don't let this intimidate you; however, your decision should be made after thoroughly thinking it through.

Here are some criteria to consider when thinking of graduate school programs:

- Fields of study offered
- Reputation of the school and the program
- Geographic location, including proximity to internships/practicums
- Cost and financial assistance
- Time required to complete degree
- Surrounding community and college environment
- Career assistance
- Admission standards
- Your personal circumstances (job and family considerations, etc.)
- Research/Academic Focus
- Size

Application Checklist

Graduate schools can have varying deadlines for applications depending on the start date of the program and whether or not they allow for rolling admission throughout the academic year. Regardless of when you are applying, you can follow this checklist to help you organize and better plan for your application process.

- Identify graduate schools of interest (which programs, concentration, location, etc.).
- Locate graduate schools that have your program(s) of interest. Some helpful resources include:
 - www.gradschools.com
 - www.petersons.com
 - www.princetonreview.com
- Request catalogs and application materials from potential graduate schools.
- Determine test requirements, prerequisites and application deadlines.
- Register and prepare for appropriate standardized test (GRE, MAT, GMAT, etc.).
- Research financial aid options including scholarships, loans and assistantships at each school you are applying.
- Visit the graduate school while school is in session so you can get a better idea of what the campus is like (atmosphere, student body, professors, etc.). This also gives you a chance to potentially meet your program advisor or professors.
- Ask faculty in your department, or other applicable individuals to write letters of recommendation. Typically you will provide three letters of recommendation. Provide them with your resume, transcript, deadlines for application, and instructions for submitting.
- Request copies of your official transcripts from all undergraduate institutions that you have attended.
- Take standardized tests and have your scores sent directly to the schools. It may be a good idea to take these exams over the summer so that you not only have more time to study, but you also will have time to retake them if you are unhappy with your scores.
- Write your personal statement for your applications. Have your statement reviewed by the Career Center as well as the Academic Resource Center.
- Apply for scholarships, fellowships, grants and assistantships.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Verify that your application materials were received and are complete.
- Prepare for on-campus interviews, if required.
- Talk with family, faculty or a member of the Career Center about acceptances and rejections.
- Make your final decision and send in the deposit.