Applying For
GRADUATE
SCHOOL

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Career Services, 1532 Student Union, (419) 530-4341
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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Graduate School Application Timetable…………………………………………………… 2
Questions to Ask When Choosing A Graduate School……………………………………3
Admission Policies and Procedures…………………………………………………………4
The Pros and Cons of Part Time Programs………………………………………………5
Financing Graduate School…………………………………………………………………5
Overview of Types of Tests…………………………………………………………………6
Graduate School Essays……………………………………………………………………7
Tips for the Interview……………………………………………………………………….9
Helpful Web Sites……………………………………………………………………………9
GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATION TIME TABLE

Applying to graduate school can be a long and time-consuming process. It is important to start early in deciding whether or not you want to go and where you would like to apply. Keep in mind that all times indicated below are approximate, and you will need to check deadlines for specific programs since they vary from institution to institution.

**Junior Year/Summer Before Senior Year**
- Start browsing through guides to graduate programs and deciding where you would like to apply. Call or write to schools to request catalogues. Check out the schools’ web sites. Determine test requirements, application deadlines, and test dates.
- Meet with faculty members and career counselors to discuss programs.
- Determine which standardized tests you will need to take, and take them.
- Register for required standardized tests. Consult study books, such as *Cracking the GRE*, published by the Princeton Review, to help you learn how to answer the questions and what to expect. Take practice tests.
- Obtain information and registration materials for tests from the Scott Park Testing Center (530-3269). Begin budgeting for the application process. It can become costly. Start a checklist of schools/programs that you wish to apply to, the application requirements, test requirements, fees, and deadlines.

**September/October**
- Review your checklist of schools/programs, application requirements, test requirements, fees, and deadlines.
- Take required standardized tests. (eg. GRE, MCAT, LSAT, GMAT)
- Write a draft of your personal statement.
- Research financial aid sources, fellowships, and assistantships.
- Begin figuring out possible budgets based on financial aid, costs of school, and cost of living.
- Request letters of recommendation from faculty members.

**November/December**
- Order official transcript from the Registrar’s Office (530-4824). Ask if the office can send a transcript with your fall term grades in time to meet the program deadlines. Many schools will require you to have them sent directly to their school.
- Finalize your personal statement and respond to the questions asked on the application.
- Mail applications. Even if deadlines are later, it is good to get applications in early.
- Apply for assistantships, fellowships, and grants.

**January/March**
- Contact schools about the possibility of visiting and scheduling an interview.
- If you are taking out student loans, fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) or the GAPSFA (Graduate and Professional School Financial Aid). You need to find out which one the schools require. You need to have a copy of your federal income tax returns to fill out the information. The Financial Aid Office is located in room 1200, Rocket Hall, 530-8700.
QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING A GRADUATE SCHOOL

**Faculty**
- How many faculty members are in the department?
- How many are full- and part-time? What non-teaching experience have they had?
- What is considered a full graduate teaching load?
- How many full-time faculty members hold doctorates?
- What post-doctorate learning experiences have the faculty had and when?
- What is the faculty’s commitment to professional activities?
- What have the faculty members published lately?
- What is the breakdown of the faculty according to age, gender, and race?
- Did the faculty earn degrees from a variety of institutions?
- How long has each faculty member been at this institution?
- What academic ranks are held (how many are tenured)?
- How often can students see or talk with faculty and advisors?

**Resources**
- Does the program have any planned practical experiences? Where and doing what?
- What assistantships and scholarships are available and how likely would you be to receive one?
- What is the estimated cost for tuition, general fees, books, and living expenses?
- What is the nature and breadth of research facilities and how are they funded?
- What is the size of the library holdings in your field?
- What career services, counseling, medical, and housing facilities are available?
- What student support groups are available in the department?
- What sort of community, social, cultural, academic, and entertainment resources are there?

**Admission**
- Which admissions qualifying tests are required?
- What is the average undergraduate GPA of students admitted?
- What percentage of applicants were admitted in the last 12 months?
- Of the students who were admitted, what proportion of them dropped out on their own?
- How many students were dropped for academic reasons in the past year?

**Curriculum**
- What specific degrees are offered?
- Will the curriculum allow for tailoring degree plans to meet specific career goals?
- What areas of concentration are offered?
- What are the required courses in each program and how many electives are offered?
- What type of thesis, oral and written comprehensive exam is required?
- What is the average length of time it takes to complete the degree?
- What are the program’s philosophical or theoretical principles?
- What values, attitudes, and knowledge are considered outcome goals for the program?
- How is student progress evaluated on cognitive and affective dimensions?
**Student Body**

- What are the career goals of currently enrolled students?
- What is the size of enrollment in the school, the graduate school, and your department?
- How many students are part- and full-time?
- What is the breakdown of the student population by geographical origin and undergraduate institution?
- What is the breakdown of the present student body according to age, gender, and race?

**ADMISSIONS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Graduate school admissions is a tricky business. From the GRE to filling out applications, the admission process involves hard work and the coordination of many resources. The key to success is planning based on correct information.

Although admission policies and procedures vary, there are some standard requirements. Graduate schools in arts and sciences, education, and business generally expect applicants to possess an appropriate bachelor’s degree at the time of entrance. Take some time and explore http://www.kaptest.com/. In it, you will find everything you need to get started on a successful admissions process.

**Application and Fee:** Make sure the application is neatly typed or written (preferably typed) and is mailed by the deadline. If the schools you are applying to have rolling admission, you should apply as early as possible - applicants are reviewed as their applications are received. Even schools with a regular admission process like to see applications in advance of the deadline. Be sure to enclose all required fees.

**Transcript:** Every graduate institution requires at least one undergraduate transcript in support of the application for admission. If you have attended more than one college or university, include copies of transcripts from each school to show all credits earned toward your degree. Since admission procedures on the graduate level are often coordinated efforts between the offices of the Dean, the departments, and admissions, more than one copy of a transcript may be required. Requests for transcripts must be made in writing to the Registrar’s Office.

**Letters of Reference:** These are typically required as part of the application procedure. Generally, letters are to be provided by members of the faculty or past employers who are in a position to assess your attitude and motivation for graduate study. It is important to choose reference writers who know you well and can attest to your abilities, accomplishments, and character. You can enhance or supplement the writers’ knowledge of your ambitions by scheduling a brief appointment to discuss your goals and achievements and by providing them with a copy of your resume. Ask your professors or employers to use the forms enclosed in the application, and always provide a self-addressed stamped envelope.
Interview: May be required by the institution. If you are applying for an assistantship or internship, an interview may also be required. If the school does not require an interview, it would still be advantageous to schedule a time to meet with a faculty member or chair of the department. This will provide an opportunity for you to visit the campus to make sure that it is a good fit for you. It is also a good time to find out more about the school and program. Treat your graduate school interview as you would a job interview; be professional and prepared.

Special Admissions Requirements: Some schools or programs require a work sample or portfolio of your talents.

COMMON REASONS GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATIONS ARE REJECTED:

- Inappropriate undergraduate curriculum
- Low admissions test scores
- Missed deadlines
- Poor grades or lack of academic prerequisites
- Weak or ineffective recommendation letters
- Incomplete application or files

THE PROS AND CONS OF PART TIME PROGRAMS

- Are there night/weekend classes?
- Is the library open at night and on weekends?
- What about the campus computer center? The lab?
- What sort of financial aid, if any, is available for part-timer students?
- Do professors work with part-time students’ special needs?
- Are current part time students available to discuss their experiences?
- Are the course offerings the same as in the full-time program?
- Do the same faculty members teach as in the full-time program?
- Do part-time students get the same priority as those in the full-time program when registering for courses? Often full-time students have an earlier registration, meaning some courses could be filled before part-time students get a chance.
- Are the admissions standards for both the same? If the part-time program has different admissions or faculty standards, investigate the program more carefully. It may not be up to the standards of the full-time version.

FINANCING GRADUATE SCHOOL

In seeking financial aid for graduate study, leave no stone unturned. In many cases, you will not have to pay for tuition at all. Assistantships often pay for your tuition, and can consist of teaching, research, or other positions in offices related to your program. Most assistantships also have stipends, which vary. Ask about assistantship opportunities before accepting a program to explore all of your options.

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The best place to begin is with the financial aid offices at the schools you are considering. Ask about Federal Student Aid Programs, State Aid Programs, private foundation scholarships, and the financial aid program of the university or graduate school. When contacting individual schools for information, inquire about these programs as well as fellowships, grants and teaching, research, and graduate assistantships.

Below are essential principles to follow when applying for financial aid:

• Your application and supporting materials must be submitted well in advance of the application deadline date. It would be wise for you to make inquiries regarding admission and financial aid a year in advance of the date of your anticipated enrollment.

• A prerequisite for a successful application for financial assistance is careful reading of the application form coupled with a scrupulous effort to provide all of the requested information.

• If you receive two or more awards, examine their actual cash value to be sure that you understand what you would receive in each case. Some fellowships have a very small face value, but carry additional benefits such as tuition and fees.

• If your stipend is not enough to carry you through the year, look into opportunities for borrowing money. Loans are granted to students by the federal government and financial institutions. Compare the different interest rates and terms of repayment before committing yourself to a particular loan.

• Two important considerations in financial aid awards are residency and your dependency status with your parents. Residency is determined by the length of time you have lived in a state or county without attending school. Independent status for financial aid purposes is determined by several factors. Contact the financial aid office for specific guidelines.

OVERVIEW OF TYPES OF TESTS

There are a number of different tests graduate schools use for admission, so it is very important to know exactly which test each school to which you apply requires. Scores on these tests are used not only for admission, but also for fellowships, grants, and assistantships. Time spent becoming familiar with the format of the exam can greatly improve your test-taking confidence and scores. There are many books, computer programs, courses and practice tests that can help you prepare.

**Graduate Record Exam (GRE):** The test is used for admission into most graduate programs. The general test is computerized, and consists of three sections: verbal (30 minutes), quantitative (45 minutes) and analytical writing (75 minutes). The verbal section tests reading comprehension and vocabulary, while the quantitative covers algebra, geometry, arithmetic, and data analysis. The analytical writing portion tests your reasoning ability through 45 minutes of writing a perspective on an issue and 30 minutes on analyzing an argument. In addition to the general test, there are subject tests that assess your specific ability in a particular discipline (i.e. English, Biochemistry,
Spanish). For some schools, the GRE Subject test is required, while for others it may be optional or not required at all.
Website: [http://www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)

**Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT):** Offered solely via computer, the GMAT tests verbal, qualitative, and analytical writing abilities and includes 78 multiple choice questions as well as two 30-minute essays. The exam generally takes three and a half hours to complete.
Website: [http://www.gmat.org](http://www.gmat.org)

**Miller Analogies Test (MAT):** Tests reasoning ability through 100 verbal analogies. Occasionally used instead of the GRE.
Website: [http://www.milleranalogies.com](http://www.milleranalogies.com)

**The Law School Admission Test (LSAT):** This test is specifically for students applying to law school and tests logical reasoning, analytical reasoning through performance in logical games, and reading comprehension. The total test, which is paper-based, lasts 170 minutes and includes a 30 minute writing sample and a 35 minute experimental section.
Website: [http://www.lsat-center.com](http://www.lsat-center.com)

**Medical College Admission Test (MCAT):** This six-hour, paper or computerized test measures verbal reasoning, knowledge of physical science and biological science, and writing ability. The test consists primarily of reading passages followed by multiple-choice questions.
Website: [http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm](http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm)

While the above are the most often used, there are many other exams including: **Allied Health Professional Admission Test (AHPAT), Dental Admission Test (DAT), Veterinary College Admission Test (VCAT), Optometry College Admission Test (OCAT), Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT), Praxis II (Education), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)** for non-native English speakers

**GRADUATE SCHOOL ESSAYS**

The application essay (also known as “statement of purpose” or “personal statement”) has two basic purposes. First, the essay is used as an indicator of your writing ability. Second, personal statements provide an opportunity for you to articulate your goals and reasons for applying to graduate school in your particular area of study. The essay is a chance for you to create a more detailed, human portrait of yourself and the assets you could bring to a graduate program beyond your test scores and undergraduate transcripts.

Different graduate schools may ask for very different essays. Writing an excellent essay entails examining the essay question carefully and conforming your essay to the question. Generally, schools will ask you to articulate why you should be admitted to their particular program, so writing a “one-size-fits-all” essay is not the correct approach. The key to writing your essay is to
match your abilities and goals specifically to the individual program, which entails researching the program as well as knowing your own goals.

**Knowing Yourself and Your Goals**

Before writing your essay, take the time to assess your skills, experiences, and achievements. Which of these set you apart? How do your experiences translate into successful completion of graduate school? Be sure to give concrete examples if you list characteristics about yourself (e.g., motivated, critical thinker), and be able to give specific, detailed examples of those characteristics in your past actions. Another important facet of presenting yourself in your essay is giving an overview of your goals, and how attending graduate school will enable you to reach those goals.

**Knowing the Graduate School**

The other half of writing an excellent essay is matching your clearly defined goals and abilities to the program to which you are applying. Check out the school’s website to learn more about the specifics of the program and the research interests of the faculty. Link your goals to the mission of the university and program.

Remember to have at least one other person carefully review your essay and PROOFREAD it! With a little preparation and self-assessment, writing the graduate school essay does not have to be an ordeal.

**TIPS FOR THE INTERVIEW**

- Double-check the time of your appointment. Arrange to be five minutes early, before the scheduled time. Do not be too early... (you shouldn't be hanging around the lobby for half an hour).
- Have extra copies of your resume with you. Have your reference list available, including names, addresses, and phone numbers. Also, be sure that your references expect phone calls or other inquiries about your school search.
- Wear clean, well-pressed clothing. Arrive well groomed from head to heels.
- Give the appearance of self-confidence and energy when you first enter the room: Smile, Be Yourself. Give a firm handshake. Be relaxed. Maintain eye contact.
- Be genuine, but not overly friendly with the interviewer.
- Before answering a question take time to pause and plan an adequate response to the question. Try not to fill silences with nervous responses.
- Keep your responses positive. Prepare positive answers to the most frequently asked interviewing questions. Prepare positive responses to cover an irregular problematic academic history. Your Career Services Advisor can help you work through this area before you begin to interview.
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer(s) for his (her or his/their) consideration and time.
- Send a thank you letter immediately following the interview.

Source: http://www.searchconsultants.com/article/compendium/etiquette.html
SUGGESTIONS FOR MAKING A GREAT FIRST APPEARANCE

General Guidelines
- Conservative two-piece business suit (solid dark blue or grey is best)
- Conservative long-sleeved shirt/blouse (white is best, pastel is next best)
- Clean, polished conservative shoes
- Well-groomed hairstyle
- Clean, trimmed fingernails
- Minimal cologne or perfume
- Empty pockets--no bulges or tinkling coins
- No gum, candy or cigarettes
- Light briefcase or portfolio case
- No visible body piercing (nose rings, eyebrow rings, etc.)

Especially for Men
- Necktie should be silk with a conservative pattern
- Dark shoes (black lace-ups are best)
- Dark socks (black is best)
- Get a haircut; short hair always fares best in interviews
- No beards (unless you are interviewing for a job as a lumberjack!)
- Mustaches are a possible negative, but if you must, make sure it is neat and trimmed
- No rings other than wedding ring or college ring
- No earrings (if you normally wear one, take it out)

Especially for Women
- Always wear a suit with a jacket; no dresses
- Shoes with conservative heels
- Conservative hosiery at or near skin color (and no runs!)
- No purses, small or large; carry a briefcase instead
- If you wear nail polish (not required), use clear or a conservative color
- Minimal use of makeup (it should not be too noticeable)
- No more than one ring on each hand
- One set of earrings only


HELPFUL WEB SITES

Peterson’s Guide Home Page
http://www.petersons.com
The Most Comprehensive Online Source of Graduate School Information
http://www.gradschools.com/

Graduate School Guide
http://www.graduateguide.com

Graduate School Survival Guide
http://www-smi.standford.edu/people/pratt/smi/advice.html

Princeton Review Home Page
http://www.princetonreview.com/grad

UT Career Services Home Page
http://www.student-services.utoledo.edu/career

Grad Source
http://www.gradsource.com