

Top 10 Questions Regarding Graduate School

1. What graduate program(s) do I want to apply to?

- If you are interested in a particular area of study, talk with your professors to get ideas as to what careers are offered with that degree.
- Ask yourself: does the career I'm interested in require an advanced degree?
- Remember: you do not have to go to graduate school for the same topic as your undergraduate degree! Just be mindful of prerequisites for admission

2. When should I start thinking about graduate school?

- It is never too early to begin looking into graduate programs.
- By researching schools early you have a better chance of making sure you meet all of the requirements.
 - Do not wait until your senior year to start looking into programs if you want to start the next year!

3. What should I look at when researching graduate programs?

- Program requirements:
 - GPA (strive for at least a 3.0)
 - Pre-requisites for admission (which may vary by institution)
 - Admissions Tests (Graduate Record Exam-GRE, Law School Admissions Test-LSAT, Medical College Admissions Test-MCAT, etc)
 - Thesis required?
- Program qualities:
 - Location (city/rural)
 - Population of university
 - Retention Rate (How many students admitted graduate?)
 - Job rate
- A good place to start: <http://www.gradschools.com/>

4. What is the graduate school application process like?

- How many schools should I apply to?
 - As a general rule of thumb, apply to at least 6 schools (two that you are definitely sure you can get in to, two that you are unsure as to whether you will be accepted to, and two that are your reach schools)
- There are several applications that you need to fill out for each institution.
 - Graduate School application
 - Program application (interested in)
 - Assistantships applications (if offered)

5. What items are typically required to complete a graduate school application?

- Personal statement (required)
- Resume (if required)
- Letters of Reference (2-4)
- Application(s) along with a processing fee
- Test scores (if needed)



6. How do I write a personal statement?

- This is your first impression: make sure the document is error free!
- Topics to include typically vary from institution to institution, so your personal statement should be tailored for each program or position that you are applying for, but you will generally want to include background information, education and experiences, and anything that makes you stand out!
- Do not use the same personal statement for all applications. This leaves the admission committee with the impression that you are not a serious applicant.
- Be concise and clear in your writing.
- Personal Statement Template <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/>

7. How do I write a resume?

- Typically resumes should be limited to one to two pages – concise and visually appealing
- Not necessary to put references unless the application directly specifies.
- Resume templates can be found on the Microsoft Office Website at: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/CT010362222.aspx>
- Start with a template, but make sure to really think about what you're writing. You don't want to leave the impression that you are lazy or don't care!

8. When should I ask professors to write letters of recommendation?

- Ask professors at least three months in advance (professors are busy too)
- Being an involved student will help your professors get to know you better
 - If you only do what is required of you, you may not get a very persuasive letter of recommendation, or may not get one at all.
- *Ways to get involved:*
 - Join clubs/organizations within your perspective department
 - Sign up for independent study/supervised research
 - Ask professors questions regarding career options or coursework
 - Attend class
- When graduate departments are looking for students to admit into their program extracurricular activities (involvement) are considering deciding factors as well.

9. Which graduate school entrance exams should I take?

- Find out early whether this is required for admission into a program.
- Start studying early (at least 6 months before the exam)
- Take the exam your Junior year- if you do not get the score you would have liked, this gives you time to retake it before you officially apply to programs.

10. What is graduate school like?

- Typically have all courses with the same group (cohort) of students
- Grades primarily consist of projects, tests, and article reviews.
- A lot of reading!
 - At times, the reading may seem like too much
 - Skimming and pulling out main ideas helps with this.
 - Study groups help tremendously when studying for tests or doing projects.
 - Although it may seem overwhelming at times, don't give up. The work is doable.
 - If you are struggling, talk with your professors.