

Consideration when Selecting a Graduate School

- Programs of study offered
- Rigor of curriculum
- Faculty's teaching philosophy
- Reputation of the school and/or the participating faculty
- Job placement
- Geographic location
- Size of the institution
- Admission requirements
- Tuition and fees
- Financial support
- Availability of Teaching/Graduate Assistantships
- On and Off-campus housing
- Support services
- Facilities and infrastructure
- Time required to complete degree (part-time or full-time)
- Environment (cultural/recreational opportunities, internship opportunities, weather)
- Personal circumstances (job, family, etc.)

THE APPLICATION

Things to remember

- **Plan ahead.** Allow yourself plenty of time to gather the information you need, and to review, revise, and edit.
- **Seek help.** Get feedback from your professors or others in your field of study. Your campus writing center can help you to craft a strong personal essay. The web sites noted on page 11 offer tips and advice on preparing graduate applications.
- **Follow up.** Make sure that you submit materials on time and follow up to verify that all supporting materials are received on time.

Biographical form

Graduate applications typically include a general form requesting standard biographical and academic information, including GPA and test scores. If the scores you report do not match the scores reported by the testing agency or transcript, be sure to give a clear explanation of the discrepancy. When you provide your contact information, be sure that it is current and that you monitor your messages on a regular basis. **HINT:** Avoid e-mail addresses and recorded messages that are offensive, cute, or otherwise unprofessional.

The personal statement

The personal statement presents the core of your application. This is where you set yourself apart from other applicants and convince the committee that your experience and interests are a good fit for your prospective program. The graduate admissions committee also uses your personal statement to make funding decisions. If your areas of interest match up with funded research projects in the department, you are more likely to receive an assistantship offer.

Letters of recommendation

You will be asked to provide letters of recommendation. Ask the faculty who know you best and who can comment positively on the quality of your work. Do not feel that you need to lighten the burden on faculty by spreading your requests to multiple faculty members. The reverse is true. They can easily modify a core letter for a number of schools. Letters from senior faculty in your prospective discipline carry more weight than those from faculty outside of your field or from faculty who are newer in their careers. It is helpful to meet with the faculty who are writing letters for you, so that they can get a clear understanding of your interests and your qualifications. You might provide them with a resume or outline of the courses you've taken; any research experience; or related activities, projects, or term papers you completed in their class. These items will give them something concrete to use in their letters.

Graduate School Entrance Examinations (GRE, GMAT, MCAT, LSAT, MAT, etc)

Graduate School Entrance Exams is used by many programs as part of their basic admissions requirements. It is important that you understand the format of the specific test that you are required to take and that you practice taking it so that you have a sense for the areas in which you may need to refresh your skills. Practice books are also available in your library and local bookstores. **HINT:** You may find that the graduate programs you have identified do not require test scores for admission. Some university and national fellowship programs, however, do review test scores, so it may be in your interest to take the test anyway. It is a good idea to find out whether funding opportunities in your field require test scores.

Other Important Requirements

Depending on the program that you are applying for, other application materials may be required. An interview or additional essay/writing sample may be required from certain colleges or universities. In addition, specific programs or departments within a college/university may require additional or separate application materials from those required by the larger university. If you are applying to an Art, Music or Performing Arts program, a portfolio or audition may be required of you prior to acceptance in the program. **HINT:** Always read and reread application packet closely to make sure that you submit ALL required and recommended materials. Most application packets supply a checklist so that you can double-check your materials before sending or submitting your completed application.