

General Guidelines for Graduate School

Graduate school applications are complicated and the selection process is highly competitive.

- Be sure of what you want to study, and why.
- When selecting a school, consider where it is located (“Do I want to live here?”) and who is in the relevant department (“Do I want to study with this faculty?”).
- For Ph.D. programs, articulate your plans for a dissertation topic while you are applying.
- Be clear about whether or not your school will allow you to defer entry, if applicable.

To learn more about a particular field, speak with tutors and alumni.

- They can help share experiences, relate your interests to particular fields, and suggest promising institutions.
- They can give you a better idea of what to expect from a graduate school environment.
- The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* at www.bls.gov/ooh/ provides information on specific careers and the degrees required for each.

Research publications by the faculty at your target school.

- Most professors are compelled by their institution to publish regularly.
- The staff at Meem Library can help you find publications if you’re having difficulty.

Steps in Researching and Applying

Sophomore Spring or Junior Fall:

- Assess yourself as a candidate. We at PPD can help!
- Contact the registrar for your GPA – many graduate schools have a GPA requirement.
- Catalogue your strengths and weaknesses in order to best represent yourself.

Junior Year:

- Research potential graduate schools (two resources: www.petersons.com or www.gradschools.com).
- Learn about these schools from tutors, alumni, friends, family, and PPD.
- Prioritize your own criteria when choosing a school: cost, location, program quality, faculty quality, etc.
- Determine which tests you will need to take (GRE, LSAT, GMAT, MCAT) and study. Take as many practice tests as necessary. Be conscious of the registration deadline for specific tests.

- Obtain application information from your target schools and contact department faculty or admissions with any questions that you cannot find through your own research.

Summer or Senior Fall:

- Consider how you will pay for your education. What are your options for financial aid, scholarships, or loans? Major scholarships (e.g. Fulbright) have early deadlines, so be conscious of what you need and when to apply.
- Arrange a campus visit, if possible.
- Request letters of recommendation from tutors and employers, and do so early. Allow your recommender one month to complete the letter.
- Prepare your statement of purpose, if applicable, and do so early. Be clear, thoughtful, enthusiastic, and unapologetically yourself.
- Apply, and do so early!
- Confirm that your target schools have received your applications.
- Remember that PPD is always available for assistance.

Senior Spring:

- Wait for letters of acceptance, wait-listing, or rejection.
- Remain in contact with target schools – many wait-listings becomes acceptances, so it is useful to keep your name present to admissions committees.
- If you have a relationship with a faculty member, they may be willing to inquire on your behalf.
- Be proactive!

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