

How to Navigate the Application Timeline for Graduate School

When should you begin preparing? When should you gather and submit application materials? Use this guide to assist you in creating an application timeline that is right for you.

1. Search and prepare **before and during your junior year**

- Identify graduate programs of interest and request brochures to identify factors such as program curriculum and uniqueness, requirements for admission, student demographics, etc.
- Involve yourself in campus activities, volunteer, internship, and work opportunities related to your field of study – schools will look for these experiences in your application.
- Talk with faculty, advisors, and mentors about your graduate school goals.
- Keep up your grades – many schools will require at least a 3.0 or higher for more competitive programs.
- Prepare your résumé and visit the Center for Career Development for a professional critique.

2. Initiate action at the **end of your junior year**

- Solicit letters of recommendation from professors/professionals who know you well.
- Obtain graduate school exam information. Exam scores may help secure funding from national and other funding sources.
- Verify the accuracy of your official transcript by visiting the Registrar's office.

3. Make a decision and plan a course of action during the **summer before senior year**

- Narrow your choices of graduate programs and create a checklist of each school's application requirements and deadlines.
- Draft a personal statement to generate ideas for your application.
- Research sources of financial aid.
- Visit schools and reach out to faculty, staff, and current students at prospective schools to ask questions, build relationships, and make connections.
- Consider a test preparation course if you plan to take a graduate school entrance exam (e.g., GRE).
- Register to take a graduate school entrance exam, if applicable.
- Begin filling out applications.

4. Apply to programs in the **fall semester of your senior year**

- Create a budget for application fees and travel expenses for on-campus interviews.
- Finish collecting letters of recommendation.
- Finalize your personal statement and have a Center for Career Development professional review your essay.
- Request your transcripts to be sent to each school you are applying to. You can request that the Registrar's Office hold your transcript until fall semester grades are submitted.
- Follow directions. Complete and submit all of your applications and supporting documents. If you are completing the application online, be sure you receive an email or postcard as proof that each school received your application. If you are mailing your application, make a copy in case it gets lost. Be sure to include everything in your application.
- Plan for interviews if they are required. Prepare your answers and make a list of questions to ask.
- Practice your interview skills by scheduling and completing a practice interview at the Center for Career Development.

5. Follow-up during your winter break of senior year

- Write thank-you notes to the people who wrote your letters of recommendation.
- Fill out the FAFSA for federal financial aid beginning on January 1.
- Continue to pursue and apply for all forms of financial aid (e.g., assistantships, fellowships, loans, grants, and other financial assistance offered by outside agencies and organizations).
- Before the final deadline, contact schools to confirm that your materials have been received.

6. Make your decision during spring semester of your senior year

- Talk with trusted individuals about the program(s) that have accepted you and consider your options.
- Visit schools where you have been accepted, if you have not already done so.
- Notify the program you accept.
- Notify the program(s) you decline.
- Contact the people who wrote your letters of recommendation and be sure to let them know of your decision.
- Respond to any financial aid opportunities that have been offered to you.
- Read all information sent by the program that you will be attending.
- Request additional information you may need (e.g., housing resources, funding opportunities, current students to contact).

Resources

“How to Decide if Graduate School is Right for You”	A supplement/handout provided by the University of Connecticut’s Center for Career Development; information is provided to students to help guide them in making the decision of whether to apply to graduate school. The supplement may be obtained online on our website or in person.
Kaplan or Princeton Review	Kaplan (http://www.kaplan.com/our-programs/test-preparation) and Princeton Review (http://www.princetonreview.com/graduate-school.aspx) both offer practice and test preparation. Visit the websites for more information.
studentaid.ed.gov	A website resource that provides information on government-funded loans for students wishing to attend school. Read information provided to understand the different types of loans available.