



Graduate School

Furthering your career goals

Considering Graduate School?

Before starting your application, consider some of these questions and talk with professors, career advisors, professionals in the field, current graduate students, and advisors about your responses.

Why are you interested in going to graduate school?

What are your career goals?

How will an advanced degree help you attain these goals? Is an advanced degree required?

Do you have the academic stamina to continue your education or do you need time off?

Do you possess the grades and test scores necessary for admittance into the program of your choice? (Most graduate programs will look for a minimum GPA of 3.0 or above)

Will full-time work experience enhance your candidacy for graduate school admittance?

Don't go to graduate school simply because...

- you don't know what you want to do for a career
- you are avoiding the job search
- your parents say you need to go
- you want a way to defer student loan payments
- you are unhappy with a current job

Choosing a Program

Now that you've decided that graduate school is the next step for you, it's time to begin looking for programs. Your professors and advisors are great resources for researching programs. Also, try looking at some of these graduate school directories and websites to explore programs.

- Petersons.com
- GraduateGuide.com
- Gradschools.com
- US News and World Report Ranking List
- Professional Associations related to your industry of interest

Some industries prefer graduates from accredited programs, so be sure to check on hiring practices in your industry before choosing programs.

Application Process

Use this list to make sure you have these materials ready for your applications. Be sure to **carefully review the application checklist for each of the programs to which you are applying (the examples below are general guidelines)**. You should carefully devise a system of record keeping, maintain copies of everything, and begin talking to your professors, requesting letters of recommendation, and researching programs during your junior year.

- Application Form**
- Test Scores.** Different fields require different tests. Give yourself several months to prepare. The GRE is the most common exam for graduate school; for specific information visit ETS.org
- Official Transcript**
- Recommendation Letters.** It is vital that you get to know your professors and other supervisors well. You will need approximately three letters of recommendation. Give recommenders at least a month to write the letters. Provide them with your resume, a statement of your experience and goals, any necessary forms, and a stamped, addressed envelope (if necessary).
- Personal Statement.** Visit Writing Tutorial Services, the Career Development Center, Health Professions and Prelaw Center, your school's specialized career services office, and your professors/academic advisors for help composing your personal statement.
- Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

Financial Aid

Opportunities for financing your graduate school education vary greatly depending on the program and the field of study. While working on your application materials for graduate school, you should be asking the specific programs about potential merit based scholarships, graduate student loan programs, and graduate assistantships which include research, teaching, and administrative positions. Sites such as U.S. News and Petersons have additional information on types of aid and how to finance your graduate school education.

Be sure to ask the programs you plan to attend about options for paying for graduate school.

Comparing a Resume & Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Resume

a marketing tool, a summary of your experiences.

- Highlight of professional accomplishments
- One page
- Short sentences/ accomplishment statements
- Less class and academic focused
- Can be customized to fit each position during the job search

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

a detailed overview of academic accomplishments.

- Academically focused
- More than one page
- Highlights courses, research, teaching experience, publications, presentations, and conferences
- Showcases skills
- Typically used for research, academic, and medical positions

Personal Statement (Statement of Purpose)

There are two types of personal statements: those that require you to answer prompts and those that provide few or no directions. If not specified, your personal statement should be approximately 1.5 to 2 pages in length.

Before you begin writing your personal statement, take time to reflect on your past experiences, reasons for applying to graduate school, and what makes you stand out from the other applicants. Answering the questions below will provide a strong foundation for writing your personal statement.

- What is missing from your application packet that you want the committee to know about you?
- What is unique, special, and distinctive about you or your experiences?
- How did you get interested in this field and what has been the impact of the field on your experiences so far?
- What are your career goals?
- Are there any gaps in your academic record that you should explain?
- What personal characteristics and/or skills do you possess that will help you succeed in this profession?
- What have you learned about this field throughout your various experiences and education?
- Have you overcome any hardships or obstacles to get to this point?
- What makes you a strong fit for this program?
- Why are you interested in this specific school?

General Guidelines

- **Tell a story/Concentrate on your opening paragraph** - Make your statement memorable by writing a story with concrete details that are unique and lively. Draw the reader in with your unique story and build upon this throughout the statement.
- **Be specific** - What skills have you developed that will allow you to succeed? Also consider what you are going to do after graduate school and what skills you will learn from the program that will make you a great advertising executive, English professor, or researcher, for example.
- **Do some research and know your audience** - Mention parts of the curriculum that are in line with your areas of interest and specific faculty with whom you want to do research.
- **Avoid certain subjects and clichés** - If possible, avoid talking about experiences from high school or other controversial topics (religious/political issues), unless they are relevant to the program to which you are applying. Avoid generic reasoning (such as attending art school because you are creative) whenever possible. Answer the questions on the previous page to help you avoid clichés.
- **Showcase your fit** - Make sure that you explain why you are a good fit for the program as well by doing research about the program, classes offered, and faculty members in the department. Demonstrate through your personal statement that you and the program are a good match by providing examples and tying together your experiences.

Personal Statement Formula

The following diagram is one popular way of formulating your personal statement. Schedule an appointment with your career advisor to discuss your personal statement in detail.

