

## GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE

This timeline begins two summers out from entering graduate school. For instance, if you plan on entering your program in Fall 2021, this process begins the summer of 2020.

### Summer

To guide your research into prospective programs and schools, take time to think about your motivation for obtaining a graduate or professional degree, factors affecting your decision, and in what ways this degree would benefit you. Think about how much time and effort you can devote to an advanced degree, your financial situation, and personal considerations, such as family or work obligations.

You can take admissions exams throughout the year, but you will want to consider when you plan on applying (application deadline and when you want to enter graduate school) and the amount of preparation you need to do well on an exam. Practice exams will give you a better understanding of the test and will provide you a baseline for structuring your studying. The most common admissions exams are the GMAT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT. For a comprehensive list of exams, please see our info sheet on Admissions Exams.

What to do (May):

- Begin research into graduate programs (create a document to organize this information for your reference)
- Determine which graduate exam is required for your field and take practice test(s) to determine what you need to study

Once you have started a list of programs and schools you're interested in:

- Start outreach to potential programs
- Request information about financial assistance, student outcomes for graduates, etc.

### Fall

At this point, your list of prospective programs should be narrowed down to a handful of schools. Your attention turns from researching programs to gathering necessary application materials. Your organizational document should include information on what materials are needed for each school, deadlines for materials, costs of attendance, and any other relevant information you need such as location of school. Keep in mind that you will have to pay application fees for each school to which you apply!

What to do (August):

- Take graduate exam (this will allow you time to re-take the exam if necessary)
- Familiarize yourself with the programs, their faculty, and the research that is being carried out
- Begin your first draft of the personal statement/statement of purpose, which will include specific information about the program, faculty, and research. Understand that you will write multiple drafts of the personal statement.

Be sure to update your organizational document as you find out more information or as your considerations change. Staying organized will help you meet deadlines and avoid feeling so overwhelmed. You will next want to:

- Reach out to faculty members for letters of recommendation. If you have been out of school for a while, this may be more challenging. If you decide to reach out to a professor you have not been in contact with for a while, provide them with enough information about how they knew you (they may not remember), what you have been up to since then, and offer to speak with them in person or via videoconferencing. Non-traditional students may also include letters from supervisors, however be sure they know what the admissions office is looking for in a recommendation letter. If you have time, take a course related to the degree you seek and cultivate a relationship with that instructor.
- Continue refining your personal statement/statement of purpose
- If you plan on receiving federal aid, fill out the FAFSA. FAFSA applications open on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Even if you don't plan on requesting federal aid, the FAFSA is a good document to complete because other institutional assistance may require the FAFSA to determine financial need.

Once faculty members agree to write letters of recommendation for you, you will:

- Provide them with materials necessary to write strong letters of recommendation. This includes your CV or resume, a draft of your personal statement, contextual information from the school/program. Be sure to give them a deadline for the letter to reach the school.
- Request your official transcripts
- If possible, arrange campus visits. If not possible to visit, ask to speak to current students or program coordinators. This will give you important information on what to expect in the program and also show your interest.

Once you have a solid first draft of your personal statement:

- Have others review it—academic mentors, current graduate students you may know, peers who provide honest feedback, or consultants from the Graduate Resource Center.

### Winter

Most applications are due between January and March. During the winter, you will want to finalize your materials for submission:

- Complete your applications and submit all materials. Be sure to save copies of your applications and confirmation of their submission. Check with faculty members to ensure they submitted letters of recommendation.

### Spring

During the spring you will start receiving notice on whether or not a school has accepted you. If you have multiple offers, consider all aspects of a school: the program itself, how you fit within the department and people there, financial aid packages, the location, and your lifestyle.