

Graduate School Timeline

Finding the right graduate program takes planning! Experts suggest that you should start thinking about the admission process earlier than you probably think. To give yourself enough time, you'll want to start at least a year before you go. Here is a suggested timeline for completing the steps required by most schools for admission to graduate study. Keep in mind that you may not be able to adhere to this timetable if your application deadlines are very early, as is the case with medical schools, or if you decide to attend graduate school at the last minute.

Junior Year: Fall and Spring

- Determine your area of interest and whether you prefer an academic or professional based program.
- Research related institutions and programs (*Peterson's Guides* and professors are both good resources).
- Register for practice graduate admissions tests (i.e., GRE, GMAT, LSAT).
- Begin requesting information from target schools.
- Be sure you're developing strong relationships with faculty, as letters of recommendation will be required in the application process.

Junior Year: Summer

- Review the information you have received and decide to which schools you would like to apply.
- Begin drafting your statement of purpose. Some programs might ask specific questions and provide specific formatting guidelines, so be sure to check the applications carefully. Register and prepare for any admission tests you will need (GRE, GMAT, etc.).
- Research financial assistance, including national scholarships, grants, fellowships and assistantships.

Senior Year: September

- Meet with faculty members to discuss selected programs and start asking for letters of recommendation.
- Ask faculty members, advisors, fellow students, and anyone whose opinion you trust to help you with your statement of purpose. If you are required to submit other writing samples, a portfolio, or an audition tape, make sure you prepare all portions of your applications well.
- Develop a timeline! Many programs have different deadlines for different portions of the application. For instance, most programs strongly recommend you apply up to a month in advance if you are interested in an assistantship or fellowship. Also, financial aid deadlines can be different from general application deadlines.
- Register for and/or take for admission tests, if you have not already done so.
- Visit the campuses of the programs you are strongly considering.

Senior Year: October

- Finalize the number of targeted schools and make sure you have all necessary application materials.
- Take admission tests and request that your scores be sent to the schools you have chosen.
- Double-check timelines for application packages for each school/program.
- Finish your statement of purpose and other materials required for applications.
- Request transcripts from the registrar for ALL undergraduate work. If you have taken courses at another college or university, be sure those are included.

Senior Year: November/December

- Send in your applications. Most schools' deadlines range from mid-November through early February. Again, sending in an application three to four weeks before it is due will help you avoid mishaps. If you are applying online, make sure to complete your application before signing out/logging off. Whether you mail or submit your application electronically, follow up with the admissions office to make sure your application was received. It is a good idea to consider sending applications by certified mail.
- Stay on top of the financial aid process. If you will be applying for loans, start researching your options now.

Senior Year: January/February/March

- Follow up on your applications.
- When you start receiving your acceptance letters, prepare to decide which program you will choose. Which factors are most important to you? Do you have a back-up plan if you do not get accepted to your top choice? Do you have another alternate plan in case you do not get accepted at all?
- You may be asked to interview for admissions, assistantships, and/or scholarships. Try to plan your travel arrangements in advance in case you need to visit more than one school. Additionally, the Career Center offers practice interviews that can help you prepare.
- File income taxes. Make multiple copies of your tax return in case you are asked to verify information. Prepare to fill out the FAFSA and any other financial aid forms.

Senior Year: March/April

- You may be asked to submit final financial aid forms/applications. Keep copies of anything you submit for your records.
- Once you have made your final decision about where you will go to graduate school, notify other schools of your choice.
- Send thank-you notes to anyone who helped you during the application process, especially those who wrote you letters of recommendation, and let them know where you are heading to school.
- **Contact the Career Center to share your success story; complete the "Share Your Success Story" online form on our website!**