

In Pursuit of More Knowledge



Applying to Graduate School

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To Go or Not to Go: Is Graduate School For You?

Learning never stops whether one is in or out of the classroom. Graduate study requires significant commitments of time and money, not to mention the rigorous academic demands it presents. Successful completion of a graduate program requires wholehearted personal motivation.

Reasons to Go

- ☺ Compelling academic, intellectual, or career interest
- ☺ To advance in a field in which you already have had significant exposure

(The above reasons assume that your professional career goals have been well thought out and that advanced study is the next logical step to achieving these goals.)

Reasons Not to Go

- ☹ You do not know what to do with your Liberal Arts degree
- ☹ To avoid entering the “real world”



Assessing the Appropriateness of Graduate School...

Asking yourself the following questions will help you assess your needs, interests, values, skills and goals in order to make an informed decision about pursuing a graduate degree.

What are my short-range and long-range career goals?

How might graduate school affect my career or professional plans?

Will the graduate degree enhance or narrow my employment prospects?

Am I mentally and physically prepared to undertake this type of an academic commitment?

At the present time, do I have other needs that conflict with pursuing a graduate degree?

Would I benefit more by gaining some practical experience before pursuing graduate studies?

Can I realistically invest the time and money required to pursue another academic degree?

What type of value, if any, do I place on attaining a graduate degree?

**MOTIVATION X ABILITY
= PERFORMANCE**

Graduate School Planning Timeline

SPRING,
Prior to Applying

- ⌚ Research areas of interest, institutions, and programs.
- ⌚ Talk to your advisor and faculty mentors about programs and application requirements.
- ⌚ Register and prepare for appropriate graduate admission tests.
- ⌚ Investigate national scholarships.
- ⌚ If appropriate, obtain letters of recommendation.

SUMMER,
Prior to Applying

- ⌚ Take required graduate admissions exams.
- ⌚ Write for application and financial aid materials.
- ⌚ Visit institutions of interest, if possible.
- ⌚ Write your application essay and have it reviewed for comments by faculty and a career advisor.
- ⌚ Check on application deadlines and rolling admissions policies.
- ⌚ For medical, dental, veterinary, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use.

FALL,
Application Time

- ⌚ Obtain letters of recommendation.
- ⌚ Send in completed applications.
- ⌚ Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov or pick up at the Financial Aid Office.

SPRING,
Follow-Up

- ⌚ Check with all institutions before their deadlines to make sure your file is complete.
- ⌚ Schedule interviews, as needed.
- ⌚ Visit institutions that accept you.
- ⌚ Send a deposit to your chosen institution.
- ⌚ Notify other colleges and universities that accepted you of your decision so that they can admit students on their waiting list.
- ⌚ Send thank-you notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your decision.

(This is a recommended general timeline; individual circumstances and programs can vary.)

Selecting a Graduate School

It is important to assess your interests, skills, and values and clarify specific career goals before you begin the process of choosing a program to apply for admission.

A. Identifying Potential Schools

- ☆ Use Peterson's Guides to Graduate School or Grad Schools.com on Career Services website at <http://careers.owu.edu>.
- ☆ Access graduate school program descriptions via links to specific schools on the Internet.
- ☆ Talk with faculty and alumni for recommendations of programs to consider.
- ☆ Read professional journals and posters in academic departments.

B. Researching Schools

- ☆ Request catalogs and application materials directly from the graduate programs.
- ☆ Check ratings in various publications (U.S. News and World Report, etc.) and also professional associations regarding the schools' reputation for academic and professional preparation.
- ☆ Visit campuses: talk to current students & faculty, attend a couple of classes.

C. Comparing Graduate Schools/Programs

- ☆ Factors to consider include:
 - ◆ Personal interests, goals, needs.
 - ◆ Costs, financial aid offered.
 - ◆ Reputation of program and faculty.
 - ◆ Location, size, facilities of school.
 - ◆ Requirements, departmental courses and offerings, and design of program (thesis vs. non-thesis, comprehensive exams, practical experience).
 - ◆ Entrance requirements (GPA, tests, course prerequisites).
 - ◆ Housing/living options.
 - ◆ Assistance from mentors and colleagues.
 - ◆ Success of graduates in finding employment upon completion of the degree.
 - ◆ Application requirements and ratio of applications to acceptances (acceptance rate).
- ☆ Also consider the research and teaching interests and academic backgrounds of the faculty members. Initiating contact with professors that share your interests can be a good way to discover more about the program and increase your chances of admission.

D. Making Your Decision

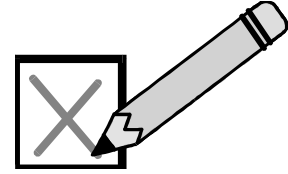
- ☆ Apply as early as possible.
- ☆ Apply to "stretch" schools, probable admits, and also have at least one "safety" school.
- ☆ Think about your match with the schools—what kind of graduate experience would you like to have? (i.e. location, size, similar to/different from OWU, relationships with faculty, emphasis on theory vs. application, etc.)

Entrance Examinations

Most graduate programs require the appropriate entrance examination as part of the application for admission.

A. Register for the Entrance Examination

- ✓ Registration materials are available in Career Services for most graduate entrance examinations. Information can also be found on our website at <http://careers.owu.edu/grad.htm>
- ✓ Many tests (i.e. GRE & GMAT) are taken on a computer and testing dates are arranged on an individual basis.
- ✓ Pay attention to the entrance requirements of each graduate school—some may require more than one test (i.e. GRE subject tests in addition to the general GRE).
- ✓ Be aware of any test registration deadlines; many are earlier than you might expect. Don't be late or you pay extra or even risk the opportunity of being able to take the exam.



B. Prepare for the Examination

- ✓ It is important for you to spend time familiarizing yourself with the design and content of the examination before the last minute.
- ✓ Study guides are available in the Career Services Library. These books can also be purchased in bookstores or checked out of your local public library. In addition, some external organizations, such as Kaplan and Princeton Review, offer preparatory courses.

Recommendations from Faculty & Other Professionals

It takes some time and planned thought for your references to prepare a strong recommendation to support your application to graduate school. Never give a person's name as a reference without asking the person first and giving him or her ample time to write it.

A. Reference Options

- ☒ Requesting letters of recommendation directly from faculty—Some faculty & departments prefer to prepare and send individual letters of recommendation to each program.
- ☒ Establish a Reference File of faculty recommendations—Career Services will collect and retain letters to be sent out to schools on your behalf. This service is especially helpful if you are not applying to graduate school immediately after graduation. Recommendations filed with us are kept in our office for five years after graduation and sent to graduate schools upon request. Letters are sent free up to 4 months after graduation—after that time, sets are \$5 each or 8 sets for \$20. Please check with Career Services for further details about starting a references file.

B. Selecting Someone as a Reference

- ☒ Choose professors and professionals who know your capabilities, academic strengths, and are familiar with you in a variety of settings.
- ☒ Choose individuals who will write well and have an idea of what is relevant to graduate programs.
- ☒ You may want to vary your references, choosing professors from different departments and an employment supervisor.

C. Providing your Reference with Helpful Information

- ☒ Schedule an appointment to discuss your plans and career goals with your references. Ask if the reference feels he/she knows you well enough to give you a strong, positive recommendation.
- ☒ Prepare a packet for each reference which provides information that they can utilize to strengthen their comments: current resume, a copy of your transcript, samples of your work, a copy of your personal statement, information specific to the graduate program.
- ☒ Include the reference form (if applicable) provided as part of the application materials and a stamped, addressed envelope.
- ☒ Allow your references ample time, and always follow-up to insure completion.

D. Always say “thank you” (verbally and in writing)

- ☒ Also keep your references informed of your status throughout the application process.

Graduate School Applications

Your application is one of the most revealing indications of your motivation towards graduate study. Often it is the first impression that the institution will receive of you. It is critical that you are attentive to details and deadlines. Apply early!

A. The Application

- ✎ Make a copy of the application and write out your answers before finalizing the information that you are providing the school.
- ✎ Be certain that your application is complete, neatly typed (typewriters are available in Career Services), contains no spelling errors and is written clearly where handwriting is required. (A messy application gives a very poor impression.)
- ✎ Make a copy for your personal files. (This is important to have if your original application does not reach its intended destination.)
- ✎ Mail early and confirm that the institution has received your application.

B. Personal Statement

- ✎ Read the question and answer what they're asking! What does the reader want to know?
- ✎ Write straight from the heart. Create a sense of your personality. Supplement the rest of your materials by providing them with information that they are not discovering in other parts of your application. Catch the reader with a bold or interesting opening statement.
- ✎ Include specific reasons for your interest in this area of study, highlights from your academic achievements (i.e. major research projects), future plans and details of special and unique experiences (i.e. travel, community service, etc.).
- ✎ After writing your first draft, take a break and then return to it later for revision.
- ✎ Ask a faculty member, career advisor, and writing center tutor to review and critique it.
- ✎ Keep a copy for your files and refer to it in preparation for an interview with graduate school faculty members. Many interviewers use the statement of purpose as an opener.

C. Transcripts

- ✎ For details regarding requests for and costs related to obtaining academic transcripts, please visit the Registrar's Office in University Hall.
- ✎ Don't forget to obtain transcripts from other colleges/universities you have attended, as necessary.

D. Interviews

- ✎ Most schools do not conduct an interview; however, you may be invited to the school for a personal interview. This is your chance to shine! For details on preparation for the interview, please review the Interviewing Skills booklet available in Career Services.
- ✎ Another opportunity available through Career Services is to practice your interviewing skills in a videotaped mock interview. Learn how to promote yourself and make your mistakes with an advisor rather than during the actual interview.

Financial Aid



Contrary to popular belief, financial aid is not readily available for all graduate students. Therefore, it is important for you to become aware of the sources of aid which are available. To determine the availability of financial aid at the graduate school to which you are applying, you should request information from the graduate school financial aid office and the academic department of your interest. Ask questions early and meet all deadlines!

A. Outright Assistance

- \$ Typically called grants, fellowships, traineeships, or scholarships.
- \$ Usually granted by the Dean of the graduate school or departments.
- \$ No services are required of the student.
- \$ Awards range in monetary amounts.
- \$ A stipend may be awarded in addition to a tuition waiver.
- \$ Usually only full-time students are eligible.
- \$ Talk to Dr. Mark Gingerich, OWU History Department, for information about fellowships which require institutional sponsorship (i.e. Fulbright, Rhodes, etc.).

B. Aid in Return for Service

- \$ These awards usually carry full or partial tuition remission plus a stipend. Number of hours worked per week varies.
- \$ Research Assistantship: Resembles a job, assisting a professor with research project(s).
- \$ Teaching Assistantship: Lecturing, supervising labs, and/or grading papers.
- \$ Residence Hall Assistantship: Living in a residence hall with responsibilities ranging from supervision and programming to handling disciplinary matters.
- \$ Graduate Assistantship: May include teaching a class, research and/or other work for the department.

C. Loans

- \$ Usually available if vital to continuation of program and must be repaid with interest within a certain amount of time.
- \$ Available through university or banks.

D. Additional Sources

- \$ Board of Regents in your state of residence.
- \$ Professional organizations. For contact information, check the National Trade and Professional Association Directory in the Career Services Library.
- \$ Fraternal, religious, and community organizations.
- \$ The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- \$ Browse the Financial Aid section of the Career Services Library for further information.

Good Luck!!

Career Library Resources

Identifying Graduate Schools

- 📖 Peterson's Guides to Graduate Programs
- 📖 Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools
- 📖 Complete Book of Law Schools
- 📖 Complete Book of Medical Schools
- 📖 Peterson's Nursing Programs
- 📖 Complete Book of Business Schools
- 📖 Peterson's MBA Programs



Application to Graduate Schools

- 📖 Peterson's How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional Schools
- 📖 Real Life Guide to Graduate & Professional School
- 📖 Graduate School Admissions Adviser
- 📖 Game Plan for Getting into Medical School
- 📖 Game Plan for Getting into Business School

Preparing for Entrance Exams

- 📖 Princeton Review: GRE
- 📖 Peterson's GRE CAT Success
- 📖 Peterson's GMAT CAT Success
- 📖 Peterson's MCAT
- 📖 Kaplan MCAT Comprehensive Review
- 📖 LSAT: The Official Triple-Prep Plus
- 📖 Peterson's LSAT

Financial Aid

- 📖 Free Money for Graduate School
- 📖 The Graduate School Funding Handbook
- 📖 Financial Resources for International Study
- 📖 The Minority & Women's Complete Scholarship Book