

## Timeline & Checklist for Graduate School

The most important thing to consider about choosing the right school and program for you is knowing what your goals for graduate training are.

**Step 1: Identify important characteristics** (such as program quality, location, costs, cultural environment, research opportunities, etc.). For example, if you are interested in getting a degree in music therapy with an emphasis on working with autistic children, focus your search on institutions that are recognized in that area and can offer you that experience.

**Step 2: Use online resources** (listed below), **and utilize department faculty.**

Check out

Peterson's Guide	<a href="http://www.petersons.com/">http://www.petersons.com/</a>
GradSchools.com	<a href="http://www.gradschools.com/">http://www.gradschools.com/</a>
GradView.com	<a href="http://www.gradview.com/">http://www.gradview.com/</a>
Match College	<a href="http://www.matchcollege.com/">http://www.matchcollege.com/</a>
Princeton Review	<a href="http://www.princetonreview.com/graduate-school.aspx">http://www.princetonreview.com/graduate-school.aspx</a>
U.S. News & World Report	<a href="http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools">http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools</a>
Professional Associations	Every career field has a number of professional associations based around that career. These associations provide a variety of resources related to finding a job, preparing for careers and researching accredited graduate programs.

**Step 3: Know deadlines**, as most applications are due in the early part of the fall semester. Also, be considerate of faculty members you may ask to write you letters of recommendation and look for deadlines to apply for Assistantships and Fellowships.

**Step 4: Research admission exam requirements and prepare.** Exam registration sites also offer tips on how to prepare for the exams.

GMAT	<a href="http://www.mba.com/us">http://www.mba.com/us</a>
GRE	<a href="http://www.ets.org/gre">http://www.ets.org/gre</a>
LSAT	<a href="http://www.lsac.org/jd/LSAT/about-the-LSAT.asp">http://www.lsac.org/jd/LSAT/about-the-LSAT.asp</a>
MCAT	<a href="https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/">https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/</a>

Additionally, know if you need a subject specific area exam on the GRE. Entrance examinations are expensive, so be sure to give yourself time to prepare for the exam. Since you're a senior, you also may be in a time crunch and not be able to take the exam again before the required date.

**Step 5: Write your personal statement/essay/cover letter and your resume/vita** and tailor it to each institution you are applying to. Each program will have different criteria and it's important to cover everything. Career Services and your department faculty are great resources to assist in making these the best they can be Upload these documents into your HANDSHAKE account, then schedule a review within HANDSHAKE.

Be sure you address in your personal statement/essay/cover letter:

- Why you are applying for graduate school
- Why this particular institution and program
- Why you are a good fit for the program
- How you will be able to handle the rigor of graduate school
- What your career goals are
- How the degree you will receive will help you reach these goals
- Share your level of understanding and passion and commitment for the field

**Step 6: Request letters of reference:** Identify faculty and other professionals who know you and your abilities well. Ask them if they can write positive letters of reference for you. Make these requests at least 6-8 weeks prior to the due date. Provide your writers information on where you are applying, how to submit their letters, and answer any other questions they might have. REMEMBER: This is a HUGE service they are providing you!

**Step 7: Verify your application is complete** and that the university has received all of your application materials including your letters of recommendation, your personal statement/essay/cover letter, and your resume/vita. Apply for financial aid and assistantships/fellowships once everything has been submitted.

**Step 8: Be prepared for an interview** and set up a practice (mock) interview with Career Services through your Handshake account.

**Step 9: Make your selection** and let the other schools you were accepted into know that you have selected another graduate program. You should know sometime in the spring semester your acceptance status with each program you have applied to.

**Step 10: Thank you notes.** Write thank you notes to your reference writers and any other professionals that have helped you in your pursuit of graduate school.