

A GUIDE TO Graduate & Professional SCHOOL

Find answers to questions like...

Is graduate school right for me?

When should I attend graduate school?

How do I find the right program?

What is the application process?

start early.
start now.

USING THIS GUIDE

This Guide to Graduate and Professional Schools is designed to assist you with answering questions about graduate school, from whether you should attend, to more detailed information about how to apply and finance your education. This guide is organized into complementary sections in order to provide you with a better understanding of factors to consider when applying to graduate or professional school. For instance, which school you select might depend on the financial assistance you receive. This guide will provide you with the resources and tools for further research. Sometimes, this content will prompt you to ask yourself the questions necessary to make an informed and educated decision. Answering these questions as you explore your options will assist you with the steps you need to take.

An individual appointment with a Knowlton Center Career Coach can provide you with additional tools and resources to assist you through the decision, search, and application process.



DECIDING IF GRADUATE SCHOOL IS RIGHT FOR YOU

Before applying for further study, you need to be fully aware of the working conditions, employment prospects, and physical and mental demands of the field you plan to pursue. In addition, the more immediate demands of research, coursework and major papers are all part of the graduate school experience to be considered. Although there are defined course requirements in most graduate and professional school curricula, you will build a program for yourself based on your interests and goals.

Some individuals enter graduate study with the idea that they can postpone the inevitable—deciding on a career and searching for a job—for another year or two. If this is your sole motivation for entering graduate school, it could have serious implications for your career development. Therefore, before going any further, carefully consider these important questions:

- ▶ *What do I want to accomplish in my lifetime?*
- ▶ *What are my long and short-term professional goals?*
- ▶ *Is attending graduate school necessary for me to achieve these goals?*
- ▶ *Am I willing to invest the time and money to take on another academic program?*
- ▶ *Should I gain work experience before going to graduate school?*
- ▶ *Will more education help me move up the ranks at my company?*
- ▶ *Do I have the interest and ability to be successful in a graduate program?*
- ▶ *By going to graduate school, am I simply delaying my career decision-making?*
- ▶ *Why do I want to attain this specific degree and not something else?*

Two of the most common reasons students withdraw from a graduate program are a dislike of concentrated academic work and a realization that they have not defined their career goals clearly enough. By answering the above questions honestly, you may avoid similar problems in the future.

Through research, you should be able to get a solid idea of whether or not you would benefit from graduate study. In the process, however, be aware that further education may not be required for entry into every career field. It is, of course, if you are planning to enter traditional professions such as law, medicine, dentistry, and teaching at the college or university level.

If you have not already done so, it is a good idea to look over occupational literature and talk with faculty, friends, and alumni—people who have the kinds of jobs in which you are interested. The staff of the Knowlton Center will also be able to assist you in determining your job prospects in various fields at all degree levels.

If you do not have a general idea of what you want to do, you will have a difficult time making appropriate choices. If you do not know where graduate or professional school might lead you, or if furthering your education is only an alternative to the job search process, then your significant investment of time and money in additional education may have limited benefits.

Choose graduate school because you are working towards a goal. Graduate or professional study can be a worthwhile and rewarding career additive; it should not be a disappointing employment alternative. As practical work experience is an education in itself, a combination work/study arrangement or short-term deferral of graduate study may be a possible solution.



DEFINING GRADUATE SCHOOL DEGREES

When you are considering applying to graduate school, you may be thinking of professional school (e.g., law, medicine, business, etc.), master's programs, or doctoral programs, all of which require specialized knowledge and concentrated study in one area.

Listed below are some of the more common degrees available in graduate or professional school.

Professional Master's Degree

Gives you a specific set of skills needed to practice in a particular field, such as education, accounting, business, fine art, engineering, social work or other professions requiring specialized training, and involves an internship, practicum, field work and/or professional exam.

Research Master's Degree

Provides experience in research and scholarship and it may be a final degree or a step toward a Ph.D. A master's degree usually takes two or three years of study. A qualifying final comprehensive exam or thesis is typically required for completion of this program.

Professional Doctoral Degree

The highest degree for areas such as medicine, business and law and requires practical applications of knowledge and skills. The M.D. for medical practice and the J.D. for law are the most common professional degrees. Others include Ed.D., Psy.D. and D.B.A.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

The highest earned academic degree and the primary credential for college level teaching. The Ph.D. typically involves both course work and an extensive and original research project (e.g., dissertation). This doctorate usually takes a minimum of four to six years of full-time study.

Dual Degree Programs

Some graduate programs combine professional and research degrees within specific areas of interest. Others may combine professional programs. Examples include J.D./M.B.A., J.D./Ph.D., M.A./J.D., M.D./M.B.A., M.D./Ph.D. Check the graduate school of your choice for more information. Dual degree programs may have more stringent admission requirements or distinctive completion schedules.



DECIDING IF YOU SHOULD ATTEND NOW OR LATER

It is common to need more time to clarify your professional goals. A frequently asked question about graduate school is “Should I attend now or later”? Listed below are some advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a graduate degree immediately after graduation. It is highly recommended to speak with faculty advisors, alumni, admission program representatives, and those currently enrolled in programs of interest, in order to assess the path that will best meet your goals. Below are some of the pros and cons of pursuing a graduate or professional degree immediately after your undergraduate studies.

Advantages of Pursuing a Graduate Degree

Immediately After Graduation

- ▶ As an undergraduate, you will have access to several graduate program resources and events, however, the Knowlton Center staff will assist you after you graduate.
- ▶ Faculty members will be more likely to remember your recent achievements for recommendation purposes. Do keep in touch with strong recommenders should you decide to delay.
- ▶ Commitment to the academic lifestyle and good study habits should be firmly established.
- ▶ Some programs prefer to recruit students directly from undergraduate programs.
- ▶ Scheduling and preparation for standardized tests may fit with existing study schedules.
- ▶ Personal, financial, and geographic commitments may be minimal at this time.
- ▶ For those who enjoy research and studying, these opportunities continue immediately.

Delaying Enrollment

- ▶ Many graduate schools tend to be more selective in their admission process. Delaying enrollment may strengthen your focus and your ability to articulate long-term plans for your degree.
- ▶ Some schools (particularly MBA programs) may require or prefer a few years of work experience, as that provides an individual with more knowledge on which to base their decisions.
- ▶ The risk of academic burnout may be reduced.
- ▶ Your financial position may be stronger than as an undergraduate.

Additional Questions to Consider

- ▶ Would related work experience help you clarify ambiguous career goals?
- ▶ Will you change your career goals after a taste of the working world?
- ▶ How much do you know about your chosen field? Have you completed internships and/or talked extensively to those who work in the field?
- ▶ Would work experience enhance your application?
- ▶ Would you have difficulty readjusting to student life after a break?

If you are uncertain about your field of study or whether it would be advantageous to gain work experience and/or take some time off, it may be a good idea to delay graduate school. If you decide to postpone graduate study but plan to begin a program within three to five years, you may want to take the appropriate standardized tests during your senior year of college, or shortly after, as scores on most of these tests are generally valid for up to five years.



RESEARCHING & EVALUATING GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Institutions and departments may vary greatly in programs available, size of the program, cost, facilities, faculty interests, reputation, and program requirements. Matching your own abilities and personal requirements against varying factors is an important task in selecting the institutions to which you want to apply.

You should take the following factors and questions into consideration as you research and evaluate various graduate programs:

Admissions and Requirements

What are the admissions requirements? Do you have the test scores, courses, research and experience required for the program? Which type of students does the program attract? Some programs require demonstrated knowledge of foreign languages, but other universities may permit a substitute for a foreign language (e.g., knowledge of a programming language). Similarly, you will want to learn about research options and whether a thesis and/or comprehensive examination is required at the master's degree level.

Size, Programs, Facilities and Geographic Location

How large is the institution and the department? The number of students, and particularly the student/faculty ratio, will affect the amount of individual attention you will receive. Do opportunities exist for specialization in areas of your own interest? Do the research facilities suit your needs? The climate, the political and social temper of an institution, and its setting (whether urban or in a smaller community) are all worth considering.

Financial Aid

The amount of financial aid awarded will vary by student and by institution. The reasons may have as much to do with university budgets as an applicant's merits. Keep in mind that while awards may vary, graduate financial aid is often based on merit, not need.

Faculty

Who are the faculty? Are there specific people conducting the type of research in which you are interested? What have they published? Are you able to contact the faculty members?

Philosophy

What is the average length of time spent in the program? Do opportunities exist for specialization in areas of your own interest? Some institutions may approach the subject matter theoretically where others may be more pragmatic in their approach.

Residence Requirements

How much time must you spend taking courses at a particular institution in order to earn your advanced degree? If you are at a public university, residence requirements also determine whether you pay in-state tuition. Many state universities are required to give preference to in-state applicants.

Available Experience and Career Support

Are there opportunities for teaching, research or assistantships? Will you receive assistance in your job search upon graduation? Check with the career center at each institution to learn which types of employers express interest in graduates of the department you're considering. What is their employment rate and where do graduates go after graduation? What are alumni doing now?



Research Tools

Peterson's Graduate Programs Directory

Profiles of more than 1,500 accredited institutions offering master's and/or doctoral programs of over 300 disciplines in the U.S. and Canada. Profiles include general institutional information, a directory of institutional offerings, academic contact persons, and a listing of departmental faculty and their research interests.

- ▶ Website: www.petersons.com

Comprehensive Online Guides

- ▶ Graduate School Guide: www.graduateguide.com
- ▶ GradSchools.com: www.gradschools.com
- ▶ Princeton Review: www.princetonreview.com/grad-school

Medical School Admissions Requirements

A publication by the Association of American Medical Colleges that provides listings of U.S. and Canadian Allopathic (MD) medical schools with information and advice about applications and financial aid. This guide is available online.

- ▶ Website: www.aamc.org

Osteopathic Medical College Information Book

A publication produced yearly by the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine. It provides information on every U.S. accredited Osteopathic (DO) medical program.

- ▶ Website: www.aacom.org

MBA Explorer

The official GMAT website, offering test information, MBA program search tools, financing resources, a recruiting calendar, advice for those considering programs, and more.

- ▶ Website: www.mba.com/us

The Law School Admission Council

The official LSAT registration source. The LSAC also provides free sample LSAT exams, access to the Candidate Referral Service (CRS), Credential Assembly Service (CAS), Law School Forums, diversity initiatives and additional test preparation resources.

- ▶ Website: www.lsac.org

Graduate School Rankings

Consider using these rankings as a resource, and not as an absolute guide, to understanding how programs and academic institutions will best fit you and your needs.

- ▶ Website: www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools

Faculty and Alumni

The numerical rankings assigned to various school programs are based on several different criteria and should not be taken as the final consensus. Discuss plans with alumni and faculty as well. Ask which institutions would be most appropriate for meeting your goals. In addition, visit the Denison Difference for post-graduate survey data (programs and schools attended by recent graduates). Remember, the advice and rankings provided by others are useful, but it is important to establish your own personal criteria to compare graduate schools.

APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Formal applications vary from one institution to the next, but each usually consists of the following:

- ▶ Application essay/Personal statement
- ▶ Graduate admissions test scores
- ▶ Letters of recommendation
- ▶ Official transcripts
- ▶ Application fee
- ▶ Separate financial aid application
- ▶ Résumé or CV (Curriculum Vitae)

As you research each institution, keep records noting admission requirements and application deadlines. It is very important to note each program's distinct instructions and requirements such as a research statement showcasing your research interests. Some graduate programs require a personal interview; most require a nonrefundable application fee of \$40 - \$120 (which may limit the number of schools to which you will apply).

Applications are usually referred to an admission committee for the particular program or school for which you are applying. This faculty committee reviews your application, reaches a decision, and makes a recommendation to the dean or the associate dean of the graduate school. In either type of school, the candidates that show strength in a combination of the requirements—academic preparation, test scores, personal statement and recommendations—have the best chance for selection. Follow up with the school to make sure your application is complete (leave enough time to follow up on a letter of recommendation or request for additional information if needed).

Application Forms

All application forms, whether hard copy or online, should be completed in a thoroughly professional manner. Carefully follow instructions. Be aware of application deadlines listed in graduate school bulletins. If admissions are handled on a rolling basis (i.e., qualified applicants are accepted as they apply), it is to your advantage to apply at the earliest possible date (when you have a strong application) in order to show your enthusiasm and give them more time to evaluate your application. An early application is also an advantage if you are applying for financial aid. Law school, medical school, and many healthcare professional programs have centralized applications.

Transcripts

All transcripts must be official; that is, transcripts must be sent to admission offices directly from the Office of the Registrar. If you receive your transcript first and then send it, there is no proof that it is official and therefore it will be considered invalid. For additional information on transcripts, contact the Office of the Registrar.

Résumé or Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Many graduate school applications require either a curriculum vitae (CV), or a résumé. While a résumé typically consists of one or two pages, a CV is often much longer and includes all academic activities and achievements, research and publications, and other relevant information. You want graduate schools to have the most complete image of you as possible, and a CV can include information that might not fit in other sections of the application. Once you have put together your résumé or CV, we encourage you to have a Career Coach in the Knowlton Center review it for formatting suggestions, targeted content, and errors.

Application Essay

Most institutions will ask that you submit a statement of purpose or personal statement in addition to basic data requested on the application. Personal statements provide you with the opportunity to supplement standard application materials with your own goals and objectives with respect to the program; therefore, they should not be taken lightly.

Typically, programs will offer suggestions on items to consider, such as your reasons for applying in relation to personal goals and professional expectations. Good grammar and writing styles are extremely important. Before writing anything, stop and consider what your reader might be looking for; the general directories or other documents contained in the application may give you an indication of this. Do not hesitate to seek help from faculty members and the Knowlton Center in preparing your personal statement or other application materials. Admission committees may be trying to evaluate a number of things from your statement, including the following:

- ▶ Motivation and commitment
- ▶ Expectations and goals
- ▶ Educational background
- ▶ Reasons for deciding to pursue graduate education in a particular field and at a particular institution
- ▶ Writing ability
- ▶ Major areas of interest
- ▶ Research or work experience
- ▶ Personal uniqueness – what you would add to the diversity of the entering class
- ▶ Maturity

Letters of Recommendation

Most institutions will request between two and four letters of recommendation on your behalf. Some programs, especially within healthcare, will require a letter of recommendation from a practitioner in the field. As with application forms and test dates, it is important to pay close attention to application deadlines and requirements, so you may contact the appropriate people whom you wish to write letters well in advance of the deadline date.

Letters of recommendation are useful to graduate admission committees only if the letters tell them something about you that is not particularly evident in the rest of your application packet. It is best to obtain recommendations from those persons qualified to evaluate your academic and/or work potential and performance based on personal observation.

You may also wish to obtain a recommendation from a professor in an unrelated discipline in order to show the breadth of your academic interests. It is essential that the reference person know you well enough that he or she can make a good assessment of your academic and work abilities.

After you have made a decision on whom to ask, schedule a meeting and explain your graduate school plans, why you are asking them for a reference and set a timeline. You should allow a minimum of three weeks for letter writing. Be prepared to share your résumé or CV, your personal statement and a short note thanking them and reminding them of the specific reason you are asking for their recommendation. When you are submitting your application, you will be asked whether or not you wish to waive your rights to view your letter once submitted. In general, it is customary to waive your rights, so that you signal trust in your recommender. If you wish to discuss this further, make an appointment with a Career Coach in the Knowlton Center.

Once you have confirmation of a submitted letter, send a “Thank-you” note or email to each recommender. Lastly, be sure to follow up with your recommenders to let them know of your acceptance.



GRADUATE ADMISSION TESTS

Most graduate and professional schools require that you take one or more standardized examinations before they decide upon your application for admission. Those wishing to enter a graduate program in the fall should plan to take a test up to a year in advance. Remember that test registration deadlines are often well in advance of the actual test dates. Research how long tests scores are valid for your particular field and exam.

If you receive accommodations at Denison, many tests also have a process for applying for accommodations. Those with disabilities and health-related needs can be provided services and reasonable, appropriate accommodations given the purpose of the test. Research your options well in advance of when you plan to take a standardized test. Also, if you have financial concerns about test registration fees, look at fee waivers and fee assistance programs on the test registration website. Listed below are the commonly required examinations:

GRE

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE), measures analytical, verbal, quantitative, and writing ability. There are two versions of the GRE; the General GRE and the GRE Subject Test (an examination in a major field of study and typically given only a few times a year). Graduate schools may require one or both versions of the test. Visit www.ets.org/gre, for more information.

GMAT

The Graduate Management Admission Test is a requirement to assess students planning to attend management and business schools. Some schools may substitute the GRE. For more information, visit www.mba.com/gmat.

LSAT

The Law School Admissions Test is a requirement for law school. Interested students should also complete the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). Some Law Schools now accept the GRE. For more information, visit www.lsac.org/lsat.

MCAT

The Medical College Admission Test, used for admission to medical school, assesses knowledge of natural, behavioral, and social science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine. Visit www.ama.org/mcat, for details.

DAT

The Dental Admission Test is a requirement for admission to dental school and consists of four tests on the Survey of the Natural Sciences, Perceptual Ability, Reading Comprehension, and Quantitative Reasoning. Visit www.ada.org/dat, for more information.

PCAT

The Pharmacy College Admission Test is a requirement for admission to pharmacy school and measures general academic ability and scientific knowledge necessary for the commencement of pharmaceutical education. For more information, visit www.pcatweb.info.

TOEFL

The Test of English as a Foreign Language evaluates English proficiency of students whose native language is not English by measuring your ability to use and understand English at the university level, and evaluates how well you combine your reading, listening, speaking and writing skills to perform academic tasks. For more information, visit www.ets.org/toefl.



STRENGTHENING YOUR APPLICATION

Test Preparation

You may wish to purchase a study guide for specific exams. These guides typically contain several practice tests based on different units of each examination, as well as “refresher” sections designed to assist in updating your skills in recall, judgment, and mathematics. Study guides and additional resources are available for check-out in the Knowlton Center.

Additionally, private “short courses”, both online and in-person, exist to help applicants prepare for examinations such as the MCAT and LSAT. Before investing money in one of these services, it is advisable to thoroughly research them with faculty members or persons formerly enrolled in the services.

Interview Preparation

An interview can be important for you to persuade an institution’s admission officer or committee that you would be an excellent manager, doctor, lawyer, dentist, etc. Interviews are required by medical schools and often suggested by business schools and other programs. Interviewers will be interested in the way you think and approach problems and will probably concentrate on questions that enable them to assess your thinking skills, rather than questions that call upon your grasp of technical knowledge. Bear in mind that the interviewer is more interested in how you think than what you think. Schedule a mock interview with the Knowlton Center to prepare.

Contact Programs Directly

Admission officials and faculty members at the institution you would like to attend can help you with questions you may have about the specific programs. Do not hesitate to contact them by phone, email, or even a personal visit. Admissions offices will take note of students who show an interest and making a good impression can also strengthen your candidacy. In some cases, a phone call can prevent you from making an unfortunate choice of an academic program, or strengthen your knowledge of the nuances of a particular graduate school.

Research and Experience

It is highly recommended that you engage in research, either with your own independent project or as an assistant to a professor. Ask professors for suggestions. Research experience will be looked upon favorably by the application committee. Gain experience in your chosen field. Complete a summer internship, shadow a professional, and/or complete informational interviews with alumni contacts.

GPA

Many graduate programs have minimum GPA requirements and others take GPA into consideration when evaluating applications. Maintaining a strong GPA throughout your academic career and researching particular program requirements can strengthen your application.

Possible Red Flags/Concerns

If any portion of your application may raise concern, it is better to address it than leave the admissions committee guessing. Leverage your recommendations, personal statement, or addendum (if appropriate) to alleviate any concerns. Consult a Career Coach to discuss how to professionally and appropriately address these concerns.



GRADUATE SCHOOL: FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Financial support to attend graduate/professional school is available from several sources. However, sources change continuously, and in the case of federal aid, the amount available is subject to change as it is regulated by current executive and legislative policy. Financial aid information can be found through catalogs, websites, and literature published by universities, government, and foundations. If you will require financial assistance, be sure to request a financial aid application at the same time you request an admission application. In most instances, you will be required to submit a completed copy of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA).

Graduate school is a wonderful way to explore your intellectual interests, establish a network, and prepare yourself for career success. However, these benefits are not without a price tag. When considering graduate school, it is important to examine three key areas.

1. Understand Your Current Financial Situation

Undergraduate student loans are a reality for many, so before taking out more financial aid for grad school, it's important to know your current debt level and realistically consider how adding more debt will impact your livelihood post-graduation. While attending graduate school means deferring your loan payments, you still need to factor in the debt you'll ultimately possess. But you don't have to do this in isolation. Contact the Office of Financial Aid to learn about your current loans, or speak with Denison's Financial Wellness Coach about your overall financial health.

2. Understand the True Cost & Return on Investment

When examining graduate school options, the cost advertised by each school will not include every expense. When evaluating the true cost, consider:

- ▶ Tuition costs, plus the average number of semesters it takes to complete the degree. Note that there is often a difference between in-state tuition and out-of-state tuition.
- ▶ Cost of living in the city: most graduate schools do not provide housing or a meal plan, so you need to consider the costs of housing, food, transportation, and other necessities.
- ▶ Costs of books and materials.
- ▶ Some schools, particularly professional schools, will share the average amount of debt their graduates have from their program, which helps you determine how most students pay for their education at that school, with grants, scholarships, or loans.
- ▶ What kind of salary can you expect upon graduation? You want to be asking this question up front so you can realistically calculate what you are willing to spend and how quickly you will be able to pay off student loans you have from undergrad or graduate school. Start your research on websites such as [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) and [PayScale.com](#).

3. Understand Funding Options

Depending on the program type and the school, a variety of funding options may be available to you.

Scholarships and Grants

These tend to be less common in the graduate school process, but you should still absolutely search for them.

- ▶ Check out large databases such as [Peterson's Scholarship Search](#) where you can search for scholarships, grants, fellowships and more, by school, program, location, etc.
- ▶ Explore professional associations in your discipline, as many of them have scholarship funding opportunities available to prospective students.

GRADUATE SCHOOL: FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS (cont.)

Fellowships

- ▶ Fellowships are short-term opportunities that focus on the professional development and are sponsored by a specific organization seeking to expand leadership in their field.
- ▶ Check out the Lisska Center's database of [Fellowships and Scholarships for Students](#) on their MyDenison page to see if there are any that may apply to you!

Assistantships

- ▶ Assistantships commonly involve working for approximately 20-hour per week in exchange for tuition waivers, reimbursement or reduction and a living stipend.
 - ▷ Types of assistantships can include research, teaching, performance, or administrative.
- ▶ Assistantships are very common for doctoral graduate programs, and are occasionally available for master's level degree types.

Employer Benefits

- ▶ Some organizations provide financial incentives for their employees to pursue graduate school during or after working for their company.
- ▶ Several service organizations include these types of incentives, including [City Year](#), [Teach For America](#), and [AmeriCorps](#).

Student Loans

- ▶ A variety of types of loans are available, but you will still fill out a [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) form for graduate school.

College Work-Study Program

- ▶ Under this program, eligible undergraduate and graduate students are provided part-time employment opportunities.
- ▶ Generally, financial aid officials administer these programs, and they can explain application procedures in greater detail.

Other Employment

- ▶ University communities often provide good opportunities for part-time work.
- ▶ Check with the institution's financial aid office, or the chairperson of the department to which you are applying, regarding possible part-time employment opportunities in the local community.

Financial support of graduate education varies widely, so it is important to research the availability of financial aid throughout the admission process. Both the sources and amounts of financial aid are important considerations. Begin the process early to identify potential funding sources.



GRADUATE SCHOOL TIMETABLE

These time frames are approximate and are based upon a typical program with a December/January application deadline, so follow this general schedule to keep yourself on track. It is strongly recommended you check the deadlines for your schools of interest and adjust accordingly as program deadlines may have earlier, later, rolling, or spring admittance deadlines.

JUNIOR YEAR	
Time of Year	Preparation Plans
<i>Fall, Spring, & Summer Semesters</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Make an appointment with the Knowlton Center, especially for specialized and professional programs ▶ Browse resources and guides to graduate programs ▶ Contact admissions offices and programs to request information ▶ Determine test requirements, dates, application requirements, and deadlines ▶ Consult with counselors, faculty members, and Denison alumni ▶ Prepare for exams: utilize practice tests and Knowlton Center resources ▶ Research national scholarships and determine your financial needs ▶ Take standardized exams ▶ Outline or draft your Personal Statement, Essay, Statement of Purpose, or Résumé

SENIOR YEAR	
Time of Year	Preparation Plans
<i>September & October</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Take standardized exams (if you have not already) ▶ Write a draft of application documents ▶ Utilize the Knowlton Center and other resources for review of application documents ▶ Research financial aid sources, fellowships, and assistantships ▶ Request recommendations early from faculty members ▶ Apply for fellowships, grants and assistantships
<i>November & December</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Order official transcripts from the Office of the Registrar ▶ Ask the Registrar to send a transcript with your fall term grades in time to meet the deadlines ▶ Finalize personal statement/essay ▶ Submit your applications-even if deadlines are later, it is good to get applications in early-fellowship deadlines may follow a separate schedule
<i>December, January, & February</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Contact schools about the possibility of visiting or schedule interviews ▶ Complete appropriate financial aid forms -if you are applying for need- based aid, you may have to file a copy of your federal tax return ▶ Contact schools at least two weeks before the deadline to make sure your applications are complete
<i>March & April</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Discuss acceptances, rejections, and other career options with a faculty member or a Knowlton Center Career Coach ▶ If you would like to defer enrollment one or two years, contact your graduate department, many programs may not offer deferral options. If you are rejected, it may be helpful to contact the school and discuss the reasons for your rejection to learn suggestions on how to get admitted in the future ▶ Send thank you notes to people who wrote your recommendations or assisted

POTENTIAL GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Some graduate and professional schools require applicants to go through a formal interview process, similar to a job interview. If your program requires an interview, make sure you know yourself well (i.e., your interests, skills, accomplishments, etc.), and that you have conducted thorough research on the program and institution.

In preparation for your interview, here are some common questions that applicants are asked during graduate school admission interviews:

- ▶ *Tell me about yourself.*
- ▶ *What are your strengths and weaknesses?*
- ▶ *What are your plans if you are not accepted into graduate school?*
- ▶ *Why did you choose this career path?*
- ▶ *What do you know about our program?*
- ▶ *Why did you choose to apply to our program?*
- ▶ *What other schools are you considering?*
- ▶ *Why are you interested in this particular degree?*
- ▶ *What research interests do you have?*
- ▶ *In what ways have your previous experiences prepared you for graduate study in our program?*
- ▶ *What do you believe your greatest challenge will be if you are accepted into this program?*
- ▶ *Which courses did you enjoy the most during your undergraduate studies? The least? Why?*
- ▶ *Describe any research project on which you worked. What was the purpose of the project and what was your role in the project?*
- ▶ *How would your professors describe you?*
- ▶ *How will you be able to make a contribution to this field?*
- ▶ *Explain a situation in which you had a conflict and how you managed to resolve it. What would you do differently and why?*
- ▶ *Describe your greatest accomplishment.*
- ▶ *Tell me about your experience in this field. What was your contribution? What challenges did you face?*
- ▶ *What are your career goals? How will this program help you achieve your goals?*
- ▶ *How do you intend to finance your education?*
- ▶ *What skills would you bring to the program? How will you help your mentor in his or her research?*
- ▶ *What are some of your hobbies? What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?*

You should also be prepared to ask questions that indicate you have done your research on the program and academic institution; graduate school admissions recruiters want to see that you are genuinely interested in attending their institution. You should treat this interview just as you would if you were interviewing for a job; dress appropriately, arrive on time and prepared, bring a padfolio to take notes, and turn off your cell phone.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to the services and programs provided by the Knowlton Center for Career Exploration, listed below are additional resources Denison students may utilize to assist in the process of applying to graduate or professional school.

Career Coaching Appointment

Schedule an appointment to meet with a Career Coach to discuss creating a plan to attend graduate or professional school to ensure you are on the right track.

- ▶ Click [here](#) to schedule a Career Coaching appointment.

Personal Statement Review Process

Students can submit a personal statement to be reviewed by a Knowlton Center staff member on the content and impact of a personal statement, with an emphasis on leveraging the document as an admission success strategy.

- ▶ Click [here](#) to download the Personal Statements handout.

Mock Interviews

As many institutions require candidates go through a formal interview process, students can practice their interview skills through a mock interview to simulate the process through which candidates will participate.

Career Toolkit

Specialized guides to assist with creating and updating professional documents, such as résumés, CVs, personal statements and cover letters. Additional guides on researching, networking, and interviewing are also available.

- ▶ Click [here](#) to access the Career Toolkit.

Pre-Health Guides

Handouts that provide an informational overview, description and program information for many health-related careers, such as Dentistry, Occupational Therapy, and Public Health.

- ▶ Click [here](#) to view and download the Pre-Health Guides.

Faculty Advisor

Meet with your Faculty Advisor to discuss potential specialties. Faculty Advisors can also offer valuable advice on choosing a graduate school, possible fellowships and teaching opportunities, or research assistantships.

Lisska Center for Scholarly Engagement

In addition to providing students with academic funding opportunities, the Lisska Center can assist in identifying and applying for nationally and internationally competitive fellowships and other awards for a wide range of summer, undergraduate, and postgraduate opportunities.

- ▶ Click [here](#) to visit the Lisska Center for Scholarly Engagement website.

Other Online Guides

The Kaplan Test Prep: access to free preparation and practice tests.

- ▶ Website: www.kaptest.com/grad/free/events



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