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## Graduate School Application Timeline for Undergrads

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There are different schools of thought about graduate school: some say, "Go now while you know how to study!" and others say, "Wait until you really figure out what you want to do, then go if you need to." Indeed, many graduate programs do prefer it if you have some experience under your belt before starting graduate studies. And, because of the cost, effort, and time required, it makes sense to have a specific goal in mind when pursuing a graduate degree. It never hurts to talk to professionals in your field of interest to find out their perspective on whether grad school makes sense and, if so, when. Of course, talking to a career counselor in the Career & Co-op Center could help provide some perspective and information as well.

If, after carefully considering your motivation to attend grad school, you've decided to go for it right after completing your undergraduate degree, here's a sample timeline for researching schools, and preparing to apply for graduate work.

### Junior Year - Fall

- Research schools and programs. Use Peterson's Guides in Career Services (or at [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)), or one of the other online search resources on the Career & Co-op Center's Graduate School page.
- Consult with faculty/advisors about your interests and the nature of grad study you might like to pursue.
- Obtain application forms, grad school catalogs, and financial aid information. Note deadlines.

### Junior Year - Spring

- Begin to approach faculty and/or professionals who know your work for recommendation letters.
- Register and begin preparing for appropriate graduate admissions tests.

### Summer after Junior Year

- Take required graduate admission tests (GRE, LSAT, GMAT, MCAT, etc.) Know deadlines and minimum time needed for scoring.
- Request applications, handbooks/bulletins, and financial aid information from all schools of interest.
- Talk to admissions staff, students and faculty at programs of interest. Look at the faculty's research interests.
- Begin drafting application essays in time to get feedback from Career Services and advisor(s) before applying.
- Gather information about financial aid resources, including assistantships (teaching, research, administrative), scholarships, and fellowships.

### Senior Year - Fall

- Obtain additional letters of recommendation from faculty and /or professionals with whom you have worked.
- Request that recommendation letters be mailed at least three weeks before any application deadline, to ensure they are processed by the deadline.
- Mail completed application materials, including financial aid packages. Application materials generally include:
  - Application Form
  - Admissions test reports (sent by the testing service to schools you specify)
  - Transcripts – request that your college mail them directly to the graduate institution or you may get copies issued to you and you can mail them with your application.
  - Letters of Recommendation (if not sent by the recommender)
  - Application Essays/Personal Statements (see handout in the Career Services office)

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- Other materials requested.
- For financial aid, be sure to complete the needed applications. Check with each school for financial aid application requirements and forms.

### Senior Year - Spring

- Follow-up to check the status of your application.
- Visit institutions of interest (optional) to help evaluate your options.
- Interview, if needed.
- Choose among schools. Be prepared to consider multiple offers. How will you decide? Also prepare for the possibility that you may not get any offers. What is your contingency plan?
- Once accepted to a program, notify other institutions of your choice.
- Send thank-you notes to those who wrote you recommendation letters, informing them of your plans.

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