

A decorative background on the left side of the page consisting of several concentric, light gray circles of varying radii, some of which are broken or incomplete, creating a sense of movement and depth.

# **UF CAREER CONNECTIONS CENTER**

## **Graduate School Preparation Guide**

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## IS GRADUATE STUDY RIGHT FOR ME?

Ask yourself the following questions to determine whether graduate study is the appropriate next step in your professional development.

- What is my interest level in this field?
- How will graduate school advance my career/is it required?
- Am I willing to put in the time and effort demanded of graduate study?
- Is it more valuable to continue my education directly from my undergraduate degree or should I gain some more hands-on experience before applying?

## FINDING THE RIGHT PROGRAM

There are many factors to consider when choosing the program that is right for you. Here are some – the order of importance is up to you.

- Preparation (pre-requisite courses)
- Ranking
- Size (institution, classes)
- Community (university, surrounding)
- Format (online, residential, hybrid)
- Tuition reimbursement/waivers
- Other personal factors
- Type of degree offered (Master's, Ph.D. Psy.D, etc.)
- Location (geographically, online)
- Support (academically, student resources)
- Financial considerations (tuition, plane tickets)
- Culture/Demographics
- Publications and Faculty Profiles/Research
- Requirements (capstone project, exams)
- Accreditation
- Experiential Learning (teaching assistant, clinical rotation, graduate assistantship)

## RESOURCES

When considering attending graduate school, there are many in-person and online resources available to you. Consider conducting an informational interview with someone currently in the field you desire to pursue.

Informational interviews provide you with in-person insight and advice, which is extremely beneficial when paired with your own individual research. Utilize the resources below to help you identify graduate programs that meet your needs.

- [UF Graduate and Professional Schools Fair](https://career.ufl.edu/events-and-programs/career-fairs/graduate-and-professional-schools-fair/) (https://career.ufl.edu/events-and-programs/career-fairs/graduate-and-professional-schools-fair/)
- [UF Career Center Events and Programs](https://career.ufl.edu/events/) (https://career.ufl.edu/events/)
- [Grad Schools](http://www.gradschools.com) (www.gradschools.com)
- [Student Doc](http://www.studentdoc.com) (www.studentdoc.com)
- [Petersons](https://www.petersons.com/) (https://www.petersons.com/)
- [US News](https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/) (https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/)

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## APPLICATION AND ADMISSION PROCESS

Ensure that you check with each individual program to meet specific requirements. Speak with an admissions representative! They are there to help. How many schools you choose to apply to is a decision based on various factors such as personal finances, competitiveness of the programs, timelines for the schools, types of programs, and career outcomes. It could be beneficial to keep a spreadsheet for each program you are researching. Not all programs require the same items, but here are some you may need to consider.

- Separate university and program application
- Interview
- Application deadlines – rolling admissions
- Standardized test scores (GRE, MCAT, GMAT, TOEFL)
- Prerequisite courses
- Research/Teaching Statement
- Supplemental information
- Official transcripts
- GPA
- Personal statement/letter of intent
- Resume/CV
- References/letters of recommendation
- Contact information for department
- Hands on Experience
- Shadowing, patient contact hours

## LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Ask faculty, staff, and supervisors who you feel can best vouch for your skills, personality and talents. Notify those you are requesting the recommendation from at least a month in advance to give them time to write it. Remind them of the deadline and steps they need to take. Give them a copy of your resume, personal statement draft and any other documents that may help them.

## CONNECT WITH THE CAMPUS

Reach out and connect to students that already attend or have attended your desired to school to find out information such as:

- What are the classes like (ask about program details)?
- What is the teaching style of the program?
- What kinds of jobs are graduates working in now?
- How accessible are faculty advisors?
- How long does it take to complete the program?
- How is the atmosphere of the department?
- How are graduates supported (wellness, post-graduation goals)?
- Determine your comfort level of the environment.

## SUGGESTED TIMELINE

Note that this is a suggested timeline and may not apply to all programs, i.e. medical school or physical therapy school. Use this as a guide to keep you on track but remember to follow up with each program individually for specifics.

### Winter/Spring - Junior Year

- Meet with career/academic advisors and professors to discuss your interest in graduate study
- Begin researching institutions/programs and visiting for campus tours
  - Gradschools.com, petersons.com, thegradcafe.com, professors/advisors
- Attend graduate school fairs (The Career Connections Center hosts one each Fall semester)
- Draft the beginnings of your personal statement
- Write a resume/CV and have it reviewed in the Career Connections Center



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## Winter/Spring - Junior Year

- Identify individuals for letters of recommendation and continue to develop these relationships
- Gain experiences needed to diversify your application
  - Part-time work, club involvement, volunteer service, research
- Register and take appropriate standardized exams
  - There are many – see what is appropriate for your industry. Take practice exams if desired
  - The GRE (Graduate Record Examinations) has a general test component, which is most often required for graduate admission, as well as several GRE Subject Tests that focus on a specific field of study.
  - Free GRE preparation materials may be found: On the official GRE Web page, [www.Number2.com](http://www.Number2.com), [www.varsitytutors.com/practice-tests](http://www.varsitytutors.com/practice-tests).
- The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), and PTE (Pearson Test of English) are common English proficiency tests.
- Register with appropriate application systems
  - Sometimes you have to apply to both the university's graduate school in addition to a specific program
- **MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATIONS:** this process is earlier than other graduate school applications

## Summer - Post Junior Year

- Continue to research/visit schools
- Network with professors to discuss overlapping research interests and how your skills might contribute
- Work on your personal statement (visit the Career Connections Center and Writing Center for review)
- Ask individuals for letters of recommendation
  - Provide your resume and other helpful documents to assist them with your letter
- Continue to gain experiences needed to diversify your application
- Make a checklist of requirements and schedule for each application

## Fall/Winter – Senior Year

- Request copies of official transcript from Registrar's office
  - See application guidelines for how to submit (with application or sent separately)
- Finish personal statement
- Collect letters of recommendation
- Attend appropriate graduate school information sessions/events
- Apply for scholarships and awards
- Complete applications and submit
  - Preferably in advance before deadlines/rolling deadlines
  - Be sure to be intentional and strategic when applying – it is beneficial to apply to more than one program to greater the chances of acceptance
- Submit financial aid applications

## Spring – Senior Year

- Interview with institutions that require an interview for program admittance/assistantships
- Engage with institutions that accept you (campus tours, virtual tours)
- Contact/talk to students currently enrolled in the program to gain more information
- Complete FAFSA
  - Consider what will be best for you (scholarship, assistantships, student loans)
- Submit tuition/housing deposits upon acceptance
- Notify other institutions that accepted you so they may admit students on their waitlist
- Send thank you notes to those who wrote your letters of recommendation, and inform them of your success

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