

guide to

# GRADUATE SCHOOL



## CHECKLIST FOR GRAD SCHOOL PREPARATION



### REFLECT

- Necessary?** Find out if you need an advanced degree for your field. Will it help you meet your goals?
- Decided?** Graduate programs are typically specialized. Do you feel confident about the direction you are going?
- Fit?** Consider if the timing is right and if the program is a good fit for your life, goals, and values.
- Motivated?** Typically, there is less structure and more individual accountability required in graduate study.



### SEARCH

- Review programs.** Review rankings, seek out recommendations, and check out programs online.
- Geography.** Geographic location is important if you plan to attend in person. Make sure to visit the schools to which you are applying.
- Types of degrees.** What types of degrees (e.g. Master of Arts, Master of Science, Doctoral) are offered at the university and through the specific department (e.g. Psychology)? Are the emphasis areas based on practice or research?
- Faculty advisors.** What are the professors' interests? Are they similar to your own? How is your advisor assigned? Do you select your advisor or is that choice made for you?
- Current students.** Are their interests and experiences similar to your own? What do they like about the program? Where are graduates from the program employed? What kind of assistance does the school provide in helping you find a job upon graduation?
- Practical experience.** Is hands-on experience possible? Are internships or a practicum required?



### REQUIREMENTS

- Exams.** Learn what exams are required for admission and the average scores of admitted students.
- Applications.** Each application process is different. Make sure to carefully read each and start working on each piece that is required for admission.
- Letters of Recommendation.** Most applications require letters of recommendation from faculty or advisors. Start identifying people to write these for you and reach out to request.
- Personal statements.** Many programs ask for a personal statement, diversity statement, or philosophy of research or teaching.
- Graduation requirements.** For graduation, is a thesis, dissertation, manuscript, practicum, or exit exam required?



Career Center  
University of Missouri

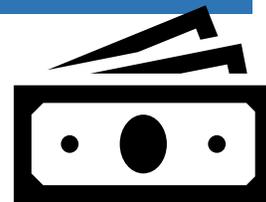
Lower Level  
Student Success Center

(573)882-6801  
career.missouri.edu  
career@missouri.edu



## FUNDING OPTIONS

Graduate school can be expensive; however, financial aid is available in several forms. Depending on your program and school, you may qualify for scholarships, fellowships, grants, assistantships, loans, and more.



**Federal Aid:** You must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Your school may also require this to apply for scholarships and other forms of aid.

**Fellowships and Scholarships:** Awards designed to encourage study in your area. Applications are generally available from departments or agencies, and may include tuition and a stipend. They usually require full-time enrollment.

**Assistantships** are teaching, research, and administrative positions that usually include some level of tuition remission, a stipend, and some benefits. At MU, applications can be obtained from your department or you can find these opportunities on HireMizzouTigers.com.

**Loans** include federal subsidized loans (the government pays the interest while you're in school) or unsubsidized (you pay all the interest, although the payments can be deferred until after graduation) and have variable interest rates. Private or alternative loans are made by private lenders and have variable interest rates. They generally cost more than federal loans.

## GRADUATE EXAMS

Although not all graduate programs require applicants to take entrance exams, many do. The main exams for graduate and professional programs are:

**GRE: Graduate Records Examination**

General: variety of grad schools

<http://www.ets.org/gre/>

**GMAT: Graduate Management Admission Test**

Business school

<http://www.gmac.com>

**LSAT: Law School Admissions Test**

Law school

<http://www.lsac.org>

**MCAT: Medical College Admission Test**

Medical school

<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/>

**PCAT: Pharmacy College Admission Test**

Pharmacy school

<http://www.pcatweb.info>

**DAT: Dental Admission Test**

Dental school

<http://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/dental-admission-test/>

**MAT: Miller Analogies Test**

General

<http://www.milleranalogies.com>

**OAT: Optometry Admission Test**

Optometry programs

<http://www.ada.org/en/OAT>

**How do I pick a test date?** Determine the application deadlines for the schools to which you are applying and then work backwards from your earliest deadline. Some exams can be taken at any time of the year while other exams are only offered a few times per year or have restrictions as to how many times they can be taken. To determine when and where a particular test is offered, visit its website and talk with the professionals at Testing Services: <https://testing.missouri.edu/>

**Prep resources.** For professional help, companies such as Kaplan and The Princeton Review offer classes and personal tutoring sessions. If you would rather study on your own, these companies, as well as others, have books and computer programs available for purchase. Moreover, many companies guarantee that their classes and products will improve your score, so take advantage of what is available!

# GO-TO RESOURCES FOR GRAD SCHOOL INFORMATION

## THE PRINCETON REVIEW

<http://www.princetonreview.com>

Small classes are offered in person, online, or with personal tutorials. Free online course demos are also available.

## EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICES

<http://www.ets.org>

Information about standardized tests together in one place..

## MEDICAL SCHOOL/HEALTHCARE

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/>  
<http://www.gradschools.com/programs/healthcare-public-health>

Applying to med schools and healthcare programs.

## ADDITIONAL GENERAL RESOURCES

<http://www.gradschools.com>  
<http://www.graduateguide.com>  
<https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools>

Search all graduate programs by major, location, and national ranking.

## FUNDING RESOURCES

<https://fafsa.ed.gov/>  
<http://www.finaid.org>  
<http://www.fastweb.com>  
<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/funding/>

Resources about applying for aid, searching for scholarships, and checking out all funding options to pay for grad school.

## KAPLAN

<http://www.kaplan.com>

Classes offered in person, online, or with a tutor. Practice exams are available online and practice prep software is available for purchase.

## PETERSON'S

<http://www.petersons.com>

Practice questions and general test info. Search for schools and get admissions and finance info.

## BUSINESS/MBA

<https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-business-schools>  
<https://www.mba.com/program-finder>

Applying to business and MBA programs.

## LAW

<http://www.businessinsider.com/best-law-schools-us-2016-7>  
<https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools>

Applying to law schools.

### *Did You Know...*

Grad school is a big investment of time and finances. Before you move forward, consider conducting informational interviews with current grad students and professionals in your desired field to make sure this is the right path for you.

Check out our **Guide to Informational Interviewing** for more info.



# GRAD SCHOOL PREPARATION TIMELINE

## 01 Before Junior Year

- Gain experience in your interest area through involvement in research, organizations, internships, jobs, etc.
- Get to know faculty members and think about who would be willing to write letters of recommendation for you.

## 02 During Junior Year

- Begin researching graduate programs and deciding where you would like to apply.
- Look up information for each program through the university's catalog often listed on the university website, including the suggested course of study and required classes.
- Determine program admission requirements, test requirements and dates, application deadlines, etc.

## 03 Summer Before Senior Year

- Meet with advisors, faculty members, and career counselors to discuss programs.
- Sign up for required standardized tests and practice for them.
- Take the necessary standardized tests for your programs.

## 04 September and October of Senior Year

- Write a draft of your statement of purpose including qualifications, career goals, and areas of interest within the field of study.
- Research financial aid sources, fellowships, and assistantships.
- Request letters of recommendation from faculty members and former employers from related jobs. Make sure they are individuals who know you well and will be able to write a strong, positive letter for you. Provide these people with your personal statement and résumé.

## 05 November and December of Senior Year

- Order official transcripts from the Registrar's Office. Be sure to request transcripts from all of the schools from which you have earned college credit, including hours obtained while in high school.
- Finalize your statement of purpose according to the question(s) asked on the applications.
- Submit all application materials to ensure all due dates are met (e.g. if you need to mail a reference letter or transcript)
- Apply for fellowships and assistantships.

## 06 January through March of Senior Year

- Contact the schools about the possibility of visiting or scheduling an interview.
- Fill out the FAFSA form.

## 07 April of Senior Year

- Discuss acceptances, rejections, and other career options with a faculty member, advisor, or a member of your college's career services office.
- Notify schools as to your decision to accept or decline admission.

*next steps:*

Talk with a Career Specialist for one-on-one assistance: <https://career.missouri.edu/connect>  
Check out more resources at <https://career.missouri.edu> > Resources tab