NAVIGATING THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL
APPLICATION TIMELINE

Once you have made the decision to pursue graduate school, start thinking about gathering and submitting application materials. The action steps below are based on an 18-month timetable.

1 | Search and Prepare

- Identify graduate programs of interest in order to identify factors such as program curriculum and uniqueness, requirements for admission, student demographics, etc.
- Involve yourself in campus activities, as well as volunteer, internship, and work opportunities related to your field of study – schools will look for these experiences on your application.
- Speak with faculty, advisors, alumni, and mentors about your graduate school goals.
- Keep your grades up – many competitive programs require at least a 3.0 or higher for admission.
- Prepare your résumé and visit the Center for Career Development for a professional critique.

2 | Initiate Action

- Request letters of recommendation from professors/professionals. It is best to ask your recommenders whether they can write a *positive* recommendation on your behalf, as well as to give them a timeline/due date.
- Research whether your chosen graduate programs require you to take standardized exams. In addition to school entry, exam scores may help secure funding from national and other funding sources.
- Verify the accuracy of your transcript online by visiting studentadmin.uconn.edu.

3 | Make a Decision and Plan a Course of Action

- Narrow your choices of graduate programs and create a checklist of each school's application requirements and deadlines. Some graduate programs have rolling admissions, meaning that your application will be evaluated when it arrives, rather than after a specific deadline.
- Consider a test preparation course if you plan to take a graduate school standardized exam.
- Register to take a graduate level standardized exam, such as the GRE, LSAT, or GMAT (if required).
- Try reaching out to faculty or current students at prospective schools to ask questions, build relationships, and make connections. However, do your research and be sure not to ask questions for which answers can be found on the program website.
- Draft a personal statement and have it critiqued by a mentor and/or a career coach at the CCD.
- Research sources of financial aid, including scholarships, fellowships, and graduate/teaching assistantships. Assistantships are opportunities for graduate students to either teach, support research, or work a set number of hours which may reduce the cost or pay for your tuition. Scholarships may be available based on academic merit or other eligibility requirements. Fellowships are typically merit-based awards that provide graduate students an opportunity to pursue their degree without taking on teaching or research responsibilities.
- Create a budget for application fees and travel expenses for on-campus interviews.

4 Apply to Programs
- Send recommenders a reminder *at least 2 weeks before letters are due* and finish collecting recommendations.
- Finalize your personal statement based on feedback from a professional mentor and/or CCD career consultant. Make an appointment at the CCD to have the final draft of your document reviewed.
- A PDF of your unofficial transcripts can be found on Student Admin to upload to online applications. If your schools require an official transcript, it can also be requested at studentadmin.uconn.edu.
- Complete and submit all of your applications and supporting documents before stated deadlines, allowing time to verify that all materials have been received prior to the date they are due. For online applications, be sure you receive an email as proof your submission was received. For mailed applications, make a copy in case it gets lost. Be sure to include all required documents in your application and follow directions carefully.
- Plan for interviews if they are required. Research and prepare answers to frequently asked questions and make a list of questions to ask the interviewers about their program.
- Practice your interview skills by scheduling and completing a practice interview at the CCD. You can also access Big Interview (https://uconn.biginterview.com/) for additional practice online

5 Follow-Up
- Write thank-you notes/emails to the people who wrote your letters of recommendation. It is best to do so within *1 week* of the date you requested that your recommenders complete their letters.
- If you attended an interview, be sure to write a thank-you email to each person whom you spoke with. Ideally, this should be done within 24 hours of the interview.
- Approximately 1 week before the final deadline, contact schools to confirm that your application materials have been received. For programs with online applications, this information may also be available on the application website.
- If you are eligible, fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for federal financial aid beginning on
  January 1st. Information on the FAFSA may be found at https://fafsa.ed.gov/.
- Continue to pursue and apply for all forms of financial aid (e.g., assistantships, fellowships, scholarships, grants, loans, and other sources of financial assistance offered by outside agencies/organizations).
- Contact your institution's financial aid office for more information.

6 Make Your Decision
- Weigh your options. Consider discussing the program(s) that you have been accepted to with a trusted mentor, colleague, or family member.
- Visit schools where you have been accepted, if you have not already done so.
- Notify each program of your decision to accept or decline. A phone call or email can both be appropriate, but it is best to match the method of communication which the program used to notify you of your acceptance.
- Contact the people who wrote your letters of recommendation and let them know of your decision.
- Respond to any financial aid opportunities that have been offered to you.
- Read information received from the program that you have chosen to attend and request any additional information you may need, including housing resources, funding opportunities, or current students to contact.

Resources

CCD Resources	How to Decide if Graduate School is Right for You https://career.uconn.edu/student-resources/
Test Preparation	https://www.princetonreview.com/grad-school https://kaplan.com/individuals/prepare-for-an-exam/
Networking	linkedin.com https://career.uconn.edu/resources/husky-mentor-network/ uconnalumni.com/community/alumni-networks
Financial Aid	studentaid.ed.gov