

**Graduate School Checklist & Timeline**

* **Questions to consider when thinking about graduate school:**
  + What are my short and long term goals?
  + Will graduate studies help me to achieve those goals?
  + Should I take some time off from school before pursuing my graduate education?
  + What are the pros and cons of pursuing graduate education?
* **Make list of what you’re looking for in a graduate program** 
  + Check out general information about graduate schools/programs online.
  + What criteria are important to you?
  + Make a list or Excel spreadsheet so you know how to evaluate programs you look at. Common criteria include:
    - Location
    - Cost
    - Program reputation
    - Credentials provided
    - Success rates of graduation
* **Generate list of potential programs/schools**
  + Research potential programs online to review your options.
    - http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/research
    - http://www.mycareerblast.com/my\_grad\_school.html
    - http://www.gradview.com/articles/choosing.html
  + Consider graduate school options abroad.
    - www.gradschools.com/program-types/graduate-schools-by-country
  + Other helpful websites include:
    - www.gradschools.com
    - www.petersons.com
    - www.usnews.com/education
  + Stop by the Graduate School (106 Gills Building) for graduate school resources here at UK.
* **Continue your research and compare options and goals**
  + Time Commitment (e.g. 1 year vs. 4 year program)
  + Part-time vs. full-time programs
  + Public vs. Private institutions
  + Acceptance rates & entrance requirements
  + Placement success of program graduates
  + Placement locations (where grads go)
  + Program size and demographics
  + Teaching methods
  + Program reputation
  + Tuition costs & financial aid available
  + Living expenses
* **Use your research to choose 5-10 program possibilities. Start to narrow your list**
  + Talk to advisors, professors & professionals in the field to discuss program highlights and their experiences in graduate school.
  + Plan campus visits, meetings with program faculty members.
  + **Ask questions** – talk with current students, professors, and alum.
* **Determine which programs you want to apply for and start the application process.**
  + Make a folder for each program you apply to and include a checklist of application requirements to keep yourself organized.

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* **Spring – Junior Year:**
  + Schedule to take GRE, GMAT, and/or GRE subject tests and request that your scores are electronically sent to each school where you are applying.
  + Note: Schedule in advance months before you intend to take test as testing facilities fill up quickly
  + Consider test prep courses with Kaplan. Visit www.kaptest.com to explore options.
  + Use online study resources like these:
    - www.gmatpracticeprep.com
    - www.mygretutor.com
  + Consider test prep books like Princeton Review, Cracking the GRE, The Ultimate Math Refresher for GRE, GMAT, and SAT, The GRE Test for Dummies
  + Investigate financial aid for programs, so you can weed out programs you cannot pursue because they do not offer the level of support you need.
* **August/September - Senior Year:**
  + Research application information & application processes. Keep track of all deadlines for applying, as deadlines will differ with programs.
  + Be sure to find out if the schools you are applying to use a rolling admissions process. This means the earlier you apply the better.
* **October/November - Senior Year:** 
  + Submit applications and application fees for each school by deadline.
  + Request transcript from Registration Office. It’s usually best to request the UK Transcript Office (located in Funkhouser Building) send transcripts directly to the addresses where supplemental materials should be sent.
  + Approach Professors, Employers, etc. for letters of recommendation.
  + Compose personal statements/essays for each institution and have them revised by a faculty member, writing center, and staff in the Graham Office of Career Management.
  + Revise resume/curriculum vitae and submit with supplemental information. (Again GOCM staff can help.)

* **December - Senior Year:**
  + Request/Research funding information for programs such as scholarships, fellowships, assistantships from each school you applied.
* **January-February - Senior Year:**
  + File your Federal Income Tax Return. This must be done before to complete FAFSA.
  + File FAFSA and submit all complete scholarship applications.
  + Prepare for admissions interviews by scheduling an appointment with Graham Office of Career Management.
* **March-May - Senior Year:**
  + Follow-up with institutions that you have not heard back from and make final decision.
  + Submit acceptance paperwork to your program of choice.
  + Notify other programs of your decision if necessary.
  + Send handwritten thank you notes on nice stationary to those who wrote letters of recommendation letters, and inform them of your chosen program.

**Setting Yourself Up for Success**

***Application*** – Read through and complete your applications carefully and clearly.

***Test Scores*** – Take tests early enough so that you have time to repeat them if needed. Make sure that you understand each program’s requirements (i.e. how many attempts they’ll accept, if they average scores, etc.)

***GPA*** – Be aware that some programs may calculate your GPA their own way. Find out if re-taking classes will help raise your GPA.

***Recommendations*** – Choose references who know you well, can speak of your strengths, and who will submit in a timely manner. Help your references write the best letters for you by giving them plenty of time to write your letters (4+ weeks) and everything needed (your resume, names of grad programs, stamps, envelopes, etc.)

***Personal Statement*** – Readers are looking for how you think, your commitment to the profession, the strength of your decision to go to grad school, and how well you “fit” with the program. Proofread carefully and have others review, as well.

**Personal Statement Checklist**

A personal statement serves as an opportunity to explain to an admissions council how you are uniquely qualified for a graduate program, scholarship, or other opportunities. It should paint a picture of you as a person while highlighting your interest in the program, your short and long term career goals, and examples of your motivation and competence. A quality personal statement requires carefully reflecting on life events, work experience, achievements, motivation, and academic history. Below is a checklist to utilize when evaluating your document.

My personal statement:

 Meets page or word limits using conventional fonts, spacing, and margins.

 Is free of grammatical and spelling errors (Consult with The Writing Center for additional assistance)

 Features an engaging opening paragraph that avoids clichés and sets a framework for the rest of the document.

 Has an overall interesting and positive tone utilizing active voice.

 Distinguishes myself from other candidates and discusses what makes me different and uniquely qualified.

 Does not simply repeat my resume (think depth over breadth).

 Offers evidence of positive qualities and traits I possess through specific examples.

 Communicates both short term and long term career goals.

 Connects life experiences to academic motivation and career goals.

 Explains why I am interested in the specific school and program.

 Includes only appropriate and relevant material.

 Avoids using “I” at the beginning of each sentence and varies sentence structure.

 Is an accurate and honest depiction of myself.

Extra points to consider:

 Mention faculty with whom you would like to collaborate and why.

 Have professors, industry professionals, and other individuals you trust read your personal statement and offer feedback for improvement.

 Comment on circumstances that may have prompted low grades or gaps in academic records, with an emphasis on learning from events and having a positive future focus.

 Graduate programs may vary in personal statement prompts or questions they would like you to answer; be sure to follow directions and tailor your essays to each program’s requirements.