

Preparing for Graduate School

GRADUATE SCHOOL TIMELINE

As early as you think graduate study might be an option for you, begin discussing it with your academic advisor, faculty members, Career and Professional Readiness Center staff and others. The earlier the better. You will need to get a good sense of what graduate study entails, the types of graduate programs and degrees that are available, the kind of coursework you should complete as an undergraduate, and the level of scholastic achievement you will need in order to be considered a viable candidate.

Junior Year – Fall

- Begin thinking about graduate school in a more systematic manner.
- Research programs and schools that interest you. The CPRC website at www.sbu.edu/cprc is a good starting point for your research.
- Attend Information Sessions for Admissions or the program directly – many schools will be offering these in a virtual setting.
- Reach out to the Admissions Office at the university you are interested in to make sure you understand the application requirements, program requirements, and if they have any recommendations to help you stand out among the other applications. The earlier you reach out, the better prepared you will be.
- Meet with your academic advisor to begin discussing graduate school options and make sure that you are on track to fulfill all requirements for graduation.
- Talk to seniors in your major who are going through the graduate school application process.
- Consider doing informational interviews with people in the field you'd like to study.

Junior Year - Spring

- Begin researching financial aid options. Scholarship deadlines are often earlier than graduate school application deadlines.
- Look for summer jobs or internships in your field to strengthen your candidacy.
- Begin to prepare for the entrance exams (GRE, LSAT, GMAT, MCAT), if applicable.
- Continue researching schools of interest and begin reviewing applications.
- Meet with faculty members and career counselors to discuss programs and options.
- Create and maintain contacts with potential reference writers (professors, supervisors, etc.)

Summer between Junior and Senior Year

- Work or volunteer at a job that is related to your field of interest.
- Continue to research graduate programs and faculty members within those programs.
- Try to visit the universities in which you are most interested.
- Develop the tentative list of schools to which you plan to apply, including both reach and safe schools.
- Continue to prepare for, and possibly take, the admissions exams that may be required.
- Start saving money for the application process, schools may ask anywhere from \$20 to \$100 in application fees.



Senior Year

September

- Contact the financial aid offices at the schools to which you plan to apply to request information and applications for any sources of financial aid that may be relevant. Be aware that financial aid deadlines can be quite different from general application deadlines.
- Start developing a timeline for each application you will be submitting.
- Begin to put together information for the individuals you will ask to write letters of recommendation on your behalf.

October/November

- Take standardized tests, if appropriate, and request that your scores be sent to the schools you have chosen.
- Double check timelines for application packages for each school/program.
- Develop your personal statement and other essays required for applications. Have faculty members and others you trust review your document.
- If you are required to submit other writing samples, a portfolio, audition tape, etc. be certain that all portions of your applications are well-prepared.
- Request letters of recommendation at least ONE MONTH BEFORE THEY ARE DUE.
- Request official transcripts from the registrar. Be sure to include transcripts from all institutions where you pursued undergraduate coursework.

December – January

- Complete and send application for all schools of interest. Most school deadlines range from mid-November through early February. Sending applications three to four weeks before deadline is recommended.
- Always follow up with schools to confirm that they have received your application and all supporting materials.
- Retake graduate school admissions tests, if necessary.
- Send thank-you notes to reference writers. apprising them of your application status.

February-April

- Prepare to make a decision about which program you will choose. Identify what factors are most important to you in this decision-making process
- Develop a contingency plan in the event you don't get accepted to the schools of your choice.
- Prepare for on-campus interviews, if required.
- Send thank-you notes to interviewers.
- Let your reference writers, professors, and everyone who has assisted you know where you have been accepted and where you have decided to go.

5 SUBCATEGORIES IN GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS EXAMS:

GMAT: Graduate Management Admission Test

GRE: Graduate Record Exam

LSAT: Law School Admission Test

MCAT: Medical College Admission Test

DAT: Dental School Admission Test

PCAT: Pharmacy College Admission Test

What Graduate Schools Are Looking For in Applicants:

- Strong undergraduate academic performance as indicated by strength of course load - GPA - GRE scores .
- Highly motivated students, who understand why they are applying.
- Students who can clearly express themselves both orally and in writing.
- Relevant field and/or research experience .
- Personal Characteristics including :
 - Motivated and hardworking*
 - Emotionally stable and mature*
 - Capable of working well with others*
 - Strong character and integrity*
 - Intellectually independent*
 - Leadership potential*