

Graduate School Checklist

This is a recommended time frame and checklist that does not need to be strictly followed. Different programs may have different time frames; be sure to check with your choice schools and meet all deadlines that they have specifically posted. Some items, such as internships, can be done for a couple years before the application process in order to gain experience in your field.

6-12 Months Before You Apply:

- Get **A LOT** of experience in the field that you are interested in attending graduate school for
 - This can be done in internships, international experience, volunteer work, paid jobs, and more!
- Begin to research schools that have your program. A few ways you could go about this are:
 - Online research
 - Communicating with faculty, family, and friends
 - Visiting the school during a campus visit/open house
- Talk to professors in your major field of study for recommendations on how to network with individuals in your desired graduate study area.
 - Ask about schools, available opportunities that they may know of, etc.
- E-mail professors at various graduate schools who have research/academic interests similar to yours
 - By e-mailing professors and establishing a relationship with them, you are networking with people in this professional field. Many times, this can lead to opportunities that will put your name out there, and increase your chances of future acceptance!
- See what standardized exams are required for the application to schools that you are interested in (MCAT, DAT, GRE, OAT, LSAT, etc.)
- Prepare **VERY EARLY** for standardized exams
 - Many times, standardized testing needs to be completed many months before the application process begins. Be sure to take a test prep class for your standardized test, as these will increase your knowledge on how they are performed. Research exactly how early you should take your exam, as a student taking the MCAT should take the exam long before a student taking the GRE, based on when your program applications should be sent to schools.
- Register for your standardized exam!
 - Testing centers fill up quickly, so be sure to register well in advance of your planned test date!
- Find out whether your schools are part of a universal application process, or if applications are done individually for each school.
 - *If you are participating in a universal application process, such as SOPHAS or AADSAS, refer to the last section of this checklist.*
- Put together a schedule for yourself that indicates when to take standardized tests, application deadlines, and the time you need to complete applications.

5 months to the Day of Application Submission

- Choose exactly which schools you want to apply to
 - Make sure to choose a safety school (a school that you know you will be accepted to), schools that you would like to attend, and “reach” schools (1 or 2 schools that you hope to be accepted to, but have more stringent application procedures and limited acceptance rates). You may be pleasantly surprised!
- Determine application deadlines of these schools
- Different programs have different application deadlines. Medical and Dental schools often have much earlier deadlines than graduate schools, so be sure that you are aware of these dates and your application is submitted **WELL BEFORE** the deadline! Get your application in before schools fill up their new classes!
- Narrow down an exact program specialty for what you wish to apply (ex. Master of Science in Psychology (MS), Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology (PhD), or Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)).
- Request recommendation letters from professors at least 2 months before you plan to submit your application
 - Pick professors who know you and your work. If you have done a special project with a certain professor, he/she would be an excellent person to write a recommendation for you. When asking for a recommendation, be sure to ask the professor for “**a good** recommendation” letter!
- Write a resume or CV
 - There is a difference between a resume and a CV! A resume must be kept to one page, while a CV can be multiple pages. Often times, science programs accept CV’s so that you can display your research experience. A CV is also used most commonly in academic or research based applications.
 - Most graduate applications require the submission of a resume/CV. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your leadership abilities, experience in the field, and other work experiences that you have had. Go to the **Center for Academic and Career Development** for resume review!
- Begin writing personal statements
 - This is often one of the most important aspects of your application, especially if the school does not require interviews. Review the question asked by the school, outline your essay, and be sure to stay within the word limits provided. **PERSONALIZE** each application essay, as generic application essays will not be accepted.
- Have your personal statements reviewed by your professors and peers before they are sent in.
 - Often times, as others read your work, they catch mistakes that you have missed after reading over your essay many times. Also, professors may give you other ideas on what to write about.
- Begin filling out all applications
 - Most applications are now online, making it much easier for applicants to submit. Fill out all your personal data, and later upload your resume, personal statement, and any other required information.
- Send standardized test scores

- For most tests, you can send out a limited number of score reports directly from the test center on the day of your exam. For example, the GRE will allow you to send up to 4 score reports from the testing center, so if you apply to more than 4 graduate schools, you will need to send the remaining score reports separately. These additional score reports may come at a cost. The GRE requires you to pay \$20 per score report sent out after the initial four free score reports sent from the testing center. Do this at least **3-4 weeks before** you plan on submitting your application!
- Go to the registrar to request the release of your transcript
 - This should be done at least **2 weeks before** you plan on sending in your applications!
- Submit your applications!
 - Standardized tests have been completed, essays have been written, and your work has been triple checked!
- Be sure to wait for e-mails from schools saying that your application is complete!
 - If you do not hear from a school in a couple weeks are received, call the school to be sure your application is complete.

After Your Application Have Been Submitted

- Fill out and submit FAFSA applications to all schools that you have applied. Be sure to check deadlines of FAFSA for scholarship consideration, as they vary by school.
- Hopefully, acceptance letters begin coming in!
- Research, more in depth, the pro's and con's of the schools that you have been accepted.
- Create a chart where you can compare schools that you have been accepted.
 - This chart will help you decide what the best program for you to attend is. Organize it by writing **Tuition, Living Costs of the Area (Rent, food, utilities), Work-study opportunities, Job Opportunities After Graduation**, and other things that are important to you when making a decision!
- If you have not already done so, visit schools after you have been accepted to make a final decision!
 - It may be a good idea to visit schools where you have already been accepted for 2 reasons:
 1. Some schools, depending on your program, will pay airfare and hotel costs for you to come visit their school once you have been accepted.
 2. You do not want to fall in love with a school for its location, it is best to visit after you have been accepted to prevent disappointment.
- Choose your school!

Don't panic if you have not followed these recommended time frames! You can choose to go to graduate school at any time, and if you have a last minute decision to apply to a program, as long as their application deadline has not passed, it can still be done!

Universal Application Information

- Many graduate schools participate with organizations that make the application process easier for students, allowing students to fill out only one application for multiple schools. While this is helpful, it makes the process much longer than applications being sent to individual schools.
- For example, SOPHAS is the generalized application for schools of public health. If you are applying to many graduate schools that participate in SOPHAS, then you actually only need to fill out one universal application.
- You still **MUST** write a personal statement/essay that has been tailored to each school that you are applying!
- Allot for weeks of additional time before school deadlines are approaching. For example, SOPHAS will receive your application, and it will take another **3-6 more weeks** for them to process and mail your application to the designated schools. The application deadline is when each school must have your application in their offices, not SOPHAS, so allow SOPHAS that time to send your application to each school.
- Don't forget that these Universal Application Organizations will be reviewing your application for formatting errors before sending it to the school. This means that they will be ensuring that all application directions have been followed and the information on each application is correct (your entered GPA must be the exact GPA that is shown on your school's transcript). While they will not change information on your application, it will be verified.
- If your application has not been approved for any reason, you will be notified, and it will be sent back to you for corrections. This is the reason your application should be sent well ahead of time, so that if this does happen, you still have time to resubmit it with corrections so that the schools receive it before their deadlines.
- Essays **MUST** be personalized for each school, and on the universal application, you will be able to make school designations in order to send each personal statement you have written to the correct school. **NO GENERIC ESSAYS!**