



2016



Graduate & Professional School Guide

Notre Dame College

Career Services Center

NotreDameCollege.edu/careers

This guide was written to assist you in conducting a successful graduate/professional school search. Follow the guidelines to apply to programs and decide which school is the right fit for you.

DECIDING TO GO TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Here are some things to consider:

- What are my long- and short-term professional goals?
- Is graduate study necessary to attain those goals?
- Will an advanced degree make me more marketable to an employer?
- Am I delaying my post graduation job search?
- Am I willing to invest time and energy to take on another degree program?
- Can I afford it now?
- Do I have the grade-point average and test scores to get into graduate school?
- Graduate school is required for professions in law, medicine, dentistry, and college-level teaching.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROGRAM

You will want to consider:

- Program of study
- Location, size of the school and program
- Cost and Financial Aid
- Success of graduates
- Admission requirements: GPA, undergraduate degree, or test scores
- Faculty (background/qualifications/research interests)
- Facilities (libraries/computers/laboratories)
- Program requirements; such as a thesis or practicum
- Residence requirements



Resources for researching graduate schools:

Peterson's Graduate and Professional Programs: www.petersons.com

The Graduate School Guide: www.graduateguide.com

Grad Profiles: <http://www.gradprofiles.com>

APPLICATION PROCESS

Begin the application process early by researching the admissions criteria, deadlines, fees, and application processes for each of your prospective schools. Deadlines and required materials vary from school to school. Make sure to gather all of the information you need from each school you plan to apply to. Visit with admissions counselors or take a tour of the campus if necessary.

Frequently required application materials include:

- Standardized Test Scores
- Application Form and Fee
- Resume
- Statement of Interest/Personal Statement
- Letters of Recommendation
- Official Undergraduate Transcripts

Standardized Test Scores

Some graduate schools require that you take one or more standardized examinations before they decide upon your admission. Requirements and scores vary between programs and schools. You may wish to prepare in advance for some of these tests. Various resources are available for study such as books, software, and prep-classes. These resources contain many sample test questions and study tips for standardized tests. **For more information and to register online:**

Graduate Record Examination (GRE) <http://www.ets.org/gre>

Law School Admission Test (LSAT) <http://www.lsac.org>

Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/>

Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) <http://www.mba.com/mba/TaketheGMAT>

Miller's Analogies Test (MAT) <http://www.milleranalogies.com>

Dental Admission Test (DAT) <http://www.ada.org/prof/ed/testing/dat/index.asp>

Application Form and Fees

Most colleges will provide an application form online or in the mail by your request. Application forms should be neat, typed, error free, and grammatically correct. At the time of submission your application fee will be due. It is important that you send a check with the application so that all your materials can be processed before the deadline.

Resume and Statement of Interest

Many institutions will require a resume and a personal statement (statement of interest letter) due at the time you submit your application. Personal statements provide the committee with the opportunity to learn about your goals, objectives, and experience. You can showcase your accomplishments, respect for the program, writing skills and creativity. Some writing tips:

- **Answer the questions that are asked.** Read the directions clearly and answer the questions accurately. Make sure your responses give the reader insight to what you want the committee to know about you. Tailor your responses to each school.
- **Tell a story.** Demonstrate your experience and creative skills through a story that answers the application questions. This is a good way to separate you from all other candidates.
- **Be specific.** Back up your statements with examples from your past school or work experiences.
- **Create a strong opening statement.** Hook the reader from the beginning. This statement becomes the framework for the rest of the paper. Avoid cliché openings such as “My name is....” Or “I want to be a teacher/doctor because....”
- **Proofread your paper.** Check for spelling and grammatical errors.

Letters of Recommendation

Most institutions require two to five letters of recommendation on your behalf. These are letters from other individuals supporting your decision and abilities to apply to the school.

- Contact your references before the deadline, so they have plenty of time to write a letter.
- Obtain recommendations from people qualified to evaluate your academic and work experience, as well as your potential performance. It is essential that your reference know you well enough to make a good assessment of your academic and work abilities.
- Faculty members, former employers, and supervisors make excellent references.
- For graduate school, at least two references should be academic or faculty.
- Find out if the school you are applying to requires your letters of recommendation on professional letterhead in a specific form. Make sure to notify your reference of which form to use or provide them with the appropriate materials.
- Share with your reference the reasons you are applying to graduate school and your future career goals.
- Supply your references with updated personal and professional information, such as a resume.

Official Transcripts

All transcripts must be officially ordered from the Notre Dame College Student Services office. Check with your graduate school admission application for official directions. **Please contact the Student Services Office at 216.373.5315 or view the website at: <http://www.notredamecollege.edu/academics/registrar>.**

ADMISSIONS INTERVIEW

An interview may be requested by some schools as a part of the application process. Some interviews are for admission into the program; other interviews are for graduate assistantships and other types of financial aid. The admissions interview is a chance for you to sell yourself in person and express your interest in the program or position.

Interview Tips:

- Express your interest and knowledge in the school. Research the school ahead of time by reading the schools catalogue or searching the website.
- Discuss your strengths, skills, experiences, and career goals that are related to the program.
- Use specific examples from your academic, work, and co-curricular experiences to explain your qualifications.
- Dress professionally: Business suits, dress shoes, and professional attire are recommended.
- Ask questions! Remember, you are interviewing the school to determine if it is right for you.

Sample Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. Why are you interested in this graduate program at this particular school?
4. What do you know about our program?
5. What are your plans after you complete your graduate work?
6. Are you interested in an assistantship? If so, which one(s)? Why?
7. How did you decide to pursue this field of study?
8. In college, what classes did you enjoy the most? ...The least? Why?
9. What are your research interests?
10. What courses or experiences at your undergraduate institution caused you to think about graduate study in this field?
11. Describe a research project you have worked on.
12. What other graduate schools are you considering?
13. What are your plans if you should not be accepted into this graduate program?
14. What do you believe your greatest challenge will be if you are accepted into this program?

Questions for the interviewer:

What distinguishes this program from others in the academic field?

What are your graduates doing now?

When will you make the selection decision?

FINANCIAL AID

Assessing your financial need is an important step in planning for graduate school. Begin by making a list of all of your expected graduate expenses (tuition, food, rent, books, insurance... etc...). Calculate all of your expenses and determine how much financial aid you will need. Based on your need and budget you can determine which type of financial aid you can receive.

Assistantships:

Graduate students can often apply and interview for different types of assistantships depending on their school and program. Be sure to check for deadlines and assistantship applications. They may be offered with the admissions process, but they are often a separate application. Some schools require a resume and interview as well.

- **Research Assistantship:** Graduate students can conduct research with/for a faculty member and in return receive tuition reimbursement and/or a stipend.
- **Teaching Assistantship:** Graduate students may be offered tuition reimbursement and/or a stipend for instructing introductory and/or laboratory classes.
- **Graduate Assistantship:** Graduate students can apply and interview for various kinds of office work for tuition reimbursement and/or a stipend.

Fellowships:

Fellowships are grants that graduate students can receive from a school or organization. Tuition is usually waived and a stipend is provided. The graduate student in return has to conduct research in a particular area.

Scholarships:

Some programs offer a variety of academic and financial need based scholarships. Check online at the institution's Financial Aid website for directions and deadlines to apply for scholarships.

Loans:

The Financial Aid office at each school can provide you with instructions to apply for government loans. Some loans are also available at private banks. Make sure to fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form online in order to become eligible for government loans.

Additional Web Resources

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

Direct Loan Service Online <https://www.dlsonline.com/borrower/BorrowerWelcomePage.jsp>

Office of Post Secondary Education <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/index.html>

Scholarships.com, Online College Scholarship Search <http://www.scholarships.com>

GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE

JUNIOR YEAR:

- › Decide which fields interest you and then start looking for programs and schools that match your interests. Visit the campus if possible.
- › Investigate what kind of financial aid options will be available to you including grants, loans, and assistantships.
- › Prepare for entrance exams and schedule them.
- › Request application materials from prospective graduate schools.
- › Keep your grades up! Take courses that are relevant to your field of study.
- › Consider who you would ask to be references or to write letters of recommendation. Discuss your goals with your references. Keep in contact by email or phone.
- › Meet with an Academic Advisor to discuss your graduate study goals.

SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR:

- › Complete an internship and/or research project. Volunteer experiences are beneficial too.
- › Read information from each school and review each application carefully. Note deadlines and requirements. Choose which ones you are going to apply to.
- › Fill out your applications and begin working on personal statements.
- › Take any entrance exams that are required to apply to each school.
- › Schedule an appointment or interview at potential graduate schools, if necessary.
- › Update your resume. Take it to the Career Services Center to be reviewed.

SENIOR YEAR (FALL):

- › Obtain any last minute application materials from schools you have selected. Identify deadlines and requirements. Line up references.
- › Request your transcripts to be sent to the graduate schools that you are applying to.
- › Evaluate each school's financial aid processes and pursue financial assistance opportunities.
- › Evaluate the schools and determine which ones you will apply to. Visit the schools; meet with a counselor or graduate student in your prospective program.
- › Submit application materials before the deadline. Check with the schools to make sure they received all of your information on time.

SPRING OF SENIOR YEAR:

- › Review acceptance letters and notify each school of your decisions to attend or decline acceptance.
- › Inform your references of your progress and decision.
- › Fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Respond to financial aid opportunities that have been offered to you.
- › Send your final transcripts after graduation.
- › Finalize enrollment and attend orientation sessions and consider residence options.

For additional assistance, contact the Career Services Center at:

216-373-5217 or careerservices@ndc.edu.