

# Graduate School Application

**CAREFULLY READ** each school's material to make sure you file a complete and timely application. Application deadlines can range from August before your senior year to a few weeks before graduate school matriculation.

## Graduate Admissions Tests

Graduate and professional schools usually require a specific admissions test in addition to other requirements.

The Graduate Records Examination (GRE) is required by most universities for admission into their graduate programs. It measures verbal, quantitative, and analytical abilities. In preparing for the GRE, the Educational Testing Service recommends the following strategies:

- Become familiar with the test design and directions; this may be accomplished by working with practice tests available in the General Test booklet and through various preparatory manuals.
- All questions are of equal value; therefore do not spend a lot of time trying to answer questions you find extremely difficult.
- Your score is based on the number of questions answered correctly. It is in your best interest to "guess" or mark an answer even if you are not sure.
- Do not wait until the last five minutes to record your answers on the answer sheet; this often leads to mistakes.
- For additional GRE information, visit the Website at <http://www.gre.org>

The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) is required for admission into most management/business programs. It measures general verbal and mathematical skills. It does not require prior knowledge of business. The Graduate Management Admission Council recommends the following strategies in taking the GMAT:

- Before taking the test, become familiar with the test structure and questions by reviewing sample tests available in the GMAT bulletin and various preparation manuals.
- Try to answer questions in the order in which they are presented; if, however, you come across an extremely difficult question, skip it and go back to it if time permits.
- Most examinees finish about 75% of the questions asked.
- Your test will be scored by awarding one point for each question answered correctly and zero points for questions not answered. You will lose one-fourth of a point for every wrong answer; therefore if you do not have a "good guess," it may be wise to skip the question.

To learn more about the GMAT and planning for an MBA, visit <http://www.gmat.com>

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) assists law schools in assessing the academic promise of their applicants. The LSAT measures reading comprehension and analytical/logistical reasoning. For more information on the LSAT, visit the web site at <http://www.lsac.org>.

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is an objective measure of science knowledge and its application of reasoning skills considered important for the study and practice of medicine.

Other tests you may be requested to take, based on the program you are applying to, are: Miller's Analogies Test, Dental Admission Test, Optometry College Admission Test, Pharmacy College Admission Test and PRAXIS (formerly the National Teacher Examination).

Do not wait until the last moment to take these tests, as your scores may not be received in time for your application deadlines. The Career Center has applications available for the GRE, GMAT, and LSAT. You should plan to take the necessary test(s) by the preceding fall with the exception of the MCAT, which should be taken during the end of your junior year.

### **Transcripts**

Graduate schools will require official transcripts for completion of your application. Contact the Registrar's Office to request your transcript.

### **Letters of Recommendation**

Most graduate schools will request two or three letters of recommendation. Recommendations from faculty are essential for academically oriented programs. Professional programs, such as business, law, and medicine, may request letters from professionals in their respective fields. When selecting people to write recommendations for you, be sure to consider those who know you or your work well. To request a recommendation letter, you should schedule an appointment with the faculty member/professional to discuss your goals and plans. You should provide each person with your resume or a summary sheet of your accomplishments. After discussing your plans, you should then ask the faculty member/professional if he/she would write a letter on your behalf. Remember, faculty members tend to get very busy during the end of each semester, so do not wait until the last minute to approach them. If they agree, give them the recommendation letter form. Be sure to provide reference writers with a stamped, addressed envelope.

### **Application Essays**

Writing an essay or personal statement is often the most difficult part of the application process. Requirements vary widely in this regard. An essay or personal statement for an application should be a statement of your goals and interests. When a "personal statement" is required, the possibilities are almost unlimited. You should develop a clear statement demonstrating interest and understanding of your chosen field. Your essay should reflect your writing abilities. More importantly, it should reveal the clarity, focus, and depth of your thinking.

There are two main approaches to organizing an essay. You can outline the points you want to cover and then expand on them, or you can put your ideas down on paper as they come to you, going over them, eliminating certain sentences, and moving others around until you achieve a logical sequence. Making an outline will probably lead to a well-organized essay, whereas writing spontaneously may yield a more inspired piece of writing.

Admissions committees may try to evaluate a number of things from your statement including:

- Motivation and commitment to a field of study
- Expectations with regard to the program and career opportunities
- Writing ability
- Major areas of interest
- Research and/or work experience
- Educational background
- Immediate and long-term goals
- Reasons for deciding to pursue graduate education in a particular field and at a particular institution
- Maturity
- Personal uniqueness - what you would add to the diversity of the entering class

It is important to have someone critique your essay. Your adviser and those who write your letters of recommendation may be very helpful in critiquing your writing. If they are in the field you plan to pursue, they will be able to tell you what things to stress and what things to keep brief. A career counselor in the Career Center can also help evaluate your statement. Do not be surprised, however, if you get differing opinions on the content of your essay. Take it all into consideration, but only you can decide on the best way of presenting yourself.

If there is information in your application that might reflect badly on you, such as poor grades or a low admission test score, it is better to address it in your essay. Failure to do so may eliminate you from consideration. You can also do this on a separate sheet entitled, "Addendum," which you could attach to the application, or in a cover letter that you enclose. In either form, your explanation should be short and to the point, avoiding long, tedious excuses. Try to keep your content as positive as possible. Neatness, spelling, and grammar are critical.

## **Graduate School Application Essays**

How to write a super graduate school application essay:

[Http://www.petersons.com/gradchannel/file.asp?id=932&path=gr.gs.yourpersonal](http://www.petersons.com/gradchannel/file.asp?id=932&path=gr.gs.yourpersonal)

## **Statement of Purpose**

Understand what a statement of purpose is and what schools expect from them:

<http://www.statementofpurpose.com>

## **Admissions Decisions**

Most committees will review your application using the following criteria:

- GPA
- Graduate admission test scores
- Undergraduate curriculum
- Reputation of undergraduate institution
- Overall content of application
- Timeliness of application materials
- Level of involvement in research, extracurricular activities, and volunteer services
- Previous work experience (especially for MBA programs)
- Strength of recommendation letters
- Interview