

# Graduate School Interviews

Although not all programs require interviews, the on campus visit can help you strengthen your candidacy. In addition, the campus interview will provide you with a better understanding of the program and help you assess your interest in the university. An interview can be extremely beneficial in your decision-making process. If the university does not require an interview, you should request one. Keep in mind that some schools will only interview selected candidates. If this is the case, you should arrange a “campus visit” during which you can tour the campus, evaluate the facilities, and talk with faculty and students.

Prepare for graduate school interviews as you would for employment interviews. Research the programs and faculty, polish your interviewing skills, and be prepared to discuss your strengths, weaknesses, goals, and academic achievements. Be sure that you are familiar with the faculty’s research and publications. When interviewing with faculty, discuss your interests, goals, and skills to discover if they are compatible with the program. Schedule to participate in a Mock Interview in the Career Center and/or talk with a Career Center professional about participation.

Listed below are a few tips for graduate school interviews:

**Interview early in the semester.** Arrange interviews or campus visits early in your senior year; this strategy will help you to evaluate and perhaps redefine your interests. (If you are interested in medical school, you may want to visit the campus during your junior year.) To arrange a campus visit, write a letter to the director of the program expressing your interest in the program. In your letter state that you have plans to be in the area during a defined period of time and would appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss the program. You should follow-up with a phone call approximately two weeks after mailing your letter to inquire about the professor’s availability and, if agreeable, to confirm a campus visit. Remember to make sure all contact and correspondence is professionally done. Even if you are informally contacting a school, unprofessional conduct may be remembered when you apply later.

**Prepare for the interview.** Spend an adequate amount of time researching the university, the field of study, and the departmental faculty. Read published articles from the faculty to develop an understanding of the research and focus of the program. Be prepared to answer standard questions as those listed on the following page. Prepare to discuss your interests, specifically demonstrating how the program will help you meet your academic and professional goals. You should also be prepared to discuss the strengths that you would bring to the program citing examples of your own research, independent study, and experiences. It is also appropriate to inquire about scholarships or assistantships during your visit.

Often during formal interviews, the program will arrange a time for you to talk to graduate students currently enrolled in the program. If this is not part of the interview process, try to **arrange a meeting with current graduate students**. In talking with the students, inquire as to their satisfaction with the program. Ask about the academic challenges of the program and availability of the faculty outside the classroom, as well as the program’s strengths and weaknesses. Try to assess the overall student perception of the program.

**Always follow-up with thank-you letters.** Following the interview or campus visit be sure to write a letter to the department chair and other faculty with whom you met to express your continued interest in their program. Also, be sure to state your appreciation of their time.

**Questions Asked of Graduate School Candidates:**

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you choose to attend Berry College?
- Why did you choose your academic major?
- How would you describe the academic climate at Berry?
- What are your short and long-term career goals?
- Why are you interested in this profession?
- What is your GPA? Is it reflective of your abilities?
- What contributions do you expect to make to this program?
- What subjects did you enjoy the most in college? The least? Why?
- Why did you choose to apply to this institution?
- What activities, aside from classroom studies, have you participated in?
- What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- What have you accomplished in the past that demonstrates your interests and commitment to this profession?
- What traits or characteristics do you think are important for success in this field?
- How do you handle stress in your life?