



## To Go or Not To Go...

The decision of whether or not to attend graduate school can be a difficult one to make. Applying to graduate school is different than applying to undergraduate school. Not all undergraduates go on to graduate school, although, in fact, the national growth rate of graduate enrollment is about 3% a year.

*So, how do you decide whether graduate school is right for you?*

There are basically three good reasons to go and if your reasons match one of these, it is probably a good choice for you:

- ◆ **To qualify you for certain professions.** A graduate/professional degree is the prerequisite for many health field professions, law, science, and teaching at the college level, among others.
- ◆ **To enhance your personal satisfaction.** Acquiring and broadening specialized knowledge in a particular discipline can be quite rewarding personally.
- ◆ **To advance your career** - both in terms of economics and responsibility. *However, it is important to know that an advanced degree is not a guarantee of a job or an income level.*

Before deciding, make a careful and honest assessment of your strengths, qualifications, interests, and goals. The time, money and energy you will invest in graduate school are significant and you will want to be sure it is the right option for you.

## Where to Apply...

The number of graduate program options continues to grow. With over 1200 institutions in the U.S. offering over 1000 masters degree options and 60 types of doctorates, the choice can be overwhelming. Once you have identified your area of interest, consult one of the appropriate graduate school directories of Peterson's Guide to Graduate Study, located in the Career Services Resource Library or look up our graduate school related links at:

**[www.skidmore.edu/administration/career/grad.htm](http://www.skidmore.edu/administration/career/grad.htm)**

In these directories you will find a list of programs that exist, along with general information regarding degree options, research facilities, the faculty, financial aid, tuition, application requirements, and more.

Consider the following factors when generating your list:

- ◆ Although size and location are important, the most critical factor should be how well that specific institution's program fits your own interests and goals.
- ◆ Talk to your professors and ask their advice about graduate programs in your area of interest.
- ◆ Get familiar with research journals in your field of choice. Note who is publishing and where they teach. A graduate school's reputation is based heavily on the reputation of its faculty.
- ◆ Consider the selectivity of the program. How many apply and how many are accepted? What have been the average GPA and entrance exam scores for accepted candidates? Do you have the necessary prerequisites? Be honest with yourself regarding your chance of acceptance.
- ◆ Research the quality of each program. Investigate its resources, services, student-faculty ratio, and other criteria of importance to you.
- ◆ You can begin your search by writing to a large number of schools that meet your basic criteria such as location, academic information, financial aid, and housing. If possible visit the institutions you are considering most seriously and see if you can meet with faculty and current graduate students.

## The Application Process...

There is no “ideal” number of schools to which you should apply. Your list will vary based upon academic disciplines and personal requirements, such as geographic preference. It is not uncommon for students to apply to 8-12 schools. Faculty and staff members can give you suggestions for your personal situation. You should, however, consider distributing your applications to three types of targets:

- Reach schools;
- Schools whose requirements are on par with your qualifications;
- Safety schools where your credentials would surely gain your acceptance.

The graduate school application usually includes:

- ◆ the application form
- ◆ a statement of purpose
- ◆ letters of recommendation
- ◆ transcripts
- ◆ a report of standardized tests (e.g. GRE, GMAT, LSAT)

Each part of the application is important. *Make sure you read all materials sent to you since programs differ greatly in areas such as requirements, deadlines, and fees.*

## The Timeline...

If you are an underclass student planning to attend graduate or professional school the semester following your graduation, start gathering information about a year and a half before graduating from college. Application deadlines vary; they range from August before your senior year (for medical schools) to late spring or summer for schools with rolling admissions.

**Most deadlines are between January and March of your senior year.**

As a general guideline, follow the timetable below:

### 2 Years Before Matriculation into your graduate/professional program:

#### ***Fall and Spring***

- ◆ Research and gather information regarding programs
- ◆ Register and prepare for graduate admissions tests
- ◆ Start to obtain letters of recommendation
- ◆ Investigate national scholarships

#### ***Summer***

- ◆ Write for application materials
- ◆ Take graduate admissions tests
- ◆ Check on application deadlines
- ◆ Medical, dental, osteopathy or law school - you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use
- ◆ Visit schools of interest

### One Year Before Matriculation into your graduate/professional program:

#### ***Fall***

- ◆ Take graduate admissions tests (if you haven't already done so)
- ◆ Obtain letters of recommendation
- ◆ Send in completed applications
- ◆ Complete financial aid paperwork for target schools
- ◆ Inquire about graduate assistantships with academic departments at target schools

#### ***Spring***

- ◆ Confirm with each institution that all application materials have been received
- ◆ Send deposit to institution of choice after acceptance
- ◆ Notify other programs that accepted you of your decision
- ◆ Inform your references of your decision

## A Word About Standardized Tests...

Most colleges and universities require a specific graduate admissions test. Some also require a subject test of the GRE. If standardized testing scares you, remember the test scores are only one of several factors considered when evaluating your application. In addition, you can study for the test and learn test taking skills which might help you to improve your score.

### GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)

- ◇ The General Test is given on computer and continues year-round
- ◇ Appointments are scheduled on a first-come, first served basis
- ◇ Register early to secure your preferred test date
- ◇ To obtain an application check out Career Services or contact: Educational Testing Service, GRE,
- ◇ P.O. Box 6000, Princeton, NJ 08541.  
Phone: 609-771-7670 Fax: 609-777-7906 Online <http://www.gre.org>.

The Writing Assessment will be introduced October 1999 and will be given on computer.  
Subject Tests are given in the paper-based format only three times per year.

Computer based testing is available on many dates. Call Sylvan National Registration Center at 800-473-2255 or call the local testing site, Prometric Testing Center in Albany at 869-6005.

**\*\*Note 1:** *On the GRE CAT you lose more points for not answering a question than for getting it wrong, so remember to answer all questions.*

**\*\*Note 2:** *Prometric Testing Center in Albany indicates that it is one of the busiest centers in the country and now recommends a 2-month lead time for registering to sit for the GRE. This is a significant change since last year and we strongly suggest students give themselves as much lead time as possible AND consider home-based centers as alternatives (be sure to find out how much lead time they need). You can get a list of testing sites by calling the 800 # above.*

### GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test) CAT (Computer-Adaptive Test)

- ◇ Computerized Test
- ◇ Test may be taken once per month. Scores from the last test date and the 2 most recent tests in the last five years will be reported to the institutions you designate.
- ◇ Registration may be done by phone, fax or mail.
- ◇ You may contact GMAT at 800-GMAT-NOW to sign up to take the test. Online [www.gmat.org](http://www.gmat.org).

**\*\*Note:** *If you do not know the answer, guess; you cannot omit questions or go back and change answers.*

### LSAT (Law School Admission Test)

- ◇ Offered four times a year
- ◇ Many schools require test to be taken by December at the latest for the following year. It is advised that students consider taking the test in June or October.
- ◇ Registration may be done by phone, online or by mail.  
Phone: 215-968-1001 Fax: 215-968-1119 Online: [www.LSAC.org](http://www.LSAC.org)

**\*\*Note:** *The LSAT score is determined only by the number of best answers marked on the answer sheet. There is no penalty for guessing when you don't know the answer.*

### The Praxis Series

The Praxis Series includes three categories of assessments corresponding to the three milestones in your career development as a teacher.

**Praxis I: Academic Skills Assessments** are intended to be taken early in your college career and specifically measures your reading, writing, and mathematical skills.

The Praxis I is available in two forms:

- Paper-based Pre-Professional Skills Tests (PPST)
- Praxis I Computer-Based Tests (PI-CBT)

**Praxis II: Subject Assessments:** measures your knowledge of the subjects you will teach. Also, they measure your general and subject-specific educational skills and knowledge.

**Praxis III: Classroom Performance Assessments:** Evaluates all aspects of a beginning teacher's classroom performance. Typically administered during the first year of teaching in the teacher's own classroom.

- ◆ You can register by mail (make sure to carefully detach the registration form and preaddressed envelope stapled in The Praxis Series Registration Bulletin.) or via the Internet at [www.teachingandlearning.org](http://www.teachingandlearning.org). If you have taken a Praxis Series test in the last five years, you can register by phone at 800-772-9476.
- ◆ If you plan on taking the computer-based test (CBT), do not fill out the standard registration form. You must call the test center where you wish to take the test or call the Sylvan Candidate Services at 800-853-6773.

*\*\*Note: The Praxis Series are based on the number of questions answered correctly. **There is no penalty for incorrect responses.** It is therefore recommended that you consider making an educated guess on those questions of which you are uncertain rather than not answer at all.*

### **Financing Graduate Education...**

There are three major ways to pay for graduate school:

*Fellowships and traineeships*--granted on the basis of merit and designed to attract the most highly qualified candidates. They are offered either by an organization for study at the student's choice of institution, or by the institution itself for accepted applicants.

*Teaching and research assistantships*--usually involves working 20 hours/week. Positions are offered by individual academic departments and often include tuition waivers as well as a stipend. There is often a separate deadline for these positions which is earlier than the application deadline.

*These two forms of aid are more common at the doctoral level than the masters level.*

*Student loans, need based*—Federal regulations make all graduate students independent of parental support unless claimed on parents' federal income tax return.

An application for financial aid will come as part of your application packet or separately from the Financial Aid Office.

**Read everything carefully and pay attention to deadlines.** Find out as much as you can from the department to which you are applying about their funding of graduate students. Be sure to research the Grants Register (in Career Services or the Scribner Library) for information regarding private scholarships, fellowships and grants, as well as links in our Graduate School Information page.

### **For More Information...**

The Career Services Office can help you in a number of ways when applying to graduate/professional schools.

- ◆ The Career Resource Library contains a variety of books and directories to help you identify and research appropriate graduate programs, write admissions essays, and prepare for graduate admissions tests.
- ◆ Test application booklets for the GMAT, GRE, LSAT, and PRAXIS series tests are available.
- ◆ Counselors are available to help you with questions about applying to graduate/professional schools. A Pre-Law advisor is also available in the Government Department.

For information on applying to health profession schools, contact the Health Professions Advisory Committee, currently chaired by Professor Bernard Possidente.