



GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL GUIDE

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1. Graduate School Timeline

This timeline gives you a quick overview of the graduate school application process. It is developed with the assumption that you are applying for admission for the fall semester. The timeline is very general. Be sure to check with each individual school you are interested in for the specific deadlines that you must meet in order to be considered for admission. Please take advantage of the services, programs and resources that the Career Development Center offers to assist you with each step of the graduate school admissions process.

JUNIOR YEAR AND EARLIER

- Think about what field of study you would like to pursue in graduate school. Be sure to consider employer demand for positions in your field of interest.
- Begin to research programs by using the internet and other resources. The Career Development Center offers many web-based resources to assist you.
- Obtain information from the schools with graduate programs you are considering. You can obtain appropriate contact information by visiting the program's website.
- Get to know your faculty members—they are excellent sources of advice as you ponder various graduate programs. You will want to try and develop relationships with certain professors, so that you would feel comfortable requesting a letter of recommendation for your graduate school application.

SENIOR YEAR

September

- Be sure to double-check all deadline dates for your school(s) of choice!!

- Request school catalogs and applications for admission and financial aid, or bookmark all relevant websites.
- Register for the graduate exam that is required by the particular program you are considering (GRE, GMAT, MAT, LSAT, MCAT) and prepare for the test. See the individual testing websites for preparation materials and sample questions/tests.
- Begin securing letters of recommendation from faculty and others in a position to speak positively to the strengths you could bring to a graduate program of study (see below for additional specifics regarding Letters of Recommendation)

October

- Begin filling out applications for admission, assistantships, and financial aid.
- Begin writing your personal statement. You can make an appointment with a tutor in the Writing Center and/or with counselor in the Career Development Center to assist you.
- Many graduate programs require you to submit a resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV) with your application materials. Be sure to visit the Career Development Center's Drop-In hours or make an individual appointment for assistance with your resume.
- Take the required graduate exam.
- Get your official transcripts from the Hawk Central. Be sure to allow at least a few weeks for your transcripts to be ready during especially busy times of year.

November-December

- Complete all admissions application materials and forms that are available. Be sure to check any materials you send - applications, personal statements, resumes - for accuracy, spelling and grammar.
- Send, or arrange to have sent on your behalf, all available information that is requested by the school, such as transcripts, graduate exam scores, personal statements, letter of recommendations, and resume or curriculum vitae if appropriate.
- You don't have to complete every requested item for an application to be sent together as a package. Go ahead and send in those materials that you have completed with the knowledge that when an admissions office receives any piece of your application, a file will be created for you to track what materials they have received as well as what is needed to complete your application.

December-January

- Contact the graduate admissions offices of the schools to which you have applied to make sure they have received ALL application materials, or to determine what is still needed.
- Complete and mail any financial aid information.

February-June

- Evaluate offers of admission and make a decision.
- Notify all schools regardless of accepting an offer or rejecting an offer of admission.
- Follow all procedures to ensure your enrollment for the program.

2. Choosing a Graduate School

There are several steps that you can take to help you choose the right graduate school for you:

- Visit the institutions that you are the most interested in attending.
- Attend and observe classes if possible, meet with faculty and students, and ask questions of those with whom you meet. Current students often volunteer their time to answer questions over the phone or through e-mail. This is an opportunity to ask questions and opinions of current students about the programs and the environment of the institutions.
- Research the faculty at the institutions because their research and interests will generally comprise the curriculum for many courses. This research will help you to determine if the programs at the particular institutions are a good fit for you in terms of your academic and research interests and professional goals. In addition, use resources such as LinkedIn and SJU Connects to identify and connect with SJU alumni who may have attended the same or similar programs for specific information on a variety of topics such as quality of program and faculty/program outcomes.
- Financial aid can be a deciding factor for choosing one school over another. Negotiation may be useful in this situation. At many institutions, it is possible to use your financial aid package from another institution as leverage to renegotiate aid. If financial reasons prohibit or limit your ability to visit schools, check for upcoming information sessions. Representatives from many schools travel throughout the country to talk with prospective students.

Websites Offering Graduate School Resources

GradSchools.com

GradSchools.com is the leading online resource for graduate school. You can use this site to find your ideal program by searching by subject, location and even specific schools.

GraduateGuide.com

This resource allows you to search graduate school programs in the United States and Canada. This site will help you find colleges and universities that offer accredited graduate programs that most interest you.

GradProfiles.com

This website features in-depth graduate and professional school profiles with information about programs of study, degree requirements, facilities, expenses, financial aid, faculty research and much more.

Grad Source

Search for graduate schools in the USA and Canada offering ONLINE masters and doctoral (PhD) degrees in all fields.

Peterson's Education Center

Peterson's has helped to connect individuals, educational institutions, and corporations

through its critically acclaimed books, websites, online products, and admissions services. Peterson's reaches millions of consumers annually with information about colleges and universities, career schools, **graduate programs**, distance learning, executive training, private secondary schools, summer opportunities, study abroad, financial aid, test preparation, and career exploration.

[Princeton Review](#)

The Princeton Review helps students, parents, and educators achieve the best results at every stage of their educational careers. By focusing on preparation and practice, they help students improve their performance in the classroom and on standardized tests

[US News Education](#)

Provides a ranking of America's best graduate schools.

NOTE: The PRINT VERSIONS of The Peterson's Annual Guide to Graduate Study and the Princeton Review can be found at The Francis A. Drexel Library at SJU.

3. Requirements for Graduate School Acceptance

Many graduate or professional schools will have similar general requirements for admission, but check with each school to ensure that you are providing all the information necessary to complete your application. Some of the most **common factors** that influence graduate school admissions decisions include:

- Official undergraduate transcript(s) for any higher education institutions attended (grades, major average, overall average, average in the last two years, completion of applicable courses)
- Standardized test scores
- Completion of a well-written personal statement (see additional information, below)
- Letters of recommendation
- Work experience and maturity (required for some MBA programs)
- Involvement in extracurricular activities
- State residence preference for some state schools
- [Interview](#) (required for some programs such as medical school)
- [Resume](#) (most graduate programs require a resume)
- Curriculum Vitae (Doctoral and educational-based programs)

Additional Resources for Graduate School Acceptance

[Interfolio.com](#)

Interfolio offers individuals one central place to store their most important documents, while also providing the means to distribute these materials to any institution. Interfolio's services offer a revolutionary way for people to present and market themselves professionally.

4. Graduate School Exam Information

Graduate admissions tests are often, but not always required. Check with the schools to which you are interested in applying about which test is required and deadlines for submitting the information. You may have to take the Graduate Record Examination ([GRE](#)), Law School Admission Test ([LSAT](#)), Graduate Management Admission Test ([GMAT](#)), Medical College Admission Test ([MCAT](#)), or Miller Analogies Test ([MAT](#)).

Additional Resources for Graduate School Exams

[Educational Testing Service](#)

ETS is an innovative non-profit organization whose mission is to advance quality and equity in education for all people worldwide because they believe in the power of learning. They provide a range of products and services, including GRE and PRAXIS preparation, to advance learning worldwide.

[Exam Focus](#)

Exam Focus offers free practice tests for a variety of graduate school exams, including: GMAT, GRE, and the LSAT. Use this site for exam information and preparation.

[GRE.org](#)

Official website of the GRE. The Graduate Record Examinations® (GRE®) General Test measures verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking and analytical writing skills. The GRE® Subject Tests gauge undergraduate achievement in 8 specific fields of study.

[Kaplan](#)

As one of the world's leading providers of lifelong education with operations around the globe. These include programs for kids and schools, post-secondary education, professional training and more.

[PowerScore](#)

Our test professionals have designed the PowerScore course to provide you with the maximum exposure to the concepts that appear on the LSAT, GMAT, or GRE, access to the best possible instructors and classroom material, and the best support system to augment your studies.

5. Personal Statements

Writing your personal statement marks an opportunity to connect your background and interests to your planned field of study. Make sure your personal statement is unique for each school. This is your chance to sell your skills and abilities and to communicate how you are a good "fit" for the program and institution. Some additional tips:

- Answer the entire question; do not focus on what you believe to be the most important piece of the admission question.
- Watch for word requirements and page length. Often, this is a way for the admissions committee to see how well you follow directions.
- Develop an interesting opening for your personal statement. The admissions committee reads hundreds of essays during each application period, so it is important to stand out. You want to leave a positive impression on the committee member who is reading your personal statement.
- Start early and spend time writing your personal statement. Remember, this essay is a reflection of you. If you do not put time and a quality effort into writing your personal statement, the admissions committee will know.

- Write many drafts. Do not be satisfied with your first personal statement. Have others, such as professors, parents, peers, or supervisors proofread your statement. The perspective of others will help you understand how your personal statement may portray you to the committee members.
- Rewrite, proof, rewrite, proof...Use the services of the Writing Center and/or the Career Development Center. Your personal statement must be free of spelling, grammatical or other errors, so having others review it is important.
- Research faculty members who teach and conduct research at the programs to which you are applying. You may learn that a faculty member is conducting research that you are interested in. Include in your personal statement the reasons you want to study with that particular faculty member. The more you can connect yourself with the institution, the better the impression you will leave on the committee members reading your application.
- Utilize resources that will help you write a strong personal statement. Take advantage of the free services and resources offered to you as students by the Career Development Center. The book entitled, "Road Map for Graduate Study: A Guide for Prospective Graduate Students " is available for all students' use at the Career Development Center.

6. Letters of Recommendation

It is a good idea for you to take the time to get to know your professors outside the classroom (i.e., during office hours). The better the faculty members know you both academically and personally, the better positioned they are to write strong letters of recommendations on your behalf. Some additional tips:

- Provide your professors with a copy of your personal statement and resume so that they are able to get a more complete understanding of who you are and what your goals are.
- The majority of graduate schools require the writer to complete a form to provide the letter of recommendation. Because many other students will be asking for recommendations, assist your professors by completing the recommendation form with your basic information and including a stamped, pre-addressed envelope.
- Begin the search for those who you will request letters of recommendation from early. If you wait until the last minute, there is a chance that your professors will not be able to write the letters on your behalf due to high demand from other students who made requests before you did.
- Consider carefully which professors to approach to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. Only ask those individuals in a position to speak accurately and positively about you and your abilities to succeed. Additionally, include details about the focus of the program and some reminders of the work you did together or your accomplishments that align with the focus of the program. Requesting this letter in person is the most professional approach.
- Legally, you have the option to waive your right to read the recommendation.
- Consider using an online credential service, such as Interfolio.com, which will allow you to store your letters of recommendation for future use for a small fee. This service is also beneficial because if you decide to apply to graduate school two or three years down the road, you will have stored letters of recommendation from professors written at a time they knew you personally.
- Inform your recommenders of your progress and what schools you have been accepted to and ultimately decide to attend. Many professors are interested in knowing what graduate schools their students end up attending.
- Do not forget to send a thank you letter to those that wrote your recommendations.

7. Financial Aid, Scholarships and Assistantships

Most university aid is administered through the graduate department in the form of teaching, graduate, or research assistantships that provide tuition remission and may include a small stipend. Contact the departments to check for listings and application forms. Graduate school is expensive and assistantships can help keep the cost manageable. Remember that assistantships will require you to work a certain number of hours a week, so make sure that you are able to handle both your academics and work responsibilities. Many scholarships or assistantships require you to submit additional application materials, such as a resume, letter(s) of recommendation, and/or a personal statement, so be sure to have these items prepared early.

When embarking on a search for scholarships and fellowships from a source outside the university, understand that there may be multiple sources that list all of the scholarships for which you are eligible, but the following are good resources with which to begin your research:

- Students are encouraged to utilize the Saint Joseph's University Fellowships Office, which offers guidance and advice to fellowship applicants already enrolled in University. The Fellowships Office works closely with fellowship / scholarship applicants in every step of the application process, from discerning which fellowships / scholarships best suit their needs to discussing the steps that need to be taken along the way. For more information, please visit SJU Fellowships Office.
- Use free online services such as [Fast Web](#), [Unigo Scholarships/Scholarship Experts](#), and [Scholarships.com](#).
- Explore federal and other financial aid programs using paper publications and on-line resources like [finaid.org](#) and [Ed.gov](#).
- Contact the schools' financial aid offices where you are applying to graduate school; often times they will have listings for both scholarships and assistantships that are available.
- Review the Career Development Center's "Scholarships, Additional Resource" below for additional resources.

It is important to exercise caution and discretion when considering the use of a scholarship service. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) lists six key signs that may serve as a clue that a scholarship service is a scam:

- The agency "guarantees" the scholarship or "your money back."
- The scholarship service will "do all the work."
- The scholarship service costs money.
- The scholarship service advertises that "you can't get this information anywhere else."
- You receive information that "you are a finalist" in a competition that you never entered.
- The scholarship service asks for your credit card or checking account number in advance.
- Review this "Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid" for additional tips: [Scholarship Scam Alert](#)

Additional Resources for Scholarships

Free Sources of Financial Aid for Graduate Studies

- [All U. S. Government Programs Benefiting Students](#)
- [National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship Opportunities](#)
- [Black Excel - 100 Minority Scholarship Gateway](#)
- [College Board Scholarship Search](#)
- [Cornell University Database: Graduate Fellowships](#)
- [Federal Student Financial Aid](#)
- [FinAid: The Financial Aid Information Page](#)
- [Free Scholarships Searches](#)
- [GrantsNet - Training in the Biomedical Sciences and Undergraduate Science Education](#)
- [Nellie Mae Student Loan Financing](#)
- [Sallie Mae: Scholarship Search](#)
- [The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, Medicine](#) Web address is:
<http://www.nationalacademies.org/grantprograms/index.html#GrantPrograms>
- [Scholarships for Women](#)
- [Scholarship Scam Alert](#)