

# Graduate School

## TYPES OF GRADUATE DEGREES

- **PROFESSIONAL DEGREES** - Give you highly specialized skills needed to carry out a particular type of profession. Examples would be an MBA or MPAC (business school), JD (law school) ) MD (medical school).
- **MASTERS DEGREES** - Programs range from 1 to 3 years. Some programs emphasize research, meaning that you will carry out a research project, often considered a thesis. Some programs emphasize practical experience where a practicum or internship is required.
- **DOCTORAL DEGREES** - A *research degree* that usually takes 4-8 years to complete. This degree is generally required to a) teach in a college or university b) to train graduate students; and c) conduct independent research in academic settings and in most industrial, non-profit and government settings. This is usually the PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), although sometimes they appear under other names such as (ED for Doctor of Education).
- **CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS** – While not a formal graduate degree, consider short-term certificate programs (some are online) that may enhance your employability. Examples include: Human Resources, Project Management, Business Analyst, Clinical Research and more.

## MAKING THE GRADUATE SCHOOL DECISION

Making a decision about whether or not to go to graduate school requires the same kind of process that applies to other career decisions: determining your interests and skills, clarifying your goals and making a plan to achieve them. Consider the following questions:

- WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO TO GRADUATE SCHOOL? ■ WHAT DO YOU WANT TO STUDY? ■ DO YOU NEED A BREAK FROM SCHOOL?
- DO YOU ENJOY RESEARCH? ■ IS A GRADUATE DEGREE NECESSARY FOR YOUR CAREER GOALS AT THIS TIME?
- ARE YOU CONSIDERING GRADUATE SCHOOL BECAUSE YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT YOUR CAREER DIRECTION?

Graduate school can be rewarding and enriching, but it is not for everyone. Sometimes taking a break from your studies before applying to graduate education can be a positive and necessary step. Consider alternatives: a GAP year, fellowship or work experience immediately upon graduation can be a bridge between undergraduate and graduate school.

## TIMELINE

Start one year prior to your start date (or sooner) to ensure that you have enough time to research programs and complete all of the requirements of your applications. Even if a program has a rolling deadline, many graduate schools will accept applicants early and a program may fill to capacity before your application is seen. Most deadlines for a September start will occur between January and March of the same year. Highly competitive programs may require you to apply a year prior to your start date.

## CHOOSING THE BEST GRADUATE PROGRAM

Consider the following before applying to a graduate program:

- REPUTATION/RANKING OF THE PROGRAM ■ ACCREDITATION ■ QUALITY OF FACULTY AND THEIR AREAS OF EXPERTISE
- OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH ■ RATIO OF STUDENTS TO FACULTY ■ QUALITY OF TECHNOLOGY/LIBRARY RESOURCES
- PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM ■ SERVICES TO ASSIST WITH EMPLOYMENT
- WHERE DO GRADUATES FIND JOBS ■ INTERNSHIPS/PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE ■ LOCATION & CULTURE ■ COST & SCHOLARSHIPS

## FINDING GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Websites to help you search: ■ GradSchools.com ■ College Source ■ Petersons ■ The Princeton Review ■ Graduate Guide  
■ US News Graduate School rankings

You may also find it useful to conduct an industry-specific search through a professional association site related to your field of study. For example: the American Psychological Association (APA) publishes *Graduate Study in Psychology*.

## REQUESTING TRANSCRIPTS

Official transcripts will be required from all universities and colleges you attended. Contact each college or university you have attended for their process. To request a transcript from Bryant University, go to Records & Registration website. Turn-around time is 3-5 business days. The difference between an official or unofficial transcript: the official transcript will bear the University seal and will be sent in a sealed envelope. An official transcript will not be considered official if opened by a student, so if you are requesting an official transcript, **DO NOT OPEN IT**.

## **ASKING FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

Ask for a letter of recommendation from people who can comment on your academic ability and preparedness for graduate-level work as well as those who can speak to your motivation, work ethic, character and other personal traits that would make you an appealing candidate for a graduate program.

**When choosing references ask the following questions:**

- Does this person know me well enough?
- How much credibility are they likely to hold with the universities to which I am applying?
- Are they likely to give me a positive reference?

**Types of individuals typically asked to be a reference include:** Faculty or College Administrators , Employers or Internship Supervisors, Coaches or Mentors, Alumni of the Institution

**When asking your references for a letter of recommendation:**

- Choose people who know you well
- Give your letter writers a 3-6 week time frame
- Include a copy of your resume and information on where to send the letter
- Be appreciative. Write thank you notes!
- Keep in touch. Every letter writer will want to know where you got accepted and where you're going.

## **WRITING A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Also called a "Personal Statement" or "Application Essay," this is an opportunity for you to show the committee who you are and why you are a right fit for their program. Some institutions provide specific questions they want you to answer, while others are broader in their request for information. **Writing Tips:**

- ASSESS WHAT SETS YOU APART FROM OTHERS
- GRAB THE READER WITH AN INTERESTING 1<sup>ST</sup> PARAGRAPH
- ANSWER THE QUESTION
- ORGANIZE YOUR ANSWER
- PROVIDE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES FOR THE POINTS YOU MAKE
- FOLLOW WORD LIMIT
- TAILOR YOUR ESSAY TO EACH GRADUATE PROGRAM/SCHOOL
- USE EVERY DAY LANGUAGE
- PROJECT A POSITIVE ATTITUDE
- BE SURE YOUR STATEMENT IS WELL WRITTEN, GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT AND ERROR-FREE (USE SPELL CHECK!)

## **RESUME**

Graduate resumes are written to enhance your application. You are NOT limited to a one page resume (2 or more pages is fine). Include: research, publications, conferences attended and professional association memberships. The Amica Center for Career Education **Critiquing Service** - drop your Resume off for a critique and get it back the next business day after 3pm

## **INTERVIEW**

Some graduate programs include an interview as part of the application process. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your communication skills, maturity and enthusiasm for the program. Even if an interview is not required, it is always helpful to visit a college or university you are considering to get a sense of your comfort level with the campus environment and the surrounding area.

## **FINANCING GRADUATE SCHOOL**

A variety of funds are available to finance graduate school from Federal, State and University sources including: grants, scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, or loans.

- **Grants** – Awarded to cover expenses associated with tuition, research or travel. Grants are typically need-based and do not need to be re-paid. Types of grants include: federal, state and graduate-school specific.
- **Scholarships** – Help pay for books, tuition, housing or other education-related expenses. Can be merit-based, need-based or career-specific.
- **Fellowships** – Typically cover living expenses to facilitate research or work on a project. Awards usually based on academic merit.
- **Assistantships** – financial assistance in exchange for teaching, research or campus administrative duties. Typically students receive monthly stipends plus a partial or full tuition waiver.
- **Loans** – Money must be paid back. Available from government or private sources.

**Resources:** ■ [The College Grants Database](#) ■ [Funding Your Graduate Education](#) ■ [FinAid](#) ■ [Scholarships.com](#) ■ [Fastweb.com](#)  
■ [Gradschool.com](#) ■ [Paying for Graduate School – US News and World Report](#)

## **FINAL TIPS FOR "GETTING IN"**

- GET GOOD GRADES
- PREPARE FOR ADMISSIONS TESTS
- ASK BRYANT FACULTY FOR ASSISTANCE
- FIND THE BEST FIT GRADUATE PROGRAM
- PROMOTE YOURSELF
- CONNECT WITH FACULTY AT PROSPECTIVE UNIVERSITY
- SEEK CRITIQUES FOR ESSAYS
- FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS AND MEET DEADLINES
- CONTACT AMICA CENTER FOR CAREER EDUCATION FOR HELP