

SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Two Year Plan.

- Graduate and professional schools *generally* start in the fall semester.
- Applications for graduate school will generally be due one year prior to the time that you start (matriculate) into your program. Don't be fooled by "rolling admissions" – many programs require you to submit early to ensure that you are considered early in the application cycle. Check with the admissions team to see when your application will be evaluated.
- Due to this timeline, we encourage you to work backwards from when you would matriculate into your program to when you should begin thinking about your graduate school options.

Fall Before Applying: <i>Explore your options</i>	Spring Before Applying: <i>Begin application process</i>	Summer Before Applying: <i>Take standardized tests</i>
Fall of Application Year: <i>Submit applications</i>	Spring of Application Year: <i>Submit financial aid/ Interview</i>	Summer before Attending: <i>Get ready to attend!</i>
Fall of the First Year: <i>Begin your program!</i>		

Fall Before Applying.

- Start thinking about graduate school possibilities.
- Use this time for reflection and introspection about your next steps. Self-assess and think about your values. Think about your priorities, what's important to you, and what you would like out of a possible graduate degree.
- Reach out to those who you've made relationships with to discuss graduate school options.
- Conduct informational interviews with professors, alumni, friends, family, mentors, advisors to find out more about the career paths with certain graduate degrees.
- Researching possible degrees and programs.
- Attend graduate school admissions and financial aid information sessions (if possible).
- Check your credit to know where you stand with regards to financial aid and loans.

Spring Before Applying.

- Decide whether you're ready, willing, and able to commit to going through the graduate school application process at this time.
- Do some research on whether internships or volunteer opportunities could strengthen your application to your chosen degree/programs.
- Talk with faculty members with whom you have relationships about your plans to go to graduate school. Ask if they think you would be a strong candidate, and if they can recommend any programs you should be considering. Ask faculty members with whom you

have a strong relationship whether they would be willing to write you a letter of recommendation in the fall.

- If a standardized test is required with your application (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, etc), register and begin studying as far in advance as possible – ideally, four months in advance of your test date.
- If you need disability testing accommodations, request them when you register for the exam. This can take weeks to months to be approved, so start early.
- If you need any testing or application fee waivers, request them as soon as possible.

Summer Before Applying.

- Take your standardized test.
- Begin drafting the personal statement or statement of purpose (PhD). Identify one or two mentors to help you review and revise – ideally, faculty members in the field you’ll be going into (for MA, MS, PhD) or your pre-professional advisor (for JD, MD, MBA, etc.).
- Begin narrowing in on specific schools to which you’d like to apply. Think about how your metrics (GPA and standardized test scores) match up with the schools general admissions profiles, but don’t rule out your dream school just because you’re a few points lower than they might expect.
- Talk with your advisors and faculty about your plans, and think about choosing a few “reach,” a few “match,” and a few “safety” schools based on metrics, strengths, and fit with the program.
- Reach out to the programs to which you will be applying. If the program has a formal admissions office, call or email. If you’re applying to a research degree where you will be working with faculty, send email introductions to the professors with whom you are most excited to work. (Talk with your advisor and faculty about your emails, and ask for a second set of eyes before you hit send.)
- Continue to monitor your credit score to ensure that you’re eligible for financial aid.

Fall of Application Year.

- Request letters of recommendation from professors at the beginning of the semester.
- Even if you asked before, ask again if they’re still willing and able to write for you. Give your professors copies of your resume, your personal statement/statement of purpose, and a list of schools to which you’ll be applying. If paper copies of recommendations are needed, provide addressed stamped envelopes for all schools. If recommendations are to be submitted online, make sure to give all the instructions, links, etc. needed. Ask and give all materials well in advance of recommendation deadlines (at least six weeks). Remember to send thank you notes.
- Review your standardized test scores. Talk with your advisor about whether or not retaking might strengthen your application, and if so, retake.
- Continue connecting with programs and showing your enthusiasm. You might follow them on social media, visit campus or attend public events (if you’re in the area), etc.
- Finish your personal statement or statement of purpose, any addenda, and your resume/CV.
- Submit your application.

Spring of Application Year.

- Confirm application status (online if possible, or with the program by phone). Make sure everything has been received and is in order.
- File your taxes and your FAFSA. The FAFSA form is available beginning January 1.
- Complete all financial aid forms and scholarship applications by the stated deadline.
- Work on interviewing skills with your career center in case you will need to interview.
- Think about what you will do if you don't get in this time around. It happens – and it's okay! It's a lot easier to open a rejection letter if you have a backup plan. Many students also do well in re-applications.
- When offers start coming in, celebrate! And, wait to make a final decision until you've heard from all schools. If you're being offered different financial aid packages, it's okay to negotiate. Talk with your advisor and with your faculty about how to approach negotiations.
- Once you've made your final decision, notify all schools, your recommenders, and advisors to share the good news of where you'll be going!