

# Graduate School Timeline

Below are many of the things you need to think about in applying to grad school. Please schedule an appointment with one of our [Pre-Graduate Education Advisors](#) [1] (follow link then scroll down) for help on any of these or other issues. Below is a timeline to help you in planning your application process:

## As Early As Possible (Freshman and Sophomore years ideally):

- Identify 3-5 professors you might eventually contact for recommendation letters and build professional relationships with them. Ask about how best to prepare for graduate study ? especially if they are in the field you are considering.

## 1 Year before Applying (Junior Year if not taking any gap years):

- Research graduate programs on-line, in-person, and at graduate school fairs.
- Register for the GRE and take a practice test. Begin formulating your study strategy and schedule to prepare. Plan to take the GRE early, as you can retake it and it takes time to have scores sent.
- View your unofficial transcript on ConnectCarolina and correct any discrepancies.

## Summer before the Fall You Apply:

- Write a rough first draft of your application essay.
- Compile a rough CV.
- Narrow your list of schools and make an applications-and-funding-deadline calendar.
- If your prospective programs require you to identify an advisor before admission, contact potential advisors and make sure they will be taking on new students in a year.
- Contact admissions directors (or similar) at all programs you are considering to make sure you have the preparation and application elements you need to apply

well as a competitive candidate.

## Fall You Apply:

- Revise and polish your application essay with help from the Writing Center and others.
- Format and polish your CV.
- Request your letters of recommendation from faculty in person (if possible) far enough in advance for them to write thoughtfully without stress.
- Order official transcripts from the Registrar well in advance of any deadlines.
- Complete and submit all elements of your applications.
- Apply for any additional funding.

## Spring after You Have Applied:

- Follow-up with schools to make sure your file is complete.
- Visit prospective campuses as possible, and talk to faculty/students to help you make your final decision. Sit in on classes, get a campus tour, look into housing and transportation options, etc. Being on campus gives you a golden opportunity to ask current students:
  - What positions have recent graduates actually been offered?
  - How many years do graduates really spend in the program?
  - Are there helpful and willing mentors to choose from?
- After receiving acceptance from your best option, send in the required deposit and contact other schools and decline acceptances. We are happy to help you think through your options once you have your acceptances.
- Write thank-you notes (on paper cards when possible) to people who helped you.

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**Source URL:** <https://careers.unc.edu/students/pre-professional-pre-graduate-advising/pre-graduate/graduate-school-timeline>

### Links

[1] <https://careers.unc.edu/students/resources/schedule-appointment>