

PLANNING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

UCS suggests starting to plan for graduate school by your junior year. If you are a Senior and have just now begun to think about the possibility of attending graduate school, then you must move quickly to complete all the tasks necessary for admission.

DECIDING

First, ask yourself a few general questions to determine if graduate school is the appropriate step for you at this point in your education process.

1. **Why do I want to go to Graduate School?**

Do you want to go to graduate school to enhance your employability? Do you have a passion for learning? Do your parents want you to go (but you would rather wait)? Do you have nothing better to do? Evaluate your answer.

2. **Do I need a graduate degree to pursue my career goals?**

There are many careers that do not require an advanced degree. In fact, you may better be served with an internship or related work experience. But maybe we should back up a little further. Have you even thought about your career and established your career goals? Are you using graduate school as an excuse to put off making a career decision? Graduate school usually does not define your career choices. Remember that graduate education requires time and money (maybe loans). Make sure that you select an area of personal interest, one that will help you enhance your career direction, and one that will be worth your time and money. You may want to discuss your career interests and whether or not graduate education will enhance your qualifications with a counselor at University Career Services.

3. **What about academics?**

Is your GPA high enough to be competitive? Does the graduate program in which you are interested have a foreign language requirement? Are you writing an honors thesis?

Most graduate schools prefer a 3.4 GPA (or better) in your major. (You may be competitive with a 3.2 at the Master's level.) Some programs require that you take a language exam, or two. Do you need to brush up on your Latin or German or Spanish? How about your honors thesis or other independent research? Projects like these will establish your commitment to your career/academic field and also introduce you to the kind of intense and dedicated research that is the hallmark of graduate study.

4. **Which schools offer programs in my field?**

Peterson's **Overview of Graduate and Professional Programs**, the standard reference, is available at University Career Services, Office of the Graduate School (200 Bynum), and online (www.petersons.com). Catalogues and program information are found online at the website of the school in which you have an interest. To determine which schools are strong in your field, consult your professors.

5. **Should I enter a Master's degree program or a Ph.D program?**

This may depend upon the career you want or your level of commitment to graduate study. In most fields a Ph.D is necessary if you want to teach at the college level. You may want to consult with your academic advisor or research your career area to make this decision.

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APPLYING

If after answering these questions, you are still interested in graduate school, then begin the process of application.

- 1. Decide to which schools you wish to apply.**
Go to the website of the schools in which you have interest to determine their application process. Many schools encourage online application. If this is not an option, write to the school to obtain an application.
- 2. Register for the GRE and any other required exams.**
GRE and other professional school exam booklets with application forms are available in the Counseling and Psychological Services Office (Student Health), Bynum Hall, and Hanes Hall. Usually you should take the exam by October in the academic year in which you are applying. If, however, you plan to take a few years off before going to graduate school, take the tests (GRE and subject tests) in the late Spring of your Senior year while the difficult material is still familiar to you.
- 3. Set up a reference file at University Career Services.**
You may pick up recommendation forms at UCS to give to professors whom you wish to ask to write a recommendation for you. Even if you plan to take a few years off before entering graduate school, ask professors to write recommendations **now**, while they remember concrete particulars about your work. Consider that they may relocate, retire or may not be accessible after several years. **Continue to check to see if your references have been sent to University Career Services and your file is in order.**
- 4. Be sure to order transcripts from the Registrar's Office to use with your application**, and remember that an additional transcript should be sent to the graduate schools in order to include your most up-to-date grading period (usually at semester's end).
- 5. Develop your personal statement/essay/statement of purpose.**
For some graduate programs, your personal statement is a very important part of your application. You may want to get assistance from the UNC Writing Center (962-7710); after completion, show a draft of your statement to a professor whose advice you trust.
- 6. Applications should be mailed by certified mail in December of your senior year** (if you are applying for the following Fall).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit University Career Services' website (<http://careers.unc.edu>) and click on Services for Students. From the menu, click on Graduate School Information. Follow the links to Colleges and Universities on the Web, Graduate and Professional School Guides, GradSchools.Com, and other helpful sites.

WEBSITES

www.gradschools.com
www.petersons.com
<http://www.usnews.com/sections/rankings>
www.ets.org
www.graduateguide.com