

# Graduate School

Attending graduate school is an excellent choice to make, but how do I apply? How do I know what school is right for me? What program should I choose?

## Looking Up Graduate Programs

For your search, there are general graduate school search engines that enable you to research schools and graduate programs by state, program, and enrollment size. These search engines allow you to see what graduate programs are out there and discover what you are interested in.

### General Search Engines:

- <https://www.princetonreview.com/grad-school-search>
- <https://graduateguide.com/>
- <https://www.petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx>

## Selecting a Program

When determining the graduate program you want to participate in, it is important to consider a few questions:

- What are your career goals?
- Are you considering graduate school for the purpose of furthering your career, or because you enjoy academia?
- What do you want to study?

## Selecting a School

When determining the school you want like to attend for graduate school, it is important to:

- Keep Career in Mind
  - Apply to schools that have one or more professors who do research in your general area of interest, and with whom you can imagine working closely for a year (or six).
- Network with Faculty
  - A conversation with the faculty members you are most interested in working with will give you insight into the program and the dynamics of the department.
- Consult with actual graduate students
  - You should also contact graduate students currently studying in that department.
  - You can use LinkedIn to discover students that are a part of the graduate program that you are interested in applying to.
    - You can message them through the platform and ask them for an informational interview to learn more about the program and whether it will be a good fit for you.
- Consider Program and Facilities
  - Check to make sure that the institution has adequate facilities and resources for your particular academic needs.



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- Accreditations
  - There are certain accreditations that go along with some industries. This can be an important factor to consider because if a school is not accredited, it could be a problem down the road for the student that their credentials may not be validated by employers or for licensure.
  - When looking at the graduate program of interest, they should have listed on their website that they are accredited.
    - **Tip:** Depending on your program, you can look up the accreditation that is required for your career field. You can go to the website for said accreditation and generally they will have a list of accredited universities.
- Cost of Tuition
  - The cost of tuition is a huge factor to consider when picking a graduate school
    - **Scholarships** for graduate students are awarded by schools, nonprofit organizations and private companies. They're usually based on academic and professional achievements.
    - **Fellowships** are often awarded based on your future potential, rather than your past achievements. Issued by government agencies, companies and nonprofit organizations, fellowships are designed to give you the funding you need to advance your career or complete your research.
      - Certain universities offer Residential Life Graduate Fellowships that provide on-campus housing and a meal stipend.



## Graduate School Exams

There are a few graduate school exams you might need to take as part of the admissions process. It's not likely that you'll need more than one, but it all depends on what the schools you're applying to require.

The list below will discuss the most common graduate entrance exams, what they are for, and who needs to take them:

### Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)

- The GRE is the most common general knowledge grad school test that universities require from master's degree and doctorate applicants.

### Law School Admissions Services (LSAT)

- Most law schools will require you to take the LSAT to qualify for admission.

### Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT)

- The GMAT is generally required for anyone who is applying to business school.

### Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)

- The standard MCAT is required for anyone who wants to get into medical school.



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## Grad School Test Preparation

Using preparation books to study on your own along with taking practice tests can be just as effective as paying for a test preparation course. Many bookstores and libraries have test preparation resources available. The Parkland Spanaway library offers test prep textbooks for the GRE and LSAT. The PLU library also offers test prep textbooks; they offer physical and online copies.

Princeton Review and Kaplan are also good resources because they offer practice tests, strategy sessions, prep courses, and frequently asked questions regarding the GRE, LSAT, GMAT, and MCAT. Princeton Review does offer free practice tests and strategy sessions.

## Personal Statements

The purpose of the personal statement is for the admissions committee to acquire a better understanding of you aside from their education and work experience. The personal statement should focus on why you, the applicant, is the right fit for the program. The personal statement offers the opportunity to highlight important components of yourself that have not been discussed in other aspects of your application. You will touch on your academic goals and past experiences in your personal statement but it is more about your life experiences and how they have allowed you or led you to apply to graduate school.

Personal statements do vary depending on the graduate program that you are applying to. In some instances, the application might ask you to respond to a prompt for your personal statement.

## Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose tells the admissions committee who you are, what your academic and professional interests are, and how you'll add value to the graduate program you're applying to. They want to know why you are interested in the specific graduate program. Although each graduate school/program has a different application, all of them want to know the same four pieces of information:

- What do you want to study at graduate school?
- Why do you want to study it?
- What experience do you have in your field of study?
- What do you plan to do with your degree once you graduate?

## Letters of Recommendation

When deciding who you will ask for a letter of recommendation, it is important to choose someone who knows you academically, and another who knows you professionally. Furthermore, it is important to choose someone who knows you well, and knows about your academic abilities and interests. Even if you are not far in the graduate school process, it is important to make connections now with professors, advisors, colleagues, etc. because when it comes time to ask for letters of recommendation, you will have people who you can ask and that know you well. Additionally, be sure to ask your recommenders for letters of recommendation far in advance.



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