

# **CENTER FOR CAREER AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GUIDE**



**MORAVIAN  
COLLEGE**



## **GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL**

## **Have further questions?**

**Please contact the Center for Career and Civic Engagement at 610-861-1509, stop by the office or send an email to [careercivic@moravian.edu](mailto:careercivic@moravian.edu).**

**HOURS OF OPERATION: Monday- Friday from 8:00am-4:30pm.**

# DECIDING TO/NOT TO ATTEND GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

## REASONS TO ATTEND TO GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL:

- **Passion:** You are interested in this area of study and have a love for the field.
- **Specialization:** Your undergraduate major gave you a broad overview of the field. Graduate school will (in most cases) have more specialized/specific concentration areas, within your field. If you are interested in the specialization, graduate/professional school will help you to gain that knowledge.
- **Necessity:** Certain career fields require graduate/professional school.
- **Advancement:** Certain career fields require graduate school for career advancement and marketability.
- **Salary:** You would like to maximize your earning power.
- **Motivation:** You are motivated to finish your graduate/professional degree now.

## REASONS NOT TO ATTEND GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL:

- **In-Decision:** It is common to be unsure what you would like to do post-graduation. Diving into graduate/professional school when you are not certain of your next-steps is not a good reason to attend.
- **Major Outcome:** Often students hear things like, “You can’t do anything with \_\_\_\_ major”. There are many things that you can do with your major. Take some time to explore them.
- **Prolonging the Inevitable:** It is common to be nervous about entering the “real world”. Going to graduate/professional school to avoid finding a career or job after graduation prolongs the inevitable.
- **Salary:** Avoid seeking graduate/professional school to get more money in a field that you are not interested in.
- **Pressure:** People try to be helpful in your career decision-making. They may strongly suggest graduate/professional school. You know yourself best. Ask yourself are you interested in attending? Is the timing right?
- **Motivation:** You are not ready to commit to \_\_\_\_ amount of years in graduate/professional school.
- **Expense:** graduate/professional school can be expensive. If you are finding that you cannot afford it at this time, you may decide to wait until your finances are more able to afford the expense. (Check out the *How Do I Pay for My Graduate/Professional Degree?* handout)

## NEED HELP DECIDING?

Contact the Center for Career and Civic Engagement to schedule an appointment:

610-861-1509

thecareercenter@moravian.edu

# **GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL TIMELINE**

Begin planning 18 months to one year before you intend to enter graduate school. This timeline is approximate. Deadlines vary significantly depending on the program and institution.

## **JUNIOR YEAR AND/OR SUMMER BEFORE YOUR SENIOR YEAR**

- Research schools and academic programs
- Research financial aid
- Visit schools
- Send for applications and materials
- Check application deadlines
- Take test prep courses
- Draft personal statement/essay

## **EARLY FALL OF SENIOR YEAR**

- Talk to Center for Career and Civic Engagement Staff and faculty to discuss personal statement
- Ask for letters of recommendation, giving your recommenders deadlines, addressed, stamped envelopes and any useful materials, like your resume and/or personal statement, to help them write the letter
- Register for and take graduate admission exams
- Request financial aid materials

## **LATE FALL SENIOR YEAR**

- Request transcripts from Registrar
- Complete applications and submit them

## **WINTER SENIOR YEAR**

- Complete applications and submit them if you have not yet
- Fill out and send financial aid forms, including the FAFSA (often due before application deadline)
- Check with schools to make sure your file is complete

## **SPRING SENIOR YEAR**

- Wait for responses from schools
- Solidify financial aid plans
- Visit schools where you are accepted

## **MAKE A DECISION**

- Send a deposit to your chosen school
- Notify other institutions that you will not be attending so they can offer the spot to someone else

- Send a thank you to those who wrote you a recommendation letter and inform them of your choice

## **CHOOSING A GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL**

You've decided to apply to graduate school. How do you find the program that is right for you?

Make sure to research in order to find out what programs are available and which would be best for you. You should consider several areas when you make this decision.

### **WHERE DO I START?**

These resources will help start the Graduate/Professional School search:

- Petersons Guide [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
- [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)
- [www.universities.com](http://www.universities.com)
- <http://www.gradschools.com/>

### **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

It is best for students to apply to programs that are at your level, measured by your grades, your GRE or other entrance examinations, and your academic record. If you graduated from a college that is not well known or if your grades or test scores are not in the higher percentiles, you may not be admitted to the higher-ranked programs. This does not mean that you should not go to graduate school. It simply means you should find a program that is better suited to your academic ability. Make sure you are aware of the admission requirements before submitting this application.

### **LENGTH OF STUDY**

How long will it take to earn the degree and what kind of work is expected? If attending on a full-time basis, a Master's degree can take from one to three years. If you decide to attend part-time it can take significantly longer. Make sure you are aware of any time constraints the university puts on its part-time students. Many schools require the students complete the degree in a certain amount of time or the earlier credits can begin to expire.

### **FACULTY**

One of the most important aspects of a graduate school is the quality of the department and the faculty that you will work with. Determine if the professors are well known in their disciplines. It's best to find out where they earned their degrees and what your current professors think of them. Do the faculty members concentrate on research and publishing? Are they concerned about and accessible to students? Is there diversity? During your campus visit, arrange to speak with a faculty member.

### **CURRICULUM**

Of course it is incredibly crucial you attend a school that offers the kind of programs that will get you the degree you want in order to get the career you want. Again, research and informational interviews are the best way to determine if a school will meet your criteria.

### **REPUTATION & RANK**

Talk with professors who teach undergraduate courses. Ask where they went to school and what programs they recommend (and why). If possible, visit campuses and talk with graduate students currently enrolled. You can find guides to specific programs which cover one field in depth, books on medical school, law schools, MBA programs, etc. Remember, any books or websites you find that

rank programs reflect the opinion of the author and should be only one part of your informational search.

***Recommended Resource: US News Graduate School Rankings***

### **ACCREDITATION**

Understand the role that specialized accreditation plays in your field as this varies considerably from one discipline to another. In certain professional fields it is a requirement to have graduated from an accredited program in order to be eligible for a license to practice. In other fields accreditation is not as important and there are some excellent programs that are not accredited. If you ask a university if the specific program you are interested in is accredited they are required to tell you.

### **RESOURCES**

Find out what resources are available on campus, particularly in the library, labs and computer center. Are resources current, complete and available to students?

### **STUDENTS**

What types of students attend the graduate school you are interested in? Learn what undergraduate schools they typically come from and what alums do once they complete the program. Talk to people to learn about employment opportunities. Many programs advertise their employment statistics, but it's also good to dig deeper and find out specifics about jobs that alumni acquire.

### **ATMOSPHERE**

Consider the size, location (urban/rural, section of the country), class size, housing, facilities, cost of living, proximity to career environment (for example, not all graduate programs in oceanography are located on the coasts).

### **COSTS/FINANCIAL AID**

Ask about tuition and financial aid. Do out-of-state students pay more? If so, how long does it take to establish residency and qualify for lower costs? Ask about grants, loans, scholarships, assistantships and availability of off-campus jobs. Remember: high cost does not necessarily mean the best education.

### **VISIT THE SCHOOL!**

The **best** way to get a feel for the schools you are interested in is to visit them in person. You can do this before you apply, after you apply but before you know if you were accepted and after you have accepted. Either of these times will work but remember to choose wisely because traveling costs can be expensive. Sometimes after a student is accepted schools are more likely to offer to pay some of the travel expenses.

Visiting allows you the opportunity to explore the campus and surrounding area as well as meet with some faculty members and current students. Remember to make an appointment before you plan your trip. You want to make sure you can make the most of your time there and it's important for the school to be expecting you so they can arrange the appropriate meetings.

While you are there be sure you check out the offices, library, laboratories and other facilities. Look into the cost of living in the surrounding town and see if it will fit into your budget. A good idea is to pick up a local and the student newspaper so you can get a feel for local events and check out the housing costs. Go with a prepared list of questions and topics you want to cover. Of course you'll want to include financial aid and housing in these questions.

## **AVAILABLE GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL DEGREES**

### **MASTER'S DEGREES**

M.S., M.A., M.Ed., M.B.A., M.F.A., M.S.W., M.P.H., M.L.S., M.M., M. Div., etc.\*

### **TYPES OF PROGRAMS:**

Online vs. Classroom

- Requires coursework, comprehensive examinations, and a dissertation.
- **Dissertation:** An original piece of research that is considered a significant contribution to the discipline.

Comprehensive Exam vs. Thesis

- **Comprehensive exam:** Student is to complete required coursework. An examination must be successfully passed to finish the program.
- **Thesis-type:** Student is to complete required coursework. The student must also submit a thesis-an original piece of research.

### **DOCTORAL DEGREES:**

Ph.D., Ed.D., Sc.D., Dr.P.H., Psy.D.\*

- The Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) is only one of many doctorates available. Some others are available in specific disciplines such as Doctor of Education (Ed.D).

### **PROFESSIONAL DEGREES:**

M.B.A., M.D., J.D., D.D.S. or D.M.D., D.V.M. ,Pharm.D.\*

- Requires coursework, professional training, and examination and certification by professional boards.

### **SPECIAL PROGRAMS/DEGREES:**

Post-baccalaureate, Post-doctoral, Ed.S.\*

- Usually pursued after a master's degree, but is not as extensive as a doctorate. This degree is frequently offered by colleges of education.
- Post- Doctoral work usually involves extended research in a particular area. This research may be sponsored by an academic department or by an organization. Post-doctoral work does not lead to a degree, but is rather an extended period of specialized training or research.

\*Please note: These are some examples of degrees.

## **APPLYING TO GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL**

Start thinking about your application 18 months to a year prior to your desired attendance. Two years would be best for medical and law schools.

### **WHEN ARE APPLICATIONS DUE?**

Each program is different. Check the graduate/professional school's website for their application deadline(s). Applications are typically due in late fall or early spring of your senior year.

Some programs will offer rolling admission. Rolling admission allows for applications throughout the year until the program is full. Apply sooner than later for these programs.

### **WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY?**

Each graduate/professional school will request different entrance requirements. Review each school's admissions requirement. Below are the most common requirements and some tips regarding these pieces:

### **APPLICATION:**

- Complete your application early and online if possible!
- If you are completing a paper version, write neatly or type.

### **GRADUATE ADMISSIONS TESTS:**

GRE, MCAT, LSAT, GMAT, DAT, OAT, PCAT, MAT

- Pay attention to registration deadlines.
- Testing Preparation Resources
  - [www.Kaplan.edu](http://www.Kaplan.edu)
  - [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
  - [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)
  - [www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com)
  - Take FREE practice tests:
    - Sign up for a FREE practice test at <http://bit.ly/MoravianCollege>
  - Register for a [prep course](#) , if necessary.
  - Every takeoff needs a countdown- Sign Up to receive a checklist that will see you through every phase, from planning and GRE? prep to applications and interviews. <http://kaptest.com/grechecklist>
- Taking the test!
  - GRE <http://www.ets.org/gre>
  - MCAT <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/>
  - LSAT <http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/about-the-lsat/>
  - GMAT <http://www.mba.com/us/the-gmat-exam.aspx>
  - DAT <http://www.ada.org/en/home-ada/education-careers/dental-admission-test>
  - OAT <http://www.ada.org/en/oat>
  - PCAT <http://pcatweb.info/>
  - MAT [www.milleranalogies.com](http://www.milleranalogies.com)



- Please Note: Not all graduate/professional schools require Graduate Admissions Test scores.

## **LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **START EARLY:** don't wait until the deadline to ask for recommendations. Allow for a 6-8 week completion time.
- Pick faculty and internship supervisors who have a good opinion of you, knowledge of your work, and familiarity with the discipline that you desire to study in graduate school and will write you an undoubtedly positive recommendation.
- Schedule an appointment to meet with the people completing your recommendations. Bring a copy of your resume, a list of courses you have taken with that professor (if applicable), examples of your strongest work, stamped envelopes (to the graduate/ professional school(s) you are applying to) and anything else the person may ask you to bring. Send them a thank you note after your meeting.
- Please Note: Every person that writes a letter of recommendation has a different style. They may require different information to complete your letter. Give them exactly what they ask for so they are able to complete a letter that is the best representation of you as possible. Some writers will allow you to view your letter of recommendation, others will not. Please respect the style of the writer.

## **PERSONAL STATEMENT/ ADMISSIONS ESSAY**

- This is arguably the most important aspect of your application.
- Put time and effort into writing a good one.
- Plan to write multiple drafts.
- Follow instructions exactly regarding length, topic, etc.
- Do not have grammar or spelling mistakes.
- Be original/creative without being cliché or using gimmicks.
- Be positive. Use a positive tone.
- **WHAT MAY THEY BE LOOKING FOR?**
  - **Passion:** A desire to commit to and succeed in this field.
  - **Career/Goals:** Where do you see yourself going? How is this program going to help you to get there? Show how you will use the program to accomplish career goals following the completion of the program.
  - **Interest:** What topic(s), populations, etc. interest you?
  - **Experience:** (*Research, work experience, academic experience, internship experience*) Why should they accept you? What do you offer their program?
  - **Education:** What knowledge do you have that will help you to be successful in this program?
  - **Fit:** Why do you see yourself in this particular program? (This will be different for each program) Sell why you are a good fit for the program.
  - **Uniqueness:** How do you stand out amongst all other applicants?
  - **Resources to help write your personal statement:**  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/>

## **RESUME/CV:**

- **Resume-** Typically a one page document highlighting your experience and skills in a clear and concise way.

- CV- Typically a two page document with a detailed description of your experiences. Academic experience should be described in more depth.

## **EXPERIENCE**

- Showcase your experience throughout the entire application.

## **PREREQUISITES**

- Graduate/professional school's may require prerequisite courses. If you have not taken these prerequisites prior to completion of your undergraduate degree, you may take these courses as a part-time, non-degree seeking student at a four-year college/university or a community college. Some classes (depending on the content area) may also be offered online.

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

- Make sure you send [official transcripts](#).
- Undergraduate GPA, major and success in relevant courses are reviewed.

## **INTERVIEW**

- Programs may require an interview for acceptance. This can be an individual or group interview, based on the preference of the program. Practice this interview, prior to visiting the campus for the interview.
- Dress professionally.
- Please Note: Not all graduate/professional schools will require an interview.

## **VISIT:**

- It is recommended that you visit the campus if possible to explore the program further.
- Visiting the campus also shows strong interest in the program.

## **AUDITIONS/PORTFOLIOS:**

- May be required for art, music, theater, journalism, architecture, and dance programs.
- This is an opportunity to showcase your talents. Be prepared and organized.

## **MONEY:**

- Have money saved for the application fees of each graduate/professional school program you wish to apply to.

## **FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION:**

- Don't forget to submit your FAFSA form to apply for loans or other forms of financial assistance.

# **PAYING FOR GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL DEGREES**

## **ASSISTANTSHIPS:**

- Pay your tuition and/or a small stipend, but require you to work for the university part-time. This can be research, teaching or practice based.
- Don't wait to get accepted- apply for these early.

## **FELLOWSHIPS:**

- Grants from foundations and other sources that pay your tuition and/or a small salary
- Don't wait to get accepted- apply for these early.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS:**

- FREE Money!!! (Not as widely available at the graduate level)

## **FEDERAL WORK STUDY**

- Employment opportunities for students demonstrating financial need
- Fill out and submit your [FAFSA](#) form
- Please Note: Some institutions only allow undergraduate students to participate in the Federal Work Study program.

## **STUDENT LOANS:**

- Fill out and submit your [FAFSA](#) form to be eligible for Stafford Loans
- Student loans typically have lower interest rates than private loans.

## **PRIVATE LOANS:**

- Avoid private loans, if possible. They are often at a higher interest rate than student loans.

## **PART-TIME/FULL-TIME JOB:**

- A part-time or full-time job can help to supplement the cost of a graduate/professional school program.
- The type of program (night, day, part-time or full-time, etc.) will help you to determine if and to what degree, employment is possible during your program.
- Please Note: Some programs are extremely intensive and will not allow for time to work.

## **MILITARY OR EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS:**

- Military or educational benefits can be used toward a graduate/professional degree.
- Contact the Financial Aid Office of the graduate/professional school (s) that you are submitting an application to determine eligibility.

## **CHECK OUT THESE SITES FOR MORE INFORMATION/RESOURCES:**

- [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
- <http://studentaid.ed.gov>
- [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
- [www.accessgroup.org](http://www.accessgroup.org)
- <http://www.collegescholarships.org/>
- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college?affiliateId=rdr&bannerId=paying>

