******

Graduate school

If you are currently considering the possibility of attending graduate school, there are many things to think about! Deciding on and applying to different schools can be a complex process. Use the following handout to help you begin planning.

Is graduate school right for me?

* What type of graduate degree do you want to pursue?
* Do you want to start graduate school immediately after finishing undergrad?
* Do you meet the academic requirements to be a competitive candidate in the program you have chosen?
* Does this degree help you reach your career or educational goals?

What do I need to think about?

* If you think you may go straight from college to grad school, begin researching graduate schools the summer before your final year of undergrad.
* Keep in mind that every school is different. Be sure to carefully review the application requirements and instructions on the official website of every school you’ll be applying to. Make a note of all deadlines, and don’t miss them!

What do I need to know about standardize testing?

* Use the following online resources to register and prepare for graduate entrance exams. Make sure you know the particular exam(s) needed for the program you are interested in.

GRE: <http://www.ets.org/gre>

GMAT: <http://www.mba.com/us>

LSAT: <http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/about-the-lsat/>

MCAT: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/>

* Planning for standardized tests is vital. Ideally, you will want to have taken the GRE or other exam eight months before the program start date. As far as studying, give yourself two to three months to prepare for an exam.
* Learn the content and format of the test by using study guides and taking practice tests.
* Set aside specific and scheduled time blocks to stay on track.

Penland 108 • 803-641-3440 CareerServices@usca.edu



What are the requirements for a grad school application?

Application and official transcripts

* Follow the instructions provided by the program to which you are applying. Every program has its own requirements and deadlines.
* For rolling admissions, the earlier, the better. Applications are reviewed as they arrive, so more space—and more funding—will be available for earlier applicants. Plan to have your application ready to send by the time the program starts accepting applications.

Letters of recommendation

* Avoid letters from family and friends.
* The best letters come from professors with whom you’ve developed a close relationship.
* Ask at least two months in advance if requesting that someone write a letter. Provide them information, such as the degree you are applying to and why. Include your resume.
* Send a thank you note!

Resume or CV

* Either a resume or curriculum vitae (CV) may be requested. A CV is a lot like a resume that is specifically geared for academia. These documents should reflect a whole picture of you instead of targeting a specific position, as when applying for a job.
* Include relevant information such as education, employment, extracurricular activities, research, publications and achievements and awards.

Personal statement or statement of purpose

* Some schools will provide specific guidelines and ask specific questions while others leave it more open-ended. In general, be sure to include the following in your statement.
* The career direction you are heading and why
* The skills, experiences and qualifications that make you a good fit for this direction
* The reasoning behind your choice in that graduate program
* It is a good idea to ask a faculty member and Career Services staff member to review your statement and offer honest feedback.

How do I prepare for a grad school Interview?

* Dress professionally.
* Be knowledgeable about the school and be able to answer why you are interested in that program and why you would be a good fit.
* Have a practice interview with someone in the Career Services.
* Look up commonly asked graduate school interview questions, especially those specific to the kind of program you are applying for.

Penland 108 • 803-641-3440 CareerServices@usca.edu