



Grad School 101

1. Consider if Graduate School is Right for You

Ask yourself why you want to go to graduate school.

- It is important to understand your reasons for going to graduate school because this essential question will be asked of you repeatedly as you research schools, ask for letters of recommendation, write personal statements, and begin creating relationships with graduate school faculty.

Evaluate your strengths and career objectives.

- Examine important questions such as: What do you enjoy doing and why? Is there a subject or issue that I am passionate about? Consider the mission and values of the program and ask yourself if they align with your values. Do I have the academic and personal qualities it takes to succeed? Will attending graduate school help me achieve my long term career goals?

Contemplate the logistics

- Do I have the money or means of finding funding for tuition, living expenses, and books? Should I go right after college or should I wait and gain some professional experience? Do I want to go to a school that is close to my work/home or farther away? Do I have fewer family obligations?

2. Research Schools

Choosing a Program.

- There are many different types of graduate programs including full-time, part-time, classes on nights and weekends, classes during the day, cohort or non-cohort based programs, or Masters vs. PhD. These are all things that are important to consider when choosing a graduate school that fits best for you.

Masters vs. PhD?

- This is often dependent on the area of expertise in which you are interested. Building relationships and talking with professors or current professionals in the field are the best source of information when making this decision. They can tell you what level of education is typically needed for your area of interest. Consider things such as how much time you are willing to spend in school, what level of occupational achievement you want to attain, and if conducting research is something that interests you. Completing a master's degree usually takes 2-3 years for full-time students. Doctoral degrees usually take 5-7 years to complete.

3. Take Entrance Exams

- One of the following exams are often a required portion of the application process: GRE, MAT, MCAT, GMAT, & LSAT. Costs range from \$150-\$250.
- Entrance exams are typically given on a computer. Locations of the exams vary. See each assessment website for registration and additional information.
- Invest a lot of time into studying for your entrance exam. Study materials are available to purchase, or you can often get free resources at your library or online.

Additional Resources

General Information:

www.gradschools.com

www.review.com

Entrance Exams:

GRE: www.gre.org

GMAT: www.mba.com

LSAT: www.lsac.org

MCAT: www.aamc.org/students/mcat

MAT: www.milleranalogies.com

Test Preparation:

Kaplan: www.kaplan.com

Princeton: www.princetonreview.com

4. Write your Personal Statement

Writing your Personal Statement/Statement of Purpose

▪ A personal statement is your opportunity to discuss your goals, hopes, and how you can contribute to the program. Get to know what the department is looking for in students and reflect those qualities in your personal statement. Illustrate how you fit into the program's goals and mission of the school. Read literature and research material written by professors in the program to which you are applying. Personalize your letters to each school and avoid being generic by being specific to your experiences. Check spelling and punctuation to ensure an error-free statement. Have your letter(s) proofread by professors, faculty, mentors, professionals in the field, academic advisors, mom, and the Career Development and Calling office!

Things to highlight in your statement:

- Research experience
- Academic background
- Career goals
- Articulated interest in chosen field
- How you can contribute to the programs' mission and values

5. Submit Applications and Letters of Recommendations

Applications.

- Consider all types of schools both large and small. Ask for suggestions from faculty and professionals in the field.
- Request applications as soon as possible, at least one year in advance of when you would like to start classes. Pay attention to the deadlines as they often vary from school to school.
- Get to know the schools to which you plan to apply by researching online and doing informational interviews with present or past students and professors.
- Transcripts from Bethel are \$6 and can be ordered online at the registrar website.
 - <http://www.bethel.edu/registrar/>
- Logistical concerns: Leave nothing blank on the application. If a question does not apply put N/A (not applicable). Print clearly with no errors in grammar and spelling and proofread. Ask others to review your writing before submission. Don't forget to include your application fees.

Letters of Recommendation.

- Considered to be one of the more important parts of the application. A substantive letter from an informed recommender can often be very persuasive to graduate admissions committees.
- Enlist individuals who know you well and who you are confident will write a good recommendation, such as professors, supervisors, and Resident Directors.
- Give the people you selected plenty of time to write a good letter as well as an addressed and stamped envelope so they can mail the letter as soon as possible. Be sure to send these individuals a thank you card! Things this letter should highlight: Leadership skills, thoughtful class contributions, interpersonal skills, independent study skills, critical thinking, and analytical skills.
- Call the admissions department occasionally to see if the letters have arrived.