



American University Career Center

Planning to go to Graduate School?



Slide 1

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Overview

Today's session will provide:

- Considerations when contemplating further study
- Step-by-step checklist for applying to graduate, business, or law school.





Things to Consider

What field or career do you want to pursue?

- Will that career be a good fit for you and bring you satisfaction?
- Is it typical and/or necessary to pursue graduate studies to enter that field?
- Do you want to teach, research, work in business or industry, practice law, etc.?
- What degree (M.A., M.S., Master of Education, PhD, PsyD, J.D., etc.) is needed to do what you want/enjoy?





Other Considerations

- Do I have previous work experience?
- Am I burned out academically?
- Do I have financial resources?
- Am I trying to postpone a job search or career decision?
- Will grad school help me meet my goals?





Do Your Research

- Make an initial list of schools
- Research, collect information and grade the schools on relevant criteria
- Make a short list and request applications
- Identify your “safeties,” your “long shots,” and those where you will be competitive for admission.





Resources

- **Peterson's Guides on Graduate & Professional Programs (and other Career Library resources)**
- **Gourman Report**
- **Graduate School Guide:**
www.graduateguide.com
- **Gradschools.com:** www.gradschools.com
- **Graduate School Fairs**





Resources

- Princeton Review: www.princetonreview.com
- US News and World Report College Reviews: www.usnews.com
- “Exploring the MBA” Publication: www.gmac.com
- “Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student’s Guide to Earning a Master’s or PhD” by Robert L. Peters, PhD





Ask People “In the Know”

- Speak to Career Center advisors, current students, alumni, and professors
- Shadow a professional within your intended field of work to get insight
- Conduct school visits





Evaluating Fit

- **Programs of Study and Opportunity for Continuing Study**
- **Entry Requirements (Undergrad GPA, Admission Test Scores, etc.)**
- **Accreditation, Reputation, Ranking**
- **Geographic Location (Good Personal Fit and Connection to Opportunities)**





Evaluating Fit (cont.)

- **Costs and Means to Defray Costs
(Assistantships, Loans, Scholarships)**
- **Program Focus: Practical Application versus
Research**
- **Opportunities for Research and Professional
Development**
- **Full-Time versus Part-Time**





Evaluating Fit (cont.)

- **Faculty**
 - Academic Training/Credentials
 - Research Interests
 - Involvement in Professional Activities
- **Students**
 - Professional Accomplishments of Graduates
 - Student Satisfaction with Program
 - Size and Cohesiveness of Programs and Cohorts; Group Morale





The Application Process

- Standardized Test Scores
- Letters of Recommendation
- Personal Statement
- Transcripts
- Resume/Writing Sample/Portfolio
- The Application





Standardized Tests

Unique test required for type of school:

- ✓ *Law*: Law School Admission Test (LSAT)
- ✓ *Business*: Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT)
- ✓ *Medicine*: Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
- ✓ *Other*: Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
 - ✓ Generally Computer-Based (Paper-Based where computer based testing not available)

NOTE: GRE has a subject test requirement for particular grad school programs.





Standardized Tests (cont.)

Most entrance exams need to be taken by October.

- ✓ **LSAT offered: June – Feb.**
- ✓ **GMAT and GRE offered: year around (computer-based; schools get all your scores).**

On-Line Registration/List of Testing Centers:

- ✓ **LSAT: www.lsac.org**
- ✓ **GMAT: www.mba.com**
- ✓ **GRE: www.gre.org**





Letters of Recommendation

- ✓ **3 letters of recommendation for each school**
- ✓ **Make a list of potential references**
 - **MBA programs - seek references from both employers and faculty**
 - **Other programs - generally focus on faculty recommendations**
- ✓ **Give your writers 4-6 weeks notice to write letter; aim to get letters back at least one month before application deadline**





How to Secure Great Letters

- ✓ **Choose people who can speak in detail about your work, work ethic, desire to learn & succeed, and your academic/professional capabilities and maturity.**
- ✓ **Schedule appointment with references to discuss schools of interest. Give them a copy of your resume & personal statement. Make suggestions about which skills they should highlight in their letter.**
- ✓ **Send thank you notes and keep them updated.**





Request Official Transcript

- Include all official transcripts of undergraduate/graduate work (even if you didn't receive degree).
- Be aware of costs associated with requesting official transcripts.
- Official transcripts should be sent directly to school (follow application directions).
- Request transcripts early enough to arrive to graduate program by application deadline.





Personal Statement

- AKA “Statement of Goals and Research Interests”
- Be direct, honest and sincere
- Don’t repeat resume; give meaning to resume
- Admission committees are interested in:
 - Clarity of your research interests.
 - Your unique story – tell a story only you can tell.
 - Steps you have taken to build expertise.
 - Your short-term and long-range goals.
 - Why this university is your top choice.
 - Whether you know about their program focus. Make sure your goals and research interest align with those of their faculty.





Resources: Personal Statement

- **Professors**
- **The AU Writing Center (228 Battelle-Tompkins)**
- **AU Career Center Resource Library**
- **Career Advisors**
- **Websites such as:**
 - <http://www.wecc.rpi.edu/gradapp.html>
 - http://www.quintcareers.com/graduate_school.html





Resume/Writing Sample/Portfolio

- Some programs may require the following:
 - Resume lists your professional experience
 - Writing Samples may be required if the program involves writing and research.
 - Portfolios showcase your creative work and/or your writing projects.





Complete Your Application

- Review all application requirements and make a list of deadlines. Deadlines as early as November; the more competitive the school, the earlier the deadline.
- Apply as early as possible within the application period. Sometimes earlier deadlines for financial assistance.
- Some schools review on rolling basis.





Complete Your Application (cont.)

- Copy blank form to use as rough draft.
- Familiarize yourself with all instructions before applying.
- Pay attention to details; respond to all items in concise and complete manner.
- Type your application; be sure it's neat and accurate.





Wait for your answers

- **Law school:**
 - Late February/ March
- **Other programs:**
 - Generally March - April





Credential File Services

- The Career Center offers **credential file services** through a partnership with Interfolio, Inc. the premier online credentials management service
- Allows candidates to create, manage and store nearly any type of document, including letters of recommendation, teacher evaluations, writing samples, transcripts, premed evaluations, and more.
- *\$15 for students or alumni to set up a 1-year account, and \$5 to send out the typical application; can pay online, using a credit card, or by check or money order.*
- http://www.american.edu/careercenter/students/interfolio_index.html





Questions?

To set up an appointment with your
Career Advisor contact:

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