



## Graduate School

### PLANNING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

Graduate school may be a great investment to make for both your education and career path. Specific occupations may require a master's degree or doctorate, others may value work experience over continued education. Ultimately, there are many factors to consider in your decision.

#### TYPES OF GRADUATE STUDY

##### ***Professional Schools***

These programs enhance the practical application of your knowledge, experience and skill set. Undergraduates applying to this type of school are not required to have a specific Bachelor's degree; although performance in certain rigorous undergraduate courses may be an important factor.

Professional schools value a student's personal statement. They are very concerned with your ability to respond and evaluate ethical scenarios; write critically and thoughtfully when addressing such issues in your personal statement. They also require completion of standardized testing such as the GMAT(Business), LSAT(Law), MCAT(Medical).

Examples:

- Medical School
- Law School
- Veterinarian School
- Dental School

##### ***Graduate Schools***

These programs allow you to enhance your knowledge within a particular field or specialized path. Post-Baccalaureate education may or may not always guarantee increased salaries within your field of choice; this is especially true for graduate schools.

Program examples:

- Clinical Psychology
- Counseling
- Biological Sciences
- Engineering
- Business
- Liberal Arts
- Social Work

Some graduate admissions committees require prior experience related to the field of study upon acceptance. Admission committees are also interested in your experience with community service, and leadership roles. And while some graduate schools are moving away from using standardized test results for admission, some still require tests such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Miller Analogies Test (MAT).



## **FACTORS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

### ***Location***

- Is there a specific state or city you'd like to be in?
- What is the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition?
- What are the housing options in the area?
- What is there to do in the area? Does the demographic and activities match your needs and interests?
- If you have a family, are they willing to relocate with you? Will you need childcare?

### ***Finances***

- Does the university you are applying to offer financial aid assistance, scholarships or graduate assistantships?
- Will you be paying your own way through school or do you have people helping you?
- How much debt will you accrue during your time in graduate school?

### ***Accreditation Status***

- Is the program you are applying to accredited by the appropriate accreditation committee? (For example: to be a licensed counselor in Maine, you must attend a graduate counseling program that is CACREP accredited).

### ***Program Requirements***

- How many credit hours do you need to graduate from the program you are applying to?
- How many years will it take to complete?
- Does the program require you to pass a comprehensive final in order to graduate?
- Will you be required to write an extensive research or thesis paper?
- Are there opportunities for internships or work experience through the program?

### ***Faculty and Coursework***

- Who are the faculty members of the program?
- Are there faculty who are researching topics of interest to you?
- Are there classes focusing on your interests?

### ***Resources***

- Does the campus/program offer resources that you will need? (Ex: extensive research databases, a counseling center, tutoring services, etc.)
- What kind of health insurance or other benefits does the school/program offer?

# DEVELOPING PERSONAL STATEMENTS

A personal statement is also known as a letter of intent and is typically used as an application material when applying for graduate programs. The sole purpose of a personal statement is to demonstrate your strengths, uniqueness, and writing skills to the admissions committee. Develop your statement in a way that persuades the faculty members to accept you into their program.

## ***Two Types of Personal Statements***

### **1) General**

This type of testimonial lets you choose a topic that allows you to reflect your full potential. Common examples could be career goals, personal learning experience(s), interest in the field, or internships and work experiences.

Often the best outline to follow is:

1. Why are you interested in this field?
2. Why are you interested in the particular school?
3. What do you bring to the school? What is your unique promise of value to the program?

### **2) Specific Prompts**

These statements request that you write about a certain subject topic or experience. Follow the instructions carefully, but most often, they want a similar outline as above.

## ***Tips for Your Personal Statement***

- Begin by grabbing the reader's attention: The opening paragraph will serve as a platform for the rest of the essay. Make a good first impression to the admissions committee.
- Make each personal statement specific: Avoid using the same statement for every application. Consider the various cultures of the places you are applying to and incorporate these findings into your statement. For example, if the graduate program well known for their community involvement, community service experiences might be a good topic to address within your personal statement.
- Add credibility by offering examples: Provide evidence for your statements and ideas; if you believe that you would succeed as a student in their program, tell them why. Discuss your unique strengths and share how their program would advance your career goals and skills.

## ***Common Mistakes to Avoid***

### **Disclosing TOO much.**

Provide the admissions committee with an honest reflection of yourself; do not simply write what you think they would want to hear. However, there are some topics which are typically deemed inappropriate to discuss within this context. Matters such as religion, political issues and financial interests should not be included within a personal statement. These topics are controversial and are not relevant to the requested information for a personal statement

### **Not doing your research.**

Research the universities and develop working knowledge of their missions and critical values before writing the personal statement. If possible, identify one or more of these values within your own testimonial.

### **Making excuses.**

The personal statement essay is meant to be a reflection, not an explanation. Focus on demonstrating your strengths and abilities rather than drawing attention to weaknesses.

### **Being off-topic or too wordy.**

Keep your writing focused and relevant to the question(s) being asked; consider word count limits when making outlines for the personal statement.

### **Spelling and grammar mistakes.**

Remember to proofread your essay before making a final submission to a graduate school or employer. Admissions committees do not want to see careless mistakes in your essay. Bring a copy to Career Services and we can help you craft and edit your personal statement.