Graduate School Guide

So, you are thinking about applying to graduate school... Here are some tips to help you develop a plan to get into the school of your dreams. This handout is meant to provide a general guideline for getting started. For more information, please visit http://www.bates.edu/career/graduate-school-advising-resources/ and schedule an appointment with a Bates Center for Purposeful Work Graduate School Advisor.

Why should you go to grad school?

- You want to study something you are passionate about
- The job/career you want requires a graduate degree
- You are established in your career and can earn more money with a graduate degree

Why you should not go to grad school...

- To avoid the job market – sometimes it is best to spend time working in a field that interests you and then pursue graduate studies
- To please someone else – you must have a genuine interest in the academic subject

Getting started and Resources for Research

- Know what subject/area of study you want to focus on
- Know which degree you want to attain (Master’s, Ph.D., etc.)
- Research many programs on a national scale -- rank them based on your interest
- Talk to Bates faculty members, alumni, currently enrolled students, as well as professionals in your field about types of programs and schools to consider
- Look at professional associations, academic journals and the following websites:
  - http://www.gradschools.com
  - Ask the reference librarian for help generating a list of schools at which faculty have published articles in your area of scholarship or research for ideas on which programs will be of interest to you.

Questions to think about and ask when speaking with graduate programs

- What is the curriculum?
- How long does it typically take to complete the degree?
- What are the demographics of the students?
- What are the criteria for choosing teaching and research assistants?
- How reliable is the financial support?
- What types of jobs have been attained by recent graduates?
- Can I meet some current students?
Applying and Application Criteria

- Apply to 6-15 schools that seem like a good fit (at least 2 safety, 2 probable and 2 reach schools)
- Basic criteria: **grades, test scores** (GRE, GMAT, MCAT, LSAT)
  - Let the graduate program know about a resolved problem with a grade or grades
  - Take tests only when you are ready! Do not take them just to give it a whirl...those scores will be seen!

**Personal statement**

- Demonstrate interest and knowledge of the profession/area of study
- Highlight relevant experience
- Connect your interests to their graduate program
- Address your academic or career goals
- Include your own vision/mission
- Be interesting and unique...schools read a lot of these and you want to stand out

**Letters of recommendation**

- Identify faculty who know you well and will write a positive, personal recommendation
- Discuss specific post-grad plans with them
- Provide background information including resume, grades, and papers
- Let them know when and where you are applying
- Write thank you notes!
- Ask for letters of recommendation before you graduate -- faculty know you best right now! You can have letters sent directly to an online credential service such as Interfolio and store them there until needed

**Becoming a top candidate**

- Contact programs you are interested in
- Identify a couple of professors in each program – connect your interests with their research
- Read some of their work BEFORE contacting them
- Email questions regarding the program and/or articles or books they have written
- Indicate your own interests and propose an area that you might want to pursue

**How to pay for graduate school**

- Contact the Graduate Financial Aid Office from each school to find out what kind of aid they offer and how to apply
- Research options such as Teaching or Research Assistants, fellowships, grants, and loans
- Check out these websites: [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) and [www.accessgroup.org/](http://www.accessgroup.org/)

**What should you do if you don’t get in?**

- Meet with faculty and Bates Center for Purposeful Work staff to discuss weaknesses in your application: grades, test scores, etc.
- Apply to more schools - especially safety schools
- Demonstrate commitment and interest in the field by gaining work experience or taking relevant courses and re-apply
- If you are waitlisted be sure to stay in contact with the schools and provide updates regarding most recent grades, awards, honors or relevant experience