



CASE WESTERN RESERVE  
UNIVERSITY EST. 1826

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# SOURCE Lunch & Learn: The Graduate School Admission Process

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# Agenda

- Getting started – decisions, tips, & research
- Completing the application process
- Components of the application
- Timeline for applying to graduate school
- Reminder

## Getting Started – Decisions

- Why do I want to go to graduate school?
- What are my career goals?
- Will graduate school assist me in meeting my career goals?
- If yes, which academic discipline will help me realize my goals?
- What are my academic and professional interests?
- Do I have the motivation for another 2-7 years of school?

## Getting Started - Tips

- Start planning early
- Use faculty - current & prospective - as your primary source for references & consultation
- Keep in mind, unlike a bachelor's degree, you are affiliating with a faculty member & department
- Use additional sources such as the Career Center, graduate students, accrediting bodies in your field
- Select a master's program in a department with a PhD program – if undecided, apply for the PhD
- Be able to articulate a genuine reason for attending graduate school, not b/c you can't find a job

# Getting Started – Research

- Literature review – note faculty research interests & expertise
- Accreditation status
- Quality & reputation of your chosen program
- Tuition & availability of financial support (start to finish or year to year?)
- Grants, fellowships, scholarships, & loans
- GPA & test scores for the average admitted student
- Time required to degree completion

## Getting Started – Research (cont.)

- [www.phds.org](http://www.phds.org) (look at Graduate School Finder)
- [www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com) (look at finance your study)
- <http://www.cacrep.org/>
- [www.admissionsessays.com](http://www.admissionsessays.com) (free admission essays)
- <http://community.livejournal.com/applyingtograd/>
- [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
- [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)
- <http://www.studentdoctor.net>
- [www.academiccareers.com](http://www.academiccareers.com)

# Completing the Application Process

## Keep in mind:

1. The graduate admissions process varies from u. to u., make sure you understand the process for your short list.
2. Graduate study is different from undergraduate study: more focused, more intense, more expensive, & more selective.
3. Hiring organizations expect more of people w/ an advanced degree; they assume you pursued the degree for a reason (& you'll be able to articulate that reason).

# Components of the Application

- Application (typically submitted electronically)
- Official transcript
- Admissions essay (aka, personal statement; may be different from statement of purpose)
- Letters of recommendation (3)
  - Interfolio
  - closed file recommended
- Standardized test(s)
- Other – e.g., resume, published article, portfolio, performance

# Components: Essay

Challenge: Distinguishing yourself from the rest of the applicant pool.

1. Analyze your personality & personal history
2. Prioritize & organize personal traits, experiences, & accomplishments & tailor them to the structure of school admission criteria/requirements
3. Fit all this prioritized information into a narrative structure
4. Craft an organized essay into a convincing & compelling composition

## Components: Essay (cont.)

Succinctly describe your:

1. Reasons for applying to the proposed program
2. Preparation for this field of study
3. Academic & research interests
4. Future career plans
5. Additional aspects of your background & interests which may aid the admissions committee in evaluating your aptitude and motivation for graduate study

## Components: Essay (cont.)

### Guiding Questions:

1. What do you want the admissions committee to know about you?
2. Why is this particular program the right fit for you & your interests?
3. What do you bring to the program, what is your contribution?
4. Why do you want to undertake graduate study @ this particular university?
5. Whom do you wish to work with? Are you familiar w/ his/her research?

# Standardized Tests

How a department or admissions committee evaluates test scores varies:

1. some use them as cutoffs to eliminate applicants
2. some use them as criteria for research assistantships and other forms of funding
3. some look to GRE scores to offset weak GPAs
4. some admissions committees will overlook poor GRE scores if applicants demonstrate significant strengths in other areas (e.g., writing ability)

## Standardized Tests (cont.)

- GRE General Test – verbal, quantitative, & writing
- GRE Subject Test – Biochemistry, Cell & Molecular Biology, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Literature in English, Mathematics, Physics, Psych
- GMAT
- LSAT
- MCAT

# Timeline for Applying to Graduate School

- Begin no later than spring of your junior year
- See hand-out for tasks associated with junior & senior years

Reminder:

- Why do I want to go to graduate school?