Graduate Education Application Process

Contact your top schools and request application materials. Review each application thoroughly to determine deadlines, test requirements and the supporting documentation necessary to complete the application process. Graduate school applications will often require the following:

- Standardized Test Scores
- Personal Statement/Essay(s)
- Letters of Recommendation
- Official Transcript(s)
- Application Fee

Standardized Test Scores
Most graduate and professional programs require scores from selected exams. Be aware of how often the exams are administered, as well as the deadlines by which scores must be submitted with your applications. The most common exams are listed below.

- The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is required by most graduate schools and many national fellowships. The General Test of the GRE measures overall scholastic ability, with separate scores for verbal ability, quantitative ability and analytical writing aptitude. Subject Tests of the GRE evaluate mastery of knowledge basic to success in specific disciplines but are only required by certain programs. Your application materials will outline test requirements.
- Law School (LSAT), Medical School (MCAT), Dental School (DAT) and Business School (GMAT) admissions tests are designed to measure general scholastic ability as it relates to the specific discipline of the examination, and are required for admission.
- The Miller Analogies Test (MAT) may be required by psychology, counseling or social work programs.

Information about these exams is available in the Career Center resource library, university libraries, and academic advising areas of the related disciplines or online. (See the graduate school section of the Career Development Center's resources page.) Registration information can be obtained at the Career Development Center. You may also directly contact the related professional associations, accrediting agencies or testing services.
Financing Your Graduate Education
Reviewing available financial aid information and managing all related paperwork in order to finance your graduate education is another critical component of the application process. Most graduate and professional programs offer some aid; however, the types of assistance and the amounts vary widely. Be sure to investigate scholarship and fellowship opportunities sponsored by the universities to which you are applying as well as external agencies and associations. Many institutions also make available a number of graduate assistantships. Assistantships not only provide graduate students with funding but also meet the university’s needs for teaching, research and other staffing needs. You may also need to consider loans as a source to meet graduate school costs.

Personal Statement/Essay(s)
Most graduate and professional programs require that you write a personal statement. A personal statement really fills several purposes. First, it is an opportunity for you to express your personality, your values, your hopes and goals. It is your one chance to escape the rigid format of the application and allow the admissions committee to know the "real you" from a life/career planning perspective. The second purpose is to provide the committee with an indication of your goal-directedness, your sense of self-efficacy, and "career fit" with the program. In addition, your personal statement gives the committee some sense of your abilities as a communicator – how well do you conceptualize and illustrate your history and goals? It is a good idea to write your essay well in advance of the application cycle, when you are likely to have more time for reflection, creativity and revision. Our career advisers are happy to review your personal statement for clarity and content.

Letters of Recommendation
Letters of recommendation are also an important part of your application to any graduate program. You should follow each program’s guidelines carefully regarding the number of recommendations you seek, from whom you request them, and how they are delivered to the schools.

A strong letter of recommendation is written by a professor who knows you personally and knows your work – they will be more detailed in their recommendations regarding your goals, competencies, and aspirations. Employers, internship supervisors, mentors, or anyone else who can speak to your career aspirations and strengths may also be an appropriate recommender (avoid friends and family). Never assume that an individual will write you a letter; ask if the potential reference is willing and has time to write a strong recommendation letter for you. Give anyone who may be hesitant an option to decline your offer – it is better to seek a different letter from someone else who will speak highly of you than to risk a less-than-glowing reference.

After someone has agreed to provide you with a letter of recommendation, do everything you can to make the process easy for them:

- Consider using Interfolio which keeps track of and sends copies of your letters of recommendations to schools as you need them. If professors or recommenders do not wish to use Interfolio, provide them with stamped, addressed envelopes for their convenience.
- Start early. Give the recommendation writer a minimum of two-weeks, but expect that they may require several weeks to write your letters. You may want to give your writers a deadline date for letters to be sent to Interfolio, but be realistic with the date, and politely check-in with them as it approaches.
- Provide your recommenders with the information they need to write you a strong letter! Ideally, you should provide them with a packet of information that includes
  - Your transcript (and any notes you may wish to make regarding improvement over your time at Loyola or classes in which you particularly excelled)
  - Any papers or projects you worked on for the writer
○ A copy of your resume so that he/she/they has a greater sense of you as a person, including your work history and other accomplishments
○ A copy of your personal statement, so that he or she can speak with specificity to why you are seeking admittance to a particular program.

Finally, don’t chance losing track of potential references! Try to get letters when you have finished your last class with a particular faculty member, or immediately after you have completed your program, practicing teaching, internship or employment.

**Official Transcript(s)**
Be sure to obtain official transcripts from all institutions of higher education where you have taken classes. Leave appropriate time for these transcripts to be sent. For information on obtaining your official Loyola transcript, visit the [Department of Registration and Records](#) website.

**Application Fee**
Application fees for graduate programs can range from $50 to $150. Some institutions will waive the fee for applications submitted online, or in the case of demonstrated financial need.