Ohio Wesleyan University

Graduate School Planning

Office of Career Services

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About Career Services

Career Services is here to assist you throughout your academic career and beyond. Services offered include:

- Major and Career Advising
- Job/Internship Search Assistance
- Résumé Writing & Cover Letter Assistance
- On-site Career Library
- Seminars on numerous career-related topics
- Alumni Networking (OWUNetworking)
- BishopLink (online job/internship database)
- Mock Interview Program
- Career Fairs & Special Events
- Extensive Website with links and information
- Drop-In or Scheduled Appointment with a Counselor

Graduate School
Making the Decision
Graduate study requires a significant commitment of time and money, along with rigorous academic demands. Deciding to go to graduate school is a decision that should be made after much research and reflection regarding your goals, strengths, and motivation. Most graduate and professional schools require application materials to be submitted at least 8 to 9 months prior to the beginning of the program, so **START EARLY!**

REASONS TO ATTEND
- Compelling academic, intellectual, or career interest
- Career field of interest requires an advanced degree
- More opportunities for advancement
- Increased earning potential

REASONS NOT TO ATTEND
- Unsure of what to do after completing your bachelors degree
- Can’t find a job or don’t feel ready to enter the workforce
- Want to please your parents, friends, or professors

Where should I start?
Stop by Career Services to develop a plan of action. Following are some things you should do and/or consider when selecting and applying for graduate programs.

Do Some Self-Assessment
Meet with a Career Services advisor, who can help you assess your interests, skills, and values and assist you in clarifying your specific career goals before you begin the process of choosing programs.

Gather Information
Visit the Career Services website for links to graduate school information, including testing, financial aid, rankings, writing essays and more.

Identify Potential Schools and Programs
Be familiar with the curriculum, program requirements, department reputation and faculty research interests, as well as current issues in your field. Use the following website to help you gather information:
- [www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com)
- [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

Be sure to talk with faculty and alumni for recommendations of programs to consider.

Where should I start? cont.
Research
Careful research can help to make the decision easier. It is important to search for programs that match your professional and personal goals.

- Find out where program graduates are working and the types of positions they hold.
- Visit campuses, talk to current students and faculty, and attend a class.
- Check rankings in publications like U.S. News and World Report.
- Look through professional research journals in your chosen academic discipline to see what universities are represented.

Evaluating Programs
Begin to compare those programs you’ve found online. Following are some factors to consider when comparing schools and programs.

- Reputation of the school, program and faculty
- Location, size, facilities, and housing options
- Requirements, departmental courses, and program emphasis
- Application fee and requirements; Acceptance rate
- Costs and financial aid offered; Assistantships, fellowships
- Accreditation of the program
- Student services

Entrance Exams
Consider taking an exam review class, joining a study group, purchasing a study guide or a CD-ROM which has sample tests.

- Career Services has registration booklets and study materials for many of the entrance exams; stop by and pick one up!
- Links to the GRE, LSAT, GMAT, and MCAT can be found on the Career Services website.

We recommend that you take entrance exams early. Please review the graduate school planning timeline on the following page. It may take 3-10 weeks to receive official scores, depending on which exam you take.
Transcripts
Your graduate program may request that you submit official transcripts. These transcripts may be requested at the Registrar’s Office. The cost is $3 per request.

Graduate School Planning Timeline
This is a recommended general timeline; however, individual circumstances and programs can vary.

SPRING PRIOR TO APPLYING (JUNIOR YEAR):
- Research areas of interest, institutions, and programs.
- Talk to your advisor and faculty mentors about programs and application requirements.
- Register and prepare for appropriate graduate admission tests.
- Investigate national scholarships.
- Identify who you will ask for recommendations.

SUMMER PRIOR TO APPLYING (SUMMER JUNIOR/SENIOR YEAR):
- Take required graduate admissions exams.
- Review application and financial aid materials.
- Visit institutions of interest, if possible.
- Write your application essays and have them reviewed for comments by faculty and a career advisor.
- Check on application deadlines and rolling admissions policies.
- For professional school programs, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use.

FALL - APPLICATION TIME (SENIOR YEAR):
- Complete any necessary steps from the spring and summer checklist not yet finished.
- Request recommendations, if possible, meet with each recommender and discuss your plans.
- Submit completed applications and other required materials. Also submit assistantship or fellowship applications.
- If applicable, fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov or pick up at the Financial Aid Office.

SPRING FOLLOW-UP:
- Check with all institutions before their deadlines to make sure your file is complete.
- Schedule interviews, as needed.
- If possible, visit institutions that accept you.
- Send a deposit to your chosen institution.
- Notify other colleges and universities that accepted you of your decision so that they can admit students on their waiting list.
- Send thank-you notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your decision.

Applications
Applications can be found on each program’s website. Follow instructions exactly for each program and realize that each program will most likely have different instructions. Stop by our office if you need assistance or have questions about an application.

Essays and Personal Statements
We recommend at least two readers for your personal statements: one of your professors and a Career Services advisor. It may be advisable to ask a Writing Center tutor to review these, as well. Examples can be found in the Career Services library and on our website. Following are some general questions to ask yourself before you write.

- What’s special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained?
- How have you learned about this field—through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?
- If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has that work contributed to your growth?
- What are your career goals?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain (great grades but mediocre LSAT or GRE scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial, or physical) in your life?
- What personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
Graduate School Application Checklist

1. INSTITUTION: __________________________
2. PROGRAM TITLE: _______________________
3. APPLICATION DEADLINE: __________________
   a. Application Fee:_______________________
   b. Online application available: Y or N
   c. PIN/Password for online application:
4. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:
   a. Test Scores:
      i. Admission Exam Required (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT, etc.) _________________
      ii. Minimum score required:
   b. GPA Required:
      i. Minimum average accepted:
   c. Personal Statement/Essay/Letter of Interest:
      i. Type of essay:
      ii. Number of pages or words:
      iii. Specific questions that must be answered:
   d. Writing Sample:
      i. Type(s)( Ex. Creative, Non-fictional, etc.):
      ii. Number required:
   e. Letters of Recommendation
      i. Number required:
      ii. Online or Written:
      iii. Form requiring your signature?:
   f. Resume or Curriculum Vita required: _________________
   g. Audition tape/portfolio/other materials required: ________
5. INFORMATION FOR YOUR RECORDS:
   a. Address to send transcripts or official application materials:
   b. Faculty Members/Research areas of interest:
   c. Assistantship Availability (Teaching, Research, General Appointment, etc.):
      i. Application deadline for assistantship: ________

(Adapted from the OWL at Purdue web site)

Letters of Recommendation
Letters of recommendation are typically written by faculty or other professionals who can speak for your ability to do well in graduate school (academic advisors who know you well, advisors for student organizations, internship supervisor, etc.). Keep in mind:

- Most programs require three to four letters.
- Always ask the person if they are willing to write a letter of recommendation and do not assume she/he will write.
- Ask the person at least 6 weeks before the application deadline.
- You should provide your references with a copy of your current résumé, a personal statement, stamped and addressed envelopes for each institution if forms are to be mailed, and a set of instructions for each school.
- Some colleges/universities may have a form that your references must fill out and return. If there is a form be sure to provide this information to your reference.
- Be sure to sign forms and fill out student section before giving them to your reference.
- Recommendations can be used to your advantage if GPA or exam scores are borderline.

Final Tips
The graduate school application process can be extremely time consuming. In order to make sure that you stay on top of things, we suggest that you make a checklist for each school that you are interested in applying to. Some items that should be included in that list for each institution are located on the back of this handout.