

## Guide to Graduate & Professional School



The **decision** to attend graduate or professional school is a serious one requiring research and preparation. Students should be confident that graduate study is available, necessary and appropriate for them at this time in their life. It is suggested that students discuss their plans with their faculty advisors and a member of the career services staff.

Programs may be available on both **full-time and part-time basis** as well as evening, weekend and summer schedules. Some may be offered only part-time; others may require some full-time participation. Length of study and availability of graduate assistantships will also vary from school to school and program to program.

This guide is designed to guide you through the graduate/professional school process by providing materials to help you be successful in that search. If you cannot locate information you need, please ask **Career Services** for assistance.

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# What Grad School is All About

## **A. Similar to undergraduate school in that you continue coursework. Main differences are:**

1. Many more seminar type courses, especially at advanced level
2. More papers, projects, presentations, fewer tests
3. More research oriented approaches
4. Increased specialization of subject matter studies
5. More independent work requiring self-discipline
6. Less short-term feedback about how you are doing academically
7. Increased pressure to maintain high grades; generally B or above is the expected minimum

## **B. Master's Degree (M.A. or M.S)**

Four typical types of programs:

1. Coursework & thesis – A thesis is an independent research project that the student designs, carries out, writes and defends before a committee of graduate professors.
2. Coursework and exams – Some programs give the student the option of not writing a thesis, but taking comprehensive exams instead.
3. Coursework and internship – An internship is a supervised, experimental learning situation, usually on a part-time, volunteer basis. The student may spend one or more semesters working in a setting compatible with his/her area of study to develop knowledge and skills in that area.
4. Combination of the above.

## **C. Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.)/Other Professional Degrees**

Usual requirements include:

1. Preliminary coursework.
2. Some programs require a master's thesis.
3. A comprehensive examination covering required coursework, which may be written, and/or oral.
4. Dissertation, which is an original, independent research project. The student usually presents the project to a faculty committee for approval and defends the completed project before the same committee. Differs from a thesis in that it must be original, is usually more complex and in-depth, must be judged to be a significant contribution to knowledge in the student's field.
5. Requirements for applied programs such as counseling, clinical psychology, nursing or social work may involve some practical experience.
6. Some professions may require some licensing procedure, i.e. a bar or state license exam.

## Identifying Your School

To identify schools offering a particular degree program, students may wish to access resources in **Career Services** such as:

**The Graduate School Guide** -- a comprehensive guide to doctoral, master's and professional degree programs. This guide provides graduate fields of study, graduate school profiles, tests dates, student reply cards and information on financing graduate study. World Wide Web address: [www.schoolguides.com](http://www.schoolguides.com).

**Peterson's Graduate & Professional Programs** -- provides complete information on all Graduate Programs and degrees at over 1500 institutions; faculty research specialties; and full listings of all degree programs by field. Visit Peterson's on the World Wide Web at: [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com).

The **Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools**: published by the Law School Admission Council to give you thorough, accurate and up-to-date information on all 181 ABA approved law schools. Includes admissions requirements, program descriptions and insider admissions tips with median LSAT/GPA information.

**Peterson's Guide to MBA Programs** -- a comprehensive directory of graduate Business Education in the U.S., Canadian, and Select International Business Schools; where, when, and how classes are taught including curricular focus; and career options, hiring trends, salary details on the MBA job market.

**Graduate School Catalogs** -- A limited number of graduate school catalogs are available in Career Services. These catalogs should be used for preliminary research only. If students are seriously interested in applying to a certain school, they are encouraged to obtain a current catalog by calling the school directly.

Faculty advisors are also a source of information about strong programs or those with a particular emphasis, orientation or direction. All departments maintain information about graduate programs in their disciplines. In addition to inquiring with the department chair, students may also wish to check bulletin boards close to the department for postings of graduate school opportunities. Some departments may also have specialized review software, directories of financial aid or specialized catalogs.

## Choosing A Graduate School

A certain amount of research is involved in selecting a graduate school that is right for you. It is not unlike the process of choosing an undergraduate institution, although the relative importance of some of the factors may have shifted from undergraduate school.

### **Curriculum**

Go to a school that offers the kind of degree program that will get you the career you want. A close look at the curriculum may also reveal a particular school of thought, philosophical basis or specialty strength in a given program.

### **Faculty**

Determine if the professors are well known in their disciplines. Find out where they earned their degrees and what your current professors think about them. Does the graduate faculty concentrate on research and publishing? Are they concerned about and accessible to students? Have they written textbooks or are they nationally recognized in their discipline?

### **Students**

Who attends this graduate school? From what undergraduate schools did they come and what do alums do when they finish the program? Look at the drop out rate. i.e. how many students who start also finish.

### **Atmosphere**

Consider size, location, class size, housing, facilities, cost of living and proximity to related career environment (eg: oceanography program located near a body of water)

### **Cost**

Ask about tuition and financial aid. Explore availability of grants, loans, scholarships, assistantships and off-campus jobs.

### **Reputation**

Talk to professors who teach related undergraduate courses. Ask where they went to school and what programs they recommend (and why). If possible, visit the campus; talk to graduate students currently enrolled.

A word of caution: reputations can often be built on the presence and/or achievements of one or two people. If those "heavyweights" are no longer there, the reputation may no longer be valid. Reputation is only one piece of your research information.

To assist in research students may also wish to attend a Graduate School Fair (like a College Fair) and pick up information, talk with an admissions representative and get a "flavor" of the school and the program.

The Graduate Management Admission Council also publishes a calendar of graduate/careers days.

## Application Expectations

Apply to a variety of schools. Try to select schools that cover a span of potential admissions including: (1) a first choice or ideal school where your chances of admission may be uncertain, (2) a safe school which may be less preferable but surer in terms of admission, (3) two or three in between. Avoid the mistake of applying only to one or two schools – you might find yourself on a limb if predictions about admission fail. Be aware that the expense of the applications and transcripts can be a limiting factor in the number of schools to which you apply, though some schools waive admissions fees in special cases.

**General Admissions Requirements:** those common to most institutions programs

- A baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution of higher education
- Some minimum grade point average in the last two years of undergraduate study. (Minimum generally ranges from 2.75 to 3.0)
- Some preparation in the proposed field of study
- Note: Specific schools/programs may have additional or different requirements.

### Additional Requirements

Admission Tests - see the section on graduate school testing.

Undergraduate Transcripts

Admissions committees require official transcripts of your grades in order to evaluate your academic preparation for graduate study. Grade point averages are important but are not examined in isolation; the rigor of the courses you have taken, your course load, and the reputation of the undergraduate institution you have attended are also scrutinized. To have your college transcript sent to graduate institutions, contact your college registrar. Stop in the Registrar's Office to complete a form requesting your transcripts. You may also write to the Registrar's Office and request transcripts.

Letters of Recommendation

Most graduate schools require two or three letters of recommendation.

Request letters early in the fall semester of your senior year from people who know you personally and are familiar with your academic preparation. These letters will be more helpful to the individuals reviewing your credentials if they include:

The reference's current professional status and relationship to you.

Comparative information as to where you rank with other students, employees, etc.

Those individuals from whom you might request letters include: a) Course advisors. b) Professors with whom you've done independent study or worked with on special projects. c) Professors from whom you've taken several courses—especially courses in your major. d) Employers. e) Most medical and dental schools will require a recommendation from the pre-med/dental committee of applicant's undergraduate institution. f) A letter of recommendation from a professor who has ties with the particular school could be helpful.

Interview (required by some schools)

Treat it like a job interview. (It may mean a job especially if the program is

looking to fill assistantship positions.)

- a) Dress appropriately.
- b) Know enough about the school (or program) to ask intelligent questions.
- c) Know enough about your own goals and desires to give intelligent answers.
- d) There are books and handouts on interviewing that detail typical interview questions

Be yourself.

It is possible that you will be interviewed with other applicants in a group situation.

Send a thank you letter to the person or persons that you spoke to within forty eight hours after the interview

### **Special Admission Requirements**

Some schools or programs may require a work sample such as an art work portfolio, music performance tape or a sample research paper.

## **Application Checklist**

Application Form & Fee – should be on file before other records arrive, in early Jan. or Feb., especially if you expect to apply for financial aid. NOTE: Some schools may request that you send all applications materials in one package (including letters of recommendation). 1. Be neat (type or print w/pen).

2. Be sure to include application fee if required.

3. Photocopy all your applications and retain your records.

Test Results – Be sure that your scores have been forwarded to the appropriate schools. State what tests you have taken and dates.

Recommendation Follow-up – Be sure to write letters of appreciation to those people who submitted letters of recommendation for you.

Transcript – Request from the Registrar well before application deadlines.

Financial Aid Application – Be aware of application deadlines!

Interview and Thank you Letter - You can arrange for an interview or it may be required part of the admissions process.

## Graduate School Testing

Students are urged to research schools carefully to ensure proper testing, deadline compliance and program admissions requirements before taking any of these tests.

**About the GRE** - Graduate Record Exam <http://www.gre.org> Phone Number: 609-771-7670, 1-800-GRE-CALL

Many graduate and professional schools and fellowship sponsors require or recommend that their applicants submit scores on either the GRE General Test, a Subject Test, or both. Admissions or fellowship panels use these tests to supplement undergraduate records and other indicators of students' potential qualifications to review applicants who come from a variety of colleges and universities with different standards.

The GRE General test is now available in both paper and through convenient Computer Based Testing (CBT). **GRE General Test** contains sections that measure verbal, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing abilities. Students are urged to read the section of this handout that answers [Most Frequently Asked Questions About Computer-Based Testing](#). Students are also urged to refer to the GRE and the GMAT Bulletins for more detailed information on computer-based testing. The cost for the General test is \$105 and it is given at most Sylvan Learning Centers. Complete registration information is found in the Information and Registration Bulletin available in Career Services

The **Subject Tests** are designed to measure knowledge and understanding of subject matter related to graduate study in specific fields. Subject Tests are available in the 16 subject areas listed and described on pages 10-11 of the registration booklet. Computer-delivered versions of many subject tests are available on a limited basis. Total testing time for each Subject Test is 2 hours and 50 minutes, and only one may be taken on any given test date.

Test centers are established by the Educational Testing Service and are listed in the Information Bulletin. Local test sites include Franklin and Marshall College, Lehigh University, Millersville University, Villanova University and several other sites in Philadelphia. A complete list of Test Centers scheduled to offer particular test dates is included in the Information Bulletin. (Note: they are listed by city, not institution.) The cost for each subject test is \$130.

General and Subject Test takers:

Complete registration information is available in the **GRE Information and Registration Bulletin**. Bulletins are available in Career Services (Bernardine Hall, Suite 1104)

Students are also urged to visit GRE Online at [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)

**About the GMAT** - Graduate Management Admission Test [www.mba.com](http://www.mba.com) Phone Number: 609-771-7330, 1-800-GMAT-NOW

The Graduate Management Admission Test is designed to help graduate schools of business assess the qualifications of applicants for advanced study in business and management.

The Computer-Adaptive Test (CAT) is the only way to take the GMAT. The cost will vary depending on where in the world you test. To register for a test date by phone (with a credit card) call 1-800-GMAT-NOW. For other forms of payment, see the Payment Voucher Form on the web site. GMAT Practice Tests are also available by calling 1-800-GMAT-NOW. A full GMAT Information Bulletin is also available as a Adobe Acrobat file.

The GMAT CAT measures general verbal, mathematical and analytical writing skills that are developed over a long period of time and are associated with success in the first year of study at graduate schools of management. You will have 75 minutes for 37 quantitative questions, 75 minutes for 41 verbal questions, and 30 minutes for each of the two analytical writing topics. The total testing time is approximately four hours.

The GMAT does not presuppose any specific knowledge of business or of other specific content areas and it does not measure achievement in any particular subject area.

Check the web site listed above for information, updated fees, announcements, and sample questions.

**About the LSAT** - Law School Admission Test <http://www.LSAC.org> Phone Number: 215-968-1001

The LSAT is designed to measure skills that are considered essential for success in law school: the reading and comprehension of complex texts with accuracy and insight, the organization and management of information and the ability to draw reasonable inferences from it, the ability to reason critically and the analysis and evaluation of the reasoning and argument of others.

The LSAT provides a standard measure of acquired reading and verbal reasoning skills that law schools can use as one of several factors in assessing applicants.

The Law School Admission Test is a half-day standardized test. It consists of five 35-minute sections of multiple-choice questions and one 30-minute writing sample. The test includes reading comprehension, analytical reasoning and 2 logical reasoning sections.

Complete registration information and sample test questions are available in the LSAT/LSDAS Registration and Information Book. This publication also contains valuable information about the law school application process, the Law School Data Assembly Service, financial aid and test preparation. This free book is available in Career Services or from Daria LaTorre, Pre-Law Advisor, in the Criminal Justice Department. Information and registration is also available at the website indicated above.

### **About the MCAT - Medical College Admission Test**

The Preprofessional program for health-related professions is designed to assist students at Alvernia College who wish to enter a professional school upon graduation.

All information concerning medical school, dentistry, optometry, physician assistant and other health careers is received through the chairperson of the Preprofessional Advisory Committee for Health Careers. Please contact Elaine Schalck in Bernardine Hall.

### **About the Miller Analogies Test**

The Miller Analogies Test is a 50 minute, 100 item exam of word analogies (eg. foot is to shoe as hand is to \_\_\_\_\_). Four possible options are given for the missing term. Your task is to select the option that best completes the analogy. Qualifying scores differ from program to program so rating scores is difficult. Graduate institutions use scores as predictors of success in a particular discipline. Applicants may have a choice between the GRE and the Miller Analogies and, therefore, students should check institutional requirements before selecting this graduate school exam choice.

The Miller Analogies is not given on a national schedule, but is scheduled by individual appointments at sponsoring institutions. Locally, the test is given at Albright College, Millersville University and Franklin & Marshall.

Call the Career Services Office at Albright College at 610-921-7630 for test schedule information. The cost at Albright college is \$55.00

Call the Millersville University Test Center at [muweb.millersville.edu/~testctr/](http://muweb.millersville.edu/~testctr/) choose MAT for schedule and registering. The cost is \$45.00.

Call Counseling Center at Franklin & Marshall at 717-291-4083 to be scheduled for January or September dates. The cost is \$55.00

## **Registration Materials**

Registration forms for the **GRE**, **GMAT** and **LSAT** are available in Career Services (Bernardine Hall, Suite 1104). **LSAT** registration forms are also available from Daria LaTorre in the Criminal Justice Department in Francis Hall. **MCAT** registrations are available from Elaine Schalck in Bernardine Hall. **GMAT** registrations are only available at [www.mba.com](http://www.mba.com).

Students are urged to READ ALL PORTIONS of the registration materials carefully. In addition to listing test dates and test centers, the Bulletins include information about special arrangements, test center procedures and regulations, score reporting and interpreting, and test taking strategies.

Students are also urged to CHECK THE WEB SITE for additional information, resources and test taking information.

## When to Test

Assuming you want to begin graduate/professional school the September immediately following graduation, the **GRE**, **GMAT** and **Millers Analogies** can typically be taken during the senior year. The more competitive the program to which you have applied, the earlier you should take the appropriate test. Spring of the junior year is not too early to test for particularly competitive programs.

**LSAT** and **MCAT** are typically taken during the second half of the junior year to allow sufficient time for the highly rigorous admissions process.

## Fee Waivers

Fee waivers are available for the LSAT and the GRE. You can request a fee waiver packet for the LSAT by calling 215-968-1001 or visiting the website at [www.LSAC.org](http://www.LSAC.org) or by writing to:

Law School Admissions Council Attn: Fee Waiver Packet Box 2000 661 Penn Street Newtown, PA 18940-0998

Contact the Office of Student Financial Planning to see if you qualify for a GRE fee waiver and to pick up a form.

## Test Review Programs

Students who wish to familiarize themselves with testing content, procedures and strategies may choose to enroll in a review or test preparation program. These programs vary widely in cost, length, format and sponsorship and are not essential for good performance on any standardized test. Students should examine their individual needs, performance history and attitudes toward testing before enrolling in a review program.

Contact information for a collection of available review programs is summarized below. Additional information is available in Career Services or from the vendors listed. Another alternative is to borrow or purchase review books or "how to prepare" manuals available at the local bookstores or public libraries.

### **School locations:**

*\*\*All three of these locations offer preparation workshops for LSAT, GRE and GMAT*

Career Advisement Services **Franklin and Marshall College** P.O. Box 3003 701  
College Avenue Lancaster, PA 17604 717-399-4427

Institute for Continuing Studies **Temple University** 1515 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102 215-204-6946

**Temple University - Fort Washington** Non-credit Programs 401 Commerce  
Drive, Suite 1000 Ft. Washington, PA 19034 215-283-1304

**Web sites:**

[www.powerscore.com](http://www.powerscore.com) [www.prepmaster.com](http://www.prepmaster.com) [www.getprepped.com](http://www.getprepped.com) [www.kaplan.com](http://www.kaplan.com)  
[www.review.com](http://www.review.com)

These test prep sites offer tips on what to do when you are scared or want to be extra-prepared.

See the web sites for each individual test or the Registration bulletin for practice questions and test taking strategies.

## Preparation/Strategy for Test Taking

Get a good night's sleep before the examination.

Determine whether you should eat before coming to the examination. (Test sessions can be long and grueling.)

Dress in a manner that enables you to adapt to any room temperature.

Read all test directions carefully. Sample questions in the Information Bulletins are helpful in developing familiarity.

Read each question carefully and thoroughly.

Make every effort to pace yourself.

In each section, answer the questions you are sure of first; then, if time permits, go back and work on difficult questions. (Returning to previous questions is not possible on the computer-based test.)

Check frequently to be sure that the number on the answer sheet matches the corresponding number for the question being answered.

Do not become upset if you cannot answer a question. No one is expected to get a perfect score. A person can do very well without answering every question or finishing every section.

Guessing-- because scoring differs among tests, the advisability of guessing will also vary. For the GRE- General Test, and the LSAT, there is no penalty for incorrect answers; however the GRE- Subject Tests and the GMAT scores are based on the number of correct answers minus a fraction of the number you answered incorrectly. There is never a penalty for leaving a question blank. Recommended strategies are summarized below.

**GRE-General Test:** No penalty, guess if necessary

**GRE-Subject Test:** Penalty for incorrect answers; guess only if you can eliminate one of the answer choices

**GMAT:** Penalty for incorrect answers; guess only if you can eliminate one of the answer choices

**LSAT:** No penalty, guess if necessary

## Most Frequently Asked Questions About Computer-Based Testing

Computer-based testing (CBT) is available for the GRE and is the only method for the GMAT. CBT is available at the Sylvan Learning Centers for both the GRE and the GMAT. The following is a list of frequently asked questions about CBT.

*Q. What is computer-based testing?* A. The CBT covers the same content and uses the same types of questions as the paper-based test. The difference is the mode of delivery; it is administered by computer.

*Q. What are the major advantages to computer-based testing?* A. Year-round availability, hundreds of test sites nationwide, faster score reporting, immediate knowledge of scores and easier procedure for scheduling an appointment to test.

*Q. What is meant by computer-adaptive testing?* A. Computer-adaptive tests (CAT) provide questions tailored to your ability level. At the start of the test, you are presented with test questions of average difficulty. The selection of each question thereafter is determined by your responses to all previous questions. In other words, the CAT adjusts to your ability level--you'll get few questions that are either too easy or too difficult for you. This means that different test takers will be given different questions.

*Q. What computer skills must I have?* A. Minimal computer skills are needed to complete the CBT. Before beginning the test, a tutorial will be provided so you can practice. You may access the help function at any time during the testing.

*Q. Are computer-based scores comparable to scores earned on the paper-based test?* A. Research studies have indicated that CBT scores are comparable with paper-based test scores.

*Q. In what ways is the CBT different from the paper-based test?* A. The CBT requires you to enter an answer for each question, and you may not return to or change your response to any previously answered questions. If you guess a correct answer or answer a question incorrectly by mistake, your answer to subsequent questions will lead you back to questions that are at the appropriate level of difficulty for you.

*Q. How long will I be at the testing center?* A. Approximately 4-4 1/2 hours.

*Q. How soon will I know my scores?* A. You will know your scores immediately after you complete the test.

Please refer to the **GRE** and the **GMAT** Bulletins or web sites for more detailed information on computer-based testing.

## Financial Aid for Graduate School

Financial aid resources may be available to you for graduate school even if you received no assistance for undergraduate study. The institutions to which you may be applying are the first source of information about what monies may be available and what forms need to be filed to establish eligibility.

**What Form to File and When:** Most schools will require the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For other required forms and deadlines, students should contact the graduate school directly. Graduate students are automatically considered independent and provide no parental information on the FAFSA; however, the graduate school may ask for parental financial information on other required forms.

### **School-based Aid:**

*Assistantships*--work much like college work study programs in undergraduate school. Students are typically assigned assistantships in areas of the college related to their major. The assistantship may involve working for a faculty member, classroom preparation, clerical/research duties or other repetitive tasks. Teaching assistantships or other positions working with undergraduates may also be available. Students receive tuition remission and a stipend in exchange for their work. Students apply directly to the institution for assistantship positions.

Institutions may also have *departmental grants, internships, loan forgiveness programs and employment* available. The best place to ask is at the institution's financial aid office and the library at the school.

**Other Sources of Aid:** Applicants should also do additional research into funding sources not hosted by the institution. Private foundations, associations and other organizations may have money available to students in a particular discipline. Ask the school's graduate financial aid office if they have books, databases or web sites that you could explore for private funding.

**Private Loans:** There are many private loans available to students, but you need to compare loan programs before applying. Compare APR, repayment terms, capitalization and deferment options to determine what program is best for your situation. Ask the school's financial aid office to recommend a few of the best loans and go shopping.

In addition to miscellaneous announcements regarding financial aid resources, the following materials are also available in [Career Services](#) (BH, Suite 1104):

**The Financial Aid Book** - an insider's guide to private scholarships, grants, fellowships, internships, competitions and loans

**Private Funding for Graduate School** - a collection of announcements received by Financial Aid and Career Services: private organizations offering stipends, grants, fellowships, scholarships or pay for work. Ask Career Services for the location of this information.

**Deferment of Existing Loans:** If you have previously borrowed under either the Federal Perkins, Federal Subsidized or Unsubsidized Stafford Loans you are eligible for a deferment while you are enrolled in school. Contact your lender or service for details and deferment forms.

**Financial Aid on the Information Superhighway:** Don't forget to look for what may be available to you on the World Wide Web. Search these sites for financial aid information and scholarship searches:

Financial Aid Information Page: [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org).  
fastWEB: <http://www.studentservices.com/index.ptml>.  
PA residents may also find the website [www.PHEAA.org](http://www.PHEAA.org) helpful.