



OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES
HARVEY MUDD COLLEGE *Your Future Opportunities*

Graduate School

Reaching Your Goal

Is Graduate Study for You?



- What do you want to accomplish in your lifetime?
- What are your short/long term professional goals?
- Is graduate necessary to meet these goals?
- Do you have the interest and ability to be successful?
- Are you simply delaying career decision-making?
- Are you willing to invest the time and money to take on another academic program?

When To Go

Consider the following questions to determine the right time...

- Do you have a clear sense of what you want to pursue?
- Is an advanced degree needed to enter into your field of interest?
- Do you want to study a certain discipline just for the love of it? Do you want to just give it a try?

You may want to reconsider if...

- You are not sure what career you want to pursue. College might be a reason for high school students to find themselves, but this is not true for graduate school
- You are getting pressure from faculty, family and friends
- You are going to grad school simply to avoid the job search

Where to Apply

- National, regional or just local reputation
- Prestige of department
- Academic and professional objectives
- Method of teaching/curriculum - structured or flexible
- Finances being offered
- Geographical location
- Size of study body & composition
- Faculty/student ratio
- Specific research projects
- Attrition rate
- Supporting library in field



The Application Process

Check it Twice

- An application form
- Transcripts
- Letters of recommendation
- Personal essay
- Required test scores
- Separate financial aid application



Timeline to be used as a General Guide



September

- Attend grad school application presentation
- Research areas of interest, schools programs
- Talk to advisers about requirements
- Register & prepare for admission tests
- Investigate scholarships
- Write for materials or request online documents

October

- Take required tests
- Check deadlines and rolling admissions
- Obtain letters of recommendation
- Write personal statement
- Send in completed application

December/January

- Complete FAFSA and Financial Aid Profile, if required
- Check deadlines to make file complete

March/April

- Visit institutions where you've been accepted
- Send deposit to school of choice
- Notify other schools
- Send thank you notes to writers of recommendation letters informing them of your success.

Obtaining Letters of Reference



1. Request in person whenever possible
2. Be gracious and don't expect a letter as your right but don't negate your right to ask
3. Allow at least two months between request and date due
4. Provide a stamped, addressed envelope and any required forms if letters are being sent directly to school
5. Ask if reference can write a substantive letter in support of your application. Never press someone if they appear hesitant to your request
6. Always thank your references in writing.

Guide to Writing a Personal Statement

Suggested Content

- Personal background
- Development of your interests
- Related experiences
- Future goals
- Obstacles and inconsistencies
- Program appeal
- Special expertise

Style

- Readable with clear, simple, and precise writing style. Make personal by using “I”

Tips

- Be professional, organized, concise, honest, specific.

Review and revise!!!



Best Sources to Learn about Programs



- Professors
- Writing faculty at schools of interest
- Other Students & Alumni
- Peterson's Guides
- Specialty Guides
- Academic Journals in Field of Interest
- Research-Doctorate Programs in U.S.
- Educational Rankings Annual
- Internet

Questions to Ask Any Graduate Program



- What are the academic requirements?
- What is the average time to obtain a PhD?
- Is the support offered as a TA/RA?
- How much is the stipend? Is it on a year-by-year basis?
- What are the provisions for housing, health insurance, etc.?
- Do research groups interact?
- Is there time for a social life?
- Is there a graduate student organization?
- Do most students like working with “this” research adviser?
- Is the adviser sensitive to various issues – women, etc.
- Do student present at national conferences? Who pays?
- Does the adviser take an active role in placing his/her students?
- Do students go into academia or industry?

Admission Tests – GRE, LSAT, MCAT, GMAT, DAT, PCAT



GRE is the most common test required.
It has three sections

1. Writing (Scale of 1 to 6)
 - Issue (Choice of 2, you pick one & support your stance) - 45 min.
 - Argument (No choice, you need to analyze and critique the argument) - 30 min.The two essay scores are averaged together
2. Verbal (Reading) 30 Questions - 30 min.
3. Quantitative (Math) 28 Questions - 45 min.

V/Q scale = 200 to 800

V/Q starts out at medium level than goes up or down in difficulty depending on your responses.

Financial Aid

Three types of aid

- Grants
- Scholarships
- Fellowships

Most are outright awards that do not require service and provide cost of tuition/fees plus a stipend to cover living expenses

Need and Merit

FAFSA applications must be submitted after January 1 preceding enrollment in the fall. Two to four weeks later you'll receive a report (Student Aid Report) for corrections as well as the schools you've designated





What Admissions Evaluate

Motivation, commitment to field of study

Expectations of program and career opportunities

Writing ability

Major areas of interest

Research/work experience

Educational background

Short/long term goals

Reason for pursuing graduate program/institution

Maturity

Personal uniqueness – what you would add to the diversity of entering class

Will You Be Ready

