



Reasons
To Attend
Graduate School

Most careers do not require a master's degree. Discover the reasons why you may want to consider furthering your education beyond your bachelor's

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Reasons To Attend Graduate School

Graduate education refers to formal study after receiving a bachelor's degree and generally specializes in an academic discipline or profession. There is minimal elective coursework and students may be expected to conduct and defend independent research, complete internships or fieldwork, and/or sit for comprehensive exams. In addition, faculty members expect more of graduate students and attendance and class participation are generally required.

It is imperative to research your desired career path before applying to graduate school. If you feel that graduate school is the right decision for you, further research should be focused on selecting the discipline or program that best meets your professional and personal goals. See the selecting a **school / program section** for more information.

01

Before investing the time into applying for graduate school, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is an advanced degree required to enter the particular profession I am interested in?
- Is an advanced degree required to advance within my field of interest?
- Do I love the field enough to obtain an advanced degree?
- Do I have the financial resources to cover the cost of graduate school?
- Am I burned out academically, and do I need to take time off?
- Do I want to go to school full-time or part-time?
- Do I have the personal qualities and skills that are needed to be successful in graduate school?
- · What are the different programs that are available in my area of interest?

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Best reasons to attend graduate school:

- Your career goal requires an advanced degree, such as a professor, lawyer or doctor.
- · You want to specialize in a subject you feel is of great importance to you.
- You want to advance in your career or change career directions.
- You want or need to gain a certain level of certification or licensure.

03

Worst reasons to attend graduate school:

- · You don't want to get a job.
- You want to postpone paying student loans.
- You don't know what you want to do.
- You don't think you can get a job with a bachelor's degree.
- You really like college and think graduate school is going to be just as fun.



If your reasons for going to graduate school indicate that you need to do more research, consider visiting your career consultant for career counseling. Schedule an appointment at (303)-556-3664

Graduate School Jargon

jar·gon [jahr-guhn, -gon]

noun

The language, especially the vocabulary, peculiar to a particular trade, profession, or group.

Before you start to research, be sure you are familiar with the terms and concepts commonly associated with graduate school.

Major professor or advisor

The faculty member who most closely guides your work

Professional graduate degree

Can be earned at the master's, specialist and doctoral levels; designed to prepare individuals for specific professions like law, medicine, college student personnel, education, and many others

Research graduate degree

Can be earned at the master's, specialist and doctoral levels; designed to contribute original research to a particular discipline such as the humanities, the social sciences, engineering, communication, and may others

GA

Graduate assistant

TA

Teaching assistant

RA

Research assistant or residence assistant

Failing grade

In grad school, C's may be considered a failing grade; most graduate programs require students to earn A's and B's

Residency requirement

Required on-campus full-time residence at the university; varies by institution

Reading list

Materials to be read in preparation for comps

GSA

Graduate Student Association

Thesis

Research paper completed after coursework for master's degree; the length varies to as many as 75 pages

Dissertation

Extensive research paper completed after coursework for a doctorate; usually more indepth than a thesis and may exceed 100 pages in length

Non-thesis option

Option to take 12 or more additional hours as a substitute for a thesis

Comps

Stands for comprehensive exam. Written and/or oral exams administered at the end of coursework for graduate programs. Oral exams are administered by a committee of faculty members

Thesis or dissertation committee

Faculty members who direct and evaluate the development of your thesis or dissertation

Cohort

A group of people sharing a common demographic; many graduate programs maybe cohort based. Each year, the new group of students start and end at the same time and primarily adhere to a strict curriculum of courses which they take together

Full load

Nine hours (9 hours is a heavy load in graduate school)

Major professor or advisor

The faculty member who most closely guides your work

Timeline for Applying



Prospective students need to begin preparing at least a year before they expect to enter a graduate program. The time table below is intended to give you an idea of the steps you should take to apply to graduate school. Keep in mind that this timeline is *approximate* and you will need to adapt it to your personal situation.

Most graduate schools start in the fall with application deadlines usually occurring between the December and February before; however, as you build your timetable, pay very close attention to deadlines and complete applications well before the due date in case you encounter any unexpected roadblocks.

$\bigcirc 1$	Research
	Decide on the type of graduate program that is consistent with your career goals
	Create a list of your top 5 or 10 values and criteria and then identify 10 to 15 prospective graduate schools that match your needs
	Contact each prospective school and request course catalogs, applications, financial aid, and other relevant information; you may have to contact both the specific department and the graduate school to get all materials
	Inquire about pre-requisite courses and minimum admissions requirements
\bigcirc	Prepare
02	Determine which standardized tests are required; take a practice test and enroll in a test preparation program if necessary
	Sign up for entrance exams if required
	If the program you are applying to uses a clearinghouse (law or medicine), begin gathering the information required by that clearinghouse
	Begin looking into financial aid options such as loans, scholarships, fellowships and graduate assistantships
	☐ Identify references to write letters of recommendation
	Start saving funds for application fees, campus visits, etc.
	Update resume; Optimal Resume can be helpful in assembling a first draft
	Begin writing a rough draft of your personal statement or essay; see the Writing the Personal Statement portion of the website for more information

() '	Apply
	Take entrance exams
	Initiate an informational interview with the department chair- person or a faculty member at each of your prospective schools to establish rapport and narrow down your list
	Generate a final list of schools; apply the "rule of 6"-choose two "reach schools," two "middle-of-the-pack schools," and two "safe bet schools"
	Finalize versions of your personal statement and resume; have it proofed by 3 different people including a career counselor
	Order transcripts from all of your post-secondary institutions
	Give recommenders information about your reasons for attending graduate school, deadlines, etc.
	Complete application forms; make copies of each before sending
	Mail all applications well before the deadline
	Apply for grants, fellowships and assistantships
	Fill out the FAFSA as close to January 1st as possible to qualify for federal aid
	Write thank you letters to anyone who helped you along the way
$\bigcap A$	Interviews
04	Prepare for possible interviews; conduct a mock interview and practice using the graduate school interview questions in Optimal Resume
	Contact schools about scheduling visits
	The Decision
	Assess your financial aid package; if it doesn't meet your needs, apply for alternative options; see the Financing your Education section for more information
	Make a decision and pay your deposit
	Call other programs to decline their offer or withdraw your application
	Write thank you letters
	If you did not get in, consult the What to do if You Don't Get In portion of the website
06	Closing the Deal
	If you applied while still enrolled in an undergraduate program, submit a final transcript as soon as your degree is conferred
	Get the required immunizations if necessary
	Finalize your financial aid
	Continue to check all forms of communication, including your new university address, for updates and program requirements

How to be a Competitive Candidate

Although graduate schools often have minimum requirements for both the centralized graduate school and the program to which you are applying, a more accurate predictor of acceptance is how you compare with the average qualifications of the current students in the program.

Keep these factors in mind when considering graduate school:

Grade-point average (GPA): 3.0 is often the minimum, but average GPAs of graduate students are often much higher. Some programs weigh grades in specific courses more heavily; for example, in medical school, science prerequisites count heavily.

Test scores: Test type and score requirements vary by institutions and program. Typically there are minimum scores you must obtain to be considered, but again, average scores of the students in the program are often much higher. Some programs place more emphasis on particular sections of the test (quantitative versus verbal). Other programs use standardized tests to weed out uncommitted applicants.

Relevant experience: Experience gained through internships, fieldwork, a practicum, volunteering, shadowing, independent studies, research, and so forth is often a deciding factor for admission.

Who you know: References and effective networking with faculty and staff members can sometimes move your application to the top of the stack. Look for any opportunity to make contacts at your institution, institutions of interest and in your field of interest.

Explore: Consult professional publications and associations for information on current trends and desirable skills in your chosen profession. To discover professional associations use a resource like <u>Weddles</u>. Gain experience in your field of interest; for example, work with a law firm or a policy maker if you are considering a law degree. Set up informational interviews with professionals in the field.



TIPS for **SUCCESS**

Prepare

Develop good writing skills and research techniques.

Keep your eyes open for opportunities to get involved with faculty members' research.

Get good grades, especially in your last few years of college or in coursework that is highly related to your field of study.

Take a test-prep course or buy a book to study for entrance exams, but remember that these courses can be very expensive! See if your local community has an adult education center that may offer cheaper rates.

Study resource guides for writing top-notch personal statements and essays; get your statement critiqued by a career consultant and a professional in your field of interest.

Develop and maintain a portfolio, including letters of references, writing samples, and relevant projects.

Selecting a School / Program

Explore multiple programs to find the best fits and increase your chances of being admitted; however, only apply to schools that meet your needs and satisfy your goals. In general, you should apply to about six programs: two "reach" programs, two "middle of the pack" programs and two "safe" programs.

Accreditation: There are two main types of accreditation, institutional and program specific. Determine the properly accredited degree programs in your field. While accreditation is not necessarily the key indicator of quality, you could face negative consequences if the program that confers your degree is not accredited. *Note: A school that is not properly accredited may not volunteer this information, so ask their admissions representatives directly.*

Admission standards: Some schools publish this kind of information, so look for the number of applicants compared with the number of acceptances and the base requirements for admission (undergraduate GPA, standardized tests, etc). If this information is not published, ask an admissions officer or faculty member for these statistics.

Multicultural / diversity opportunities: Diversity could be an indicator of a quality program because it often signals a broader worldview. Examine the composition of both the faculty and the students in the program. Also consider multiple types of diversity, rather than solely focusing on one. You need to determine a mix where you'll feel both comfortable and appropriately challenged.

Reputation/ranking: Rankings can be an indicator of quality, but they should never be the sole reason you select a program. Examples of organizations that rank graduate programs include U.S. News and World Report, Fortune and Business Week.

Size: There are two aspects of size you should evaluate—size of the program and size of its home university. Examine the resources available to the program, as well as the faculty-student ratios.

Faculty: Are the program's faculty members published? If so, in what journals? What are they currently researching? Does this research match your interests? Are they well networked within their larger professional community? Conduct a web search and see what you can find about their publications and research interests.

Current students: Request contact information or arrange a talk with a current student to learn the pros and cons of the program from an insider's view.



www.gradschools.com

Find details about graduate departments and programs that you may be considering.

www.petersons.com

Helps students find the right graduate school for them, details test preparation and how to pay for graduate school.

www.graduateguide.com

Learn detailed information about grad schools, financial aid, and loans.

www.gradview.com

Details financial aid information, scholarships, test preparation, careers and graduate programs.

www.princetonreview.com

Information about different graduate programs and careers, entrance exams, scholarships, and financial aid.

www.lsac.org

Provides in-depth information about the law school application process.

www.mba.com

Provides in-depth information about MBA programs.

www.aamc.org

Gives a wide variety of information about the medical field such as professional development groups, MCAT, medical schools, jobs, surveys

www.gradschooltips.com

Provides advice about how to get into graduate school, reasons to consider graduate school, applications, essays, and interviewing

Student life: Consider your life both in and out of the classroom. What is the student population? How large is the graduate program? What is the average age of the students enrolled? Do students attend classes full or part-time? Are there any student organizations? What support services are on campus? What is the social atmosphere?

Location: Where is the school located? What is the climate? Is there a community outside of your graduate program that you can plug into? Can you be happy in this environment for the duration of your program? If you know you want to live in a certain location after graduation, examine the schools in that region. Oftentimes, schools have long-standing relationships with their local community, which can come in handy when you start looking for a job.

Finances: What is the tuition for the program? What kind of financial assistance is available? Do they have a variety of assistantships, fellowships, grants, and/or loans? Make sure you examine all associated costs: tuitions, books, supplies, housing and other miscellaneous fees and expenses.

"Fit" with your career interests: If you have a specialized career interest-environmental law, for example-you need to know whether the graduate program offers specialized courses and experiential opportunities in that area and whether its faculty members have research interests that will allow you to develop the knowledge, skills and contacts to start your professional career.

The future: Does the program assist with the job search after you receive your degree? Where do the graduates end up working? What opportunities for internships, research, and jobs are available while you are in the program? Note: graduate degrees DO NOT guarantee you a job.

Graduation requirements: Does the program require an exit project, such as a thesis, dissertation, or comprehensive exam? See the **graduate school jargon** for more information about exit requirements.



Gather information from your professors, other students, alumni who have gone on to graduate school, individual program websites, general graduate school websites, Peterson's guides, specialty guides and academic journals in your field of interest.

Application Materials

The graduate school application usually consists of some or all of the following:

- Application Form
- Admission Essay
- Entrance Exams
- Application Fee
- Official Transcripts
- Interview

- Resume
- Campus Visit
- Letters of Recommendation

1 Application Form

Get the appropriate application form as soon as you know you are interested in a program. The form is often available online or you can request a paper copy from the school. The form is composed of standardized questions that the program will use to track your application and ensure that you meet minimum qualifications. Your answers to the questions should be clear, consistent, accurate and typed.

Be sure to use your full legal name on all pages. If you have changed your name since you completed your undergraduate degree, list your former name as well. It is likely that your undergraduate transcripts will list your former name and you don't want your materials to get lost due to confusion.

Application Fee

You should plan to have approximately \$300 to \$500 available, as application fees can be as much as \$100 per school. These fees are typically not refundable, so do your research and be fairly certain of your interest in a school before applying. Some schools will issue fee waivers; however, this is not a common practice. To find out more information about application fees and fee waivers, speak individually with your schools to inquire about their policies.

Resume

A resume/CV for a graduate school application is similar to a resume used in a job search; however, it should be structured to highlight the skills and qualifications that would be valued in your particular graduate program, such as research experience or jobs / activities related to your field of study.

Official Transcripts

An "official" transcript bears the university's seal and the signature of its registrar. You must order these and usually pay a small fee for each one. You can order MSU Denver official transcripts by contacting the registrar's office at http://www.msudenver.edu/registrar/student/transcripts/. Just about every graduate program requires an official transcript from every post-secondary institution you have attended, even if you took only one course at an institution. Contact the registrar's office at each school you attended to obtain for official transcripts from those schools.

Letters of Recommendation

A well-written recommendation can often be a deciding factor, especially if you have any weak spots in your qualifications. You will typically be asked for two or three recommendations, but the number required varies from school to school. Recommendations may be submitted online or in paper form. When you are deciding, consider individuals who know you well and can vouch for your academic, professional and/or research abilities.



Suggestions for references:

Professors in your field who know you well and can vouch for your academic and/or research abilities. Build these relationships early so that they can report on more than just grades.

Supervisor in your field, preferably someone with an advanced/relevant degree, who has worked with you through a related internship or job.

Advisor from a student organization or professional group who knows your work style



NOTE: Using family members, members of the clergy, and politicians (unless you are studying law or government) as recommenders is strongly discouraged. Not only are their comments less relevant to your academic qualifications, they can actually be detrimental to your case. Avoid using personal references or recommenders that may have controversial career paths.



Remember that you are asking the recommender for their time and effort, so treat them with care and consideration.

Identify potential recommenders early: Visit professors during office hours, get involved in research or community service projects and have conversations with supervisors about your career goals.

Your recommenders are busy: Start asking for recommendations well before your deadline. A year in advance is appropriate. If you are still finishing your undergraduate degree, go ahead and get letters while your recommenders are still accessible to you and you are fresh on their minds. It's easier for references to update an old letter, rather than write a new one, years after they had you in class.

Schedule an appointment with each potential recommender to talk about how your chosen program aligns with your career goals and why you think you are a good candidate. This may spark their memory about positive things they can write about you. Share with them why you chose them as a reference so your letter can be as focused as possible.

Give them the list of schools you are applying to, instructions for sending the letter, the recommendation form (if the desired program requires it), the deadline for receipt of the letters, your contact information, and any pertinent information that will help them write an appropriate letter. Include your personal statement and resume to jog their memories.

If you notice that a reference seems hesitant, move on to an alternate. You do not want to run the risk of submitting a poor recommendation.



Most programs will not review an application until it is complete, and probably will not review it at all if anything is late—so start early! Always have a copy of all your application materials so you will always be ready to fax/mail missing information in the event items get lost. Call to confirm the receipt of all your materials, and record the date and the name of the person you speak with. Make sure you are polite and courteous even if a mistake is made on the institution's part—Remember your fate is in their hands.

Most schools require your scores on at least one standardized test for admission. Meeting minimum test score requirements does not guarantee admission. For insight into hidden requirements, find the "average" test scores of people admitted to the program you are interested in.

Types of standardized tests

GRE

Graduate Record Exam

www.gre.org

MAT

Miller Analogies Test

www.pearsonassess. com/haiweb/cultures/ en-US/site/Community/ PostSecondary/Products/MAT/mathome.htm

DAT

Dental Admission Test

www.ada.org/prof/ed/ testing.dat

GMAT

Graduate Management Admission Test

www.gmac.com

LSAT

Law School Admission Test

www.lsat.org

MCAT

Medical Admission Test

www.aamc.org/students/mcat

OAT

Optometry Admission Test

www.opted.org/14a/ pages/index.cfm?pageid=3444

TOEFL

Test of English as a Foreign Language

www.toeflorg.org



It is not advisable to take these tests "cold" for practice or to see how you will do. Some programs, especially law schools, average all your test scores together for evaluation.

Prepare for and take the test early! For some tests, your scores are good for five years, so it's okay to take the test early when you have a significant amount of time to devote to studying. In addition, this allows you to retake the test if you are not satisfied with your scores.

Take a test-preparation course or buy a prep book. Kaplan, Princeton Review and Peterson's are very well known for their test preparation classes and books; however, be considerate of your budget—these courses can be very expensive! For a low cost option, see if your local community has an adult education center with preparation courses. Take a diagnostic test before the real thing to assess how much progress you need to make.

Register early! Testing centers often fill up in the time period immediately preceding graduate admissions deadlines. There are no registration deadlines for some computer-based tests (GRE General and Written Assessment, GMAT), but registration is first come, first serve. Certain tests such as the MCAT and LSAT are only offered a few times a year. Check with each testing organization to verify their policies. Special accommodation for students with disabilities can be arranged with prior notice.

The Interview and Campus Visit

Some programs, especially medical schools, will want to meet with you in person to discuss your goals and your fit with their program.

Don't panic before your interview; just schedule a mock interview with the MSU Denver Office of Career Services. Do this early so that you have time to process your consultant's suggestions and possibly do a follow-up mock interview. For more information, visit http://gradschool.about.com/cs/interviews/a/admint.htm You can also practice graduate school interviews at home with Optimal Resume.

Even if your program doesn't have formal interviews, plan to visit your top choices if you can. Talk with admissions, faculty, and other students to gain a better understanding of how the program fits your criteria. Sit in on a class and visit the community to gain a feel for the surrounding areas.

Contact the program in advance to determine if they offer a formal visitation or if they can help you plan your informal visit. Remember that while you might only be there to gather information about their program, they will also have the chance to evaluate you, so be professional and prepared at all times.

Writing The Personal Statement

The personal statement generally falls into one of two categories

1

General, comprehensive personal statement:

Allows maximum freedom in terms of what you write. Often used in medical or law school application forms.



Response to very specific questions:

Statement responds to the specific question being asked. Some business school applications favor multiple essays, typically asking for responses to three or more questions.

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 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?
- 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, managerial skills, etc), 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)?
- What personal characteristics (leadership, integrity, compassion, persistence) do you possess that would improve your chance for success in the field? Is there a way to demonstrate you have these characteristics?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate who is more successful in the field than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?



Rules to Consider When Writing a Personal Statement

Strive for depth rather than breadth.

Narrow focus to one or two key themes, ideas or experiences

Try to tell the reader something that no other applicant will be able to say

Provide the reader with insight into what drives you

Be yourself, not the 'ideal' applicant

Get creative and imaginative in the opening remarks, but make sure it's relevant

Address the school's unique features that interest you

Focus on the positive in the personal statement; consider an addendum to explain deficiencies or blemishes

Evaluate experiences, rather than simply describing them

Proofread carefully for grammar, syntax, punctuation, word usage, and style

Use readable fonts, typeface, and conventional spacing and margins

Keys for Success

Answer the questions that are asked

If you are applying to several schools, you may find questions in each application that are somewhat similar, but don't be tempted to use the same statement for all applications. Answer each question, and if slightly different answers are needed, write separate statements.

Tell a story

Demonstrate through concrete experience. One of the worst things you can do is bore the admissions committee. If your statement is fresh, lively, and different, you'll be putting yourself ahead of the pack making yourself memorable. Even though you have to answer the assigned questions, your statement should flow and should not read like a bulleted list.

Be specific

Don't state that you would make an excellent doctor unless you can back it up with specific reasons. Your desire to become a lawyer, engineer, ect., should be logical, the result of specific experience that is described in your statement.

Find an angle

If you're like most people, your life story lacks drama, so figuring out a way to make it interesting becomes the big challenge. Finding a unique angle or "hook" is vital. You are more unique than you think you are. Lack of drama does not make you any less interesting.

Concentrate on your opening paragraph

The lead or opening paragraph is generally the most important. It is here that you grab the reader's attention or lose it. It becomes the framework for the rest of the statement.

Tell what you know

Too many people graduate with little or no knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the profession or field they hope to enter. Be specific and relate what you know about the field in the language professionals use. Refer to experiences (work, research, etc.), classes, conversations with people in the field, books you've read, seminars you've attended, or any other source of specific information about the career you want and why you're suited to it. When you are selecting experiences, be sure to consider the appropriateness of this content.

Consider the appropriateness of content

There are certain things best left out of personal statements. For example, references to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier are generally not a good idea. Don't mention potentially controversial subjects (for example, controversial religious or political views) unless they are highly relevant.

Do some research

If a school wants to know why you're applying to it rather than another school, do some research to find out what sets your choice apart from other universities or programs. Consider factors such as the schools' research focus, faculty, reputation, how the program matches with your career goals, etc.

Write well and correctly

Be meticulous. Type your essay and proofread it multiple times. Many admissions officers say that good written skills and correct use of language are important to them as they read these statements. Express yourself clearly and concisely. Adhere to stated word limits.

Avoid clichés

A medical school applicant who writes that he is good at science and wants to help other people is not exactly expressing an original thought. Stay away from often-repeated statements.

Pitfalls to Consider When Writing a Personal Statement

- 1. Do not restate your resume
- 2. Do not complain or whine about the "system" or circumstances in your life
- 3. Do not preach to your reader. You can express opinions, but do not come across as fanatical or extreme
- 4. Do not talk about money as a motivator
- 5. Do not discuss your minority status or disadvantaged background unless you have a compelling and unique story that relates to it
- 6. Do not solely discuss the school's rankings
- 7. Do not use boring clichéd intros or conclusions:

"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is..."

"This question asks me to discuss..."

"I would like to thank the admissions committee for considering my application."

"It is my sincere hope that you will grant me the opportunity to attend your fine school."

"In sum, there are three reasons why you should admit me..."

- 8. Do not use unconventional formats or submit your materials in fancy packaging
- 9. Do not get the name of the school wrong. This is easy to do. Take time and double check
- 10. Do not showcase your vocabulary for the sake of appearing intelligent; only incorporate technical language when it is necessary and relevant

8 USEFUL **RESOURCES**

MSU Denver Writing Center http://www.msudenver.edu/writectr/

Graduate Admission Essays:
Write your Way into the Graduate
School of Your Choice

by Donald Asher, Ten Speed Press, 2000

How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School

by RichardStelzer, Petersons, 1997

http://www.gradschools.com/ ArticleIndex/Essay-Writing/50. html

includes more than a hundred pages of instruction

www.statementofpurpose.com

www.accepted.com/grad/ personalstatement.aspx

Financing your Education

Financial aid is available for graduate school although it is much more scarce than financial aid for undergraduates. The most common forms of aid are fellowships, assistantships, grants and loans. There are also a limited number of academic scholarships.

Traditional Sources of Funding:

Fellowships: Fellowships cover living expenses and often tuition in return for research or work on a project. Fellowships may be single or multi-year awards and are usually based on an individual's merit as measured by grades, GRE scores, publications and letters of recommendation. They are often offered through the government or private companies and organizations.

Assistantships: Assistantships are campus-affiliated work assignments (graduate teaching instructor, research associate, or graduate assistant, etc) that provide a stipend and often waive tuition and/or other fees for a designated number of work hours. Talk with administrators of your individual program about availability of assistantships in your department. Other general assistantships may be available elsewhere on campus, often within student service units. These may or may not relate to your field of study.

Grants: Grants are awarded to cover expenses associated with carrying out research or other specific projects, such as expenses for travel, materials or computers.

Loans: Loans are available from the government and from private sources. These are very similar to those you may have applied for during your undergraduate program.

Academic Scholarships: In general, institutional aid is primarily given to undergraduate students; however, some institutions have a limited amount of money to devote to graduate students. This money could come from the general graduate school or from your specific program. Start looking early! While some schools will automatically issue merit scholarships, others require a complex application process. Speak with your schools' admissions counselor and/or a faculty representative for more information.



FastWeb:

Free Scholarship and College Searches, & Financial Aid Tools-Free scholarships search site that has 500,000 scholarships worth more than \$1billion. Registration required.

www.fastweb.com

FinAid:

The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid-This award-winning site is a comprehensive annotated collection of information about student financial aid on the web.

www.finaid.org

GradSchools.com:

Articles and resources for fellowships. www.gradschoools.com/category/finance-your-study.html

U.S. Department of Education:

Find and pay for college at www.ed.gov/students/landing.jhtml

The American Association of University Women (AAUW):

Offers grants and fellowships for women obtaining graduate degrees or making a difference in their communities.

http://www.aauw.org/learn/fellowships_ grants/index.cfm

Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO):

Offers grants and scholarships to women pursuing higher education degrees. Includes opportunities for both US citizens and international students http://www.peointernational.org/about/

Special opportunities for underrepresented and disadvantaged students: Some institutions offer application-fee waivers and other forms of funding in order to help diversify their student body. Outside scholarships and specialized funding may also be available.

Other Sources of Funding:

Your Employer: Certain employers will pay for their employees to advance their education. This is a great question to ask when interviewing for a job!

Professional Organizations:

Professional organizations often offer grants and fellowships for students pursuing a degree in their particular discipline. For more information, go directly the organization's website.

Fraternities and Sororities:

Check with your national branch to see if your fraternity or sorority offers any grants or fellowships for alumni pursuing a graduate degree.

Churches/Religious Organizations:

Some churches offer scholarships and grants for their members. Others offer them at the national level. Contact your church to see if they have any options.

Note: Scholarships are most likely to be available through national organizations as opposed to local or regional ones.



If you plan on funding your education through any one of these options, you should have located the source(s) (grants, fellowships, assistantships, etc) you wish to apply for about a year before you plan on entering graduate school

Resources with Career Services

Meet with Career Services early in the process to discuss your career objectives and goals for graduate school. They can also help you identify professional opportunities that will make your resume look appealing to admissions officers. To schedule an appointment call 303-556-3664

Attend a Career Services workshop on applying to graduate school.

Attend a graduate school fair. Most schools will post which fairs they are attending. See if they are coming to a campus near you!

Read about your profession using resources from the Career Services or the MSU Denver Library.

Practice your interviewing skills by coming in for a mock interview or practice at home using **Optimal Resume**.

Download our **application checklist** to stay organized during the application process.

Talk with alumni who have completed your graduate program or are working in your field of interest.

What to Do if You Don't Get In

If you do not get on your first attempt, try one or more of the following steps to increase your chances of getting accepted in the future:

- 1. Apply earlier next year. Avoid the last 6 weeks before the deadline.
- 2. Apply to more schools. Six is usually considered a good number.
- 3. Apply to more "safe" schools. Even 4.0 students and those who exceed a program's entrance criteria can, and do, get rejected.
- 4. Visit the programs you really want to get into and schedule personal meetings with faculty members and admissions officers.
- 5. Get great grades by taking one class at a time in your targeted subject area! Remember, your most recent grades count the most!
- 6. Get a volunteer or internship experience in your targeted field. It will boost your credentials even if it's part-time, a few hours per week, or unpaid.
- 7. Work a job in your targeted field. There is no substitute for actual experience. Plus it will give you the opportunity to add recommendations from people working in the profession.
- 8. Get an intermediate degree (e.g. certificate, credential, etc.).
- 9. Get older and try again. Review all application materials. Many times, that's all it takes.



If you are unclear how to strengthen your candidacy, contact your admissions officer at your first choice institution. In many cases, admissions officers are willing to tell you why you were not selected. Take their suggestions seriously and work hard to strengthen your potential weaknesses before the next application cycle.





MCI I DENVED	University:		Program:			
ALUMNI	Phone:	Email:		Application Deadline:	Date C	Date Completed:
Application Materials	Delivery Method	Date Requested	Date Sent	Reciept Confirmed	Contact Person	Thank You Card Sent
Program Application Form	Online / Mail					
Grad School Application Form*	Online / Mail					
Application Fee	Online / Check	Amount:				
Transcript 1						
Transcript 2						
Transcript 3						
Letter of Recommendation 1		Meeting Date: (Person / Phone)				
Letter of Recommendation 2		Meeting Date: (Person / Phone)				
Letter of Recommendation 3		Meeting Date: (Person / Phone)				
Person Statement		Draft Created: Critiqued: Finalized:				
Standardized Test *		Registered: Taken:				
Financial Aid*		Application Deadline:		Amt Awarded:		0
Interview*	In Person / Phone	Agenda Confirmed: (Y/N)	Date Conducted:			
Campus Visit*	Self-Guided / Guided	Agenda Confirmed: (Y/N)	Date Conducted:			
Decision		Decision Deadline:				
Deposit	Online / Check	Amount:				
Other						

University Website: _

Program Website: