

# PREPARING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

Attending graduate school can help you reach your career goals, including placing you a step above the competition in the job market. If graduate school is right for you, here are some tips to help you prepare:



## DO YOUR RESEARCH.

Make a list of your needs in a graduate program and form a list of questions. Then, research online and contact the graduate programs you are interested in. Take advantage of your Saint Xavier University resources, including Career Services and your professors who may be able to provide graduate school recommendations. Also, be sure to organize your information in one spot.

## HELPFUL WEBSITES:

[www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com)  
[www.graduateguide.com](http://www.graduateguide.com)  
[www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)  
[www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools](http://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools)



## PREPARE FOR AN ADMISSIONS TEST.

Students who plan to attend graduate school most oftentimes will have to take a graduate admissions test. The most common is the GRE, or Graduate Record Exam, but others may include the LSAT, GMAT or MCAT. Just as you would for any test, be prepared. You can prep by taking practice tests online.

## HELPFUL WEBSITES:

Test Prep - [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org), [www.kaplan.com](http://www.kaplan.com)  
Practice Tests - [www.testprepreview.com](http://www.testprepreview.com)  
Tests - [www.mba.com](http://www.mba.com) (GMAT)  
[www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre) (GRE),  
[www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org) (LSAT)  
[www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat](http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat) (MCAT)



## APPLY EARLY.

It's best to apply for graduate school early to increase your odds of being admitted. And while application deadlines vary - applications for most Ph.D. programs are due in December or January, while deadlines for master's programs are due in

January, February or March - starting early will give you more time to prep and polish your application.



## GATHER YOUR RECOMMENDATION LETTERS.

Get an early start at reaching out to your professional and personal contacts to provide them with ample time to compose

recommendation letters to submit with your application. You can help their writing go more smoothly by sending them your resume or personal statement for reference.



## CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS TO FINANCE GRADUATE SCHOOL.

Many of the options you pursued to finance your undergraduate degree are the same options to look at for your graduate studies, including grants, loans and scholarships.

Another similarity is applying for FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which should be the first step you complete to help finance your education. It's also smart to research fellowship and assistantship opportunities.



## WRITE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT.

As part of the application process, many graduate programs require writing a personal statement or answering specific questions that details your interest in the program. This statement can set you apart from other candidates looking to be admitted

into the program, so it's best to write an engaging and concise piece that speaks to who you are and your future pursuits. Also, be sure to proofread your work by having a second person look it over.

# SAMPLE SCHEDULE

FOR A STUDENT HOPING TO ENTER GRADUATE SCHOOL IN THE FALL.



## MAY:

Begin researching potential schools. Take a practice GRE test.



## NOVEMBER:

Have someone in the field and a few smart (and honest) friends read over your personal statement.

## GRE JUNE:

If your practice scores were low, sign up for a GRE test preparation course.



## DECEMBER:

Complete and submit all applications, keeping two copies of every section for your records.



## JULY:

Request information from schools that interest you.



## JANUARY:

Focus on financial aid – fill out the FAFSA online and look into private loans, grants and fellowships.



## AUGUST:

Take the GRE general test. If you're not happy with your scores, sign up to take it again. Begin writing your personal statement.



## FEBRUARY AND MARCH:

Try to relax while you wait it out. This will probably be the most relaxing time you'll have for the next several years, so enjoy it.



## SEPTEMBER:

Finalize your list of prospective schools and pick a professor or two from each whose research interests mirror your own. Familiarize yourself with their work.



## APRIL:

Celebrate your acceptances. Appeal the aid package (or apply for alternative loans) if the amount the school offers you doesn't meet your needs.



## OCTOBER:

Send your recommenders supplemental materials (like your resume, personal statement, etc.). Arrange a campus visit if you can.

For more information or to schedule an appointment with Career Services, call (773) 298-3131, email [careerservices@sxu.edu](mailto:careerservices@sxu.edu), or visit Career Services in the Warde Academic Center, Room L-208.



[sxu.joinhandshake.com](https://www.linkedin.com/company/sxu-joinhandshake)



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