

with individual institutions to see how they handle GPA calculation.

GRE:

The Graduate Record Exam is required by most universities in the United States. It is used not only for purposes of admission but also sometimes used (in conjunction with other criteria) to award fellowships, teaching assistantships and research assistantships. The general exam tests you in three areas: verbal (analogies, antonyms, sentence completion and reading comprehension), quantitative (quantitative comparison and problem solving covering arithmetic, algebra and geometry) and analytical writing ('present your perspective on an issue' writing task and 'analyze an argument' writing task).

The GRE is administered via computer at testing facilities across the country. Simply locate a facility near you and set up an appointment. Score reports are mailed to recipient institutions 10-15 days after you complete the test (provided you complete the writing tasks on the computer). You may elect to hand-write the analytical section, but your scores will take 4-6 weeks in that case. You will need to check with individual schools who may also require the subject exam in your major area.

For detailed information about test fees, test center locations, preparation materials, the search service, etc. see the comprehensive GRE website at www.gre.org.

Letters of Recommendation:

Getting these letters, which are very important in the application process, seems to cause the most stress for students. Typically, you will need to contact three writers. Depending upon the requirements of your program they may be from faculty, internship supervisors, employers or others who can confidently discuss your potential for graduate-level work. Be sure to give your references plenty of time to write the letters. For help figuring out how to approach potential references, contact Career Services.

Statement of Purpose:

The statement of purpose (sometimes referred to as the "essay" or "personal statement") is your opportunity to state who you are, where you are coming from and where you are going professionally. The statement is typically 2-3 pages (typed, double-spaced) and should be an essay of the highest quality. *Graduate Admission Essays* by Donald Asher is available in the Career Services Resource Center to assist you in getting started in writing your personal statement. Additionally, critiques of your essay may be arranged by appointment with a Career Services staff member. Your advisor or a faculty member may also be able to assist you.

Experience:

Admissions committees are interested in knowing how much and what types of experience you have had in your field. The place to discuss your experience is in the statement of purpose. You might include internships, independent study research experiences, capstones, applicable employment, laboratory assignments, etc. Such opportunities demonstrate that you have the experience and commitment necessary as you pursue your professional goals.

Financial Aid

Institutional:

Typically, these awards consist of research and teaching assistantships, tuition fee waivers and fellowships. Awards are usually based upon merit rather than financial need and are instrumental in recruiting candidates to their programs. The application process is usually included as part of the admissions application. *The deadline to apply for these awards, however, is often much earlier than program deadlines (usually early January).*

Federal and State:

Applying for this assistance is a separate process in addition to applying for admission. At some schools, applying for Federal aid and institutional support are combined. In all instances, you will be required to complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form. You will only need to complete one FAFSA as there is a section you can use to have the data sent to multiple institutions.

Some schools may require a supplemental application. This usually occurs when schools combine the awarding of Federal and institutional aid. This may not be a free service, so check with each school to make sure it is required. For comprehensive information online about financing graduate school, including downloading the FAFSA, see www.finaid.org.

Private Sector:

This body encompasses local, national and international organizations, foundations and corporations. Funds are available to support graduate education in a number of ways. Fellowships primarily provide for living expenses and, in some instances, payment of tuition and fees. Recipients benefit from these funds as they are usually free to utilize them at the college of their choice. Career Services offers several publications, including the *Worldwide Graduate Scholarship Directory*, in the Resource Center to help you locate funding opportunities. Application deadlines vary, so start your investigation early. Career Services *Write Your Own Ticket* program each Spring features information about high-profile graduate fellowships.

Timeline for Fall Applications

The "ideal" timeline for applying to graduate school upon graduation from SU begins the spring of your junior year.

Spring:

Begin the exploration process via Career Services, the Internet and by talking to faculty at SU and on other campuses. Pave the way for asking for letters of recommendation.

Summer:

Prepare seriously for entrance exams. Start a draft of your statement of purpose.

Fall:

Take entrance exams. Complete your statement of purpose. Finish gathering letters of recommendation. By the end of the fall semester, turn in all applications to meet priority deadlines for funding and admission.