Considering Grad School

Research your prospective field

- **Talk with** professors, graduate students, or other UCI staff
- **Meet with** people working in that industry or studying in that field
- **Check out** the Occupational Outlook Handbook by visiting www.bls.gov/ooh
- **Identify prospective schools** and seek information on their programs. Check out the Peterson’s Guide to Graduate and Professional Schools online at www.petersons.com

Evaluate the Various Graduate Programs

- **Department**
  - Certain institutions are known for particular programs. Check out the U.S. News & World Report Best Graduate Schools online or at the Career Center.

- **Faculty**
  - Research the reputation and areas of specialization of the faculty.

- **Program**
  - Each school has a different curriculum and philosophy. Make sure they meet your educational goals.

- **Facilities**
  - Find out about the libraries, laboratories, and research facilities. What is the depth of the library collection in your particular field of interest?

- **Size**
  - There are advantages and disadvantages to both small and large universities.

- **Placement**
  - Where do graduates go after completing the program?

- **Degree Requirements**
  - List all requirements such as residency, unit requirements, language requirements, examinations, candidacy, thesis or dissertation.

Prepare for the Admissions Process

- **Complete your bachelor’s degree**
- **Aim for a minimum 3.0 GPA**
  - Some schools average your last two years of school, or the courses in your field of concentration.

- **2-3 letters of recommendation**
  - Choose individuals who know you academically and/or professionally and will give you the best recommendation. The job title or status of that person does not usually matter; however, at least one reference should be a professor. Before asking for a recommendation, meet with your reference to discuss your career goals and inform them about the program(s).

- **Statement of Purpose**
  - State why you are the most qualified to be in that particular program. This is a qualitative way to show your eligibility, not quantitative like GRE scores, transcripts, and grades.

- **Admissions tests**
  - In most cases, the Graduate Records Exam (GRE) will be required. Check with each school to identify the appropriate exam.

- **Application**
  - Read instructions carefully and meet all requirements and deadlines.

Finance your Education

- **Fellowships**
  - Given to students with the expectation that they will maintain and achieve good standing.

- **Loans**
  - Explore school, private, and government options. Repayment of loans can vary.

- **Assistantships**
  - You receive a stipend for which you perform services related to your field.

- **Grants**
  - Like fellowships, these are gifts to graduate students that do not have to be repaid.

- **Work-Study**
  - This type of financial aid assists graduate students by providing job opportunities within the institution or in a public or non-profit agency for up to 20 hours a week.

Resources available at the Career Center

- Preparation for GRE, LSAT, CBEST, DAT, etc.
- ABA Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools
- MBA Programs
- U.S. News & World Report - Best Graduate Schools
- APA Guide to Graduate Study in Psychology
APPLYING TO GRAD SCHOOL

Application Checklist

Sample Timeline

**Junior Year and Senior Summer**
- Determine which type of graduate program best fits your career goals
- Research specific graduate programs of interest. Look at admissions and financial aid applications
- Take required examinations (may also take again in fall)
- Attend the Graduate and Professional School Fair

**Senior Year**

**September**
- Continue research graduate programs of interest
- Find out when graduate transcripts must be sent and what other materials are required
- Check applications for specific deadlines
- Register for required entrance exams

**October**
- Talk to graduate recruiters visiting the campus or in the area
- If possible, visit the schools in which you are interested. Talk with admissions staff, department faculty, and/or current graduate students
- Request letters of recommendation
- Write personal statement

**November**
- Begin preparing your financial aid application. These are often required at the same time or earlier than admissions applications

**December**
- Some admissions applications might be due this month
- Check on your transcripts and letters of recommendations to see that they have been sent

**January**
- Last chance to take the required tests for Fall admissions (it may be too late for some schools)
- Check with each school to see that they have received all the materials, including test scores and financial statements

**February (or after sending off applications)**
- Wait to hear whether you have been accepted
- Continue to make contact with representatives of the schools to which you applied and check on the progress of your applications

**Store Your Letters of Rec Online**
- Avoid losing letters or asking professors to write letters to numerous schools by storing your letters online.
- Try services like Interfolio (interfolio.com)

**Career Center Resources**
- Grad School Advising
- Literature on admissions and programs
- Applying to Graduate School workshop
- Applying to Law School workshop
- GRE, GMAT, LSAT, and MCAT test info
- Grad School Fair, Law School Fair (Fall)
- Health Professions Grad School Fair (Spring)

**If You Don’t Get Accepted**
- Talk to a career counselor to determine some reasons why you were not accepted, and decide if you should revisit your goals.
- Don’t give up - students are sometimes accepted on their second or third try, or even later!