APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Once you've considered your career goals, researched career options and requirements and determined that graduate school is right for you, the next step is to proceed with the application process. This tip sheet reviews application basics. However, program requirements vary by school and program. Research and review admission requirements of each program carefully.

EVALUATING PROGRAMS

- Research schools and programs compatible with your research interests (e.g. Biology - long distance migration of butterflies and dragonflies, or Political Science - global environmental politics).
- Ask professors and practitioners in your field about reputable schools and programs.
- Review faculty profiles, identify those with similar interests, and talk with them about their research and your research interests. This type of networking can lead to conversations about what they look for in graduate students, if they are accepting new grad students and their acting as your thesis supervisor.
- Visit the campus to meet the faculty, talk with students in the program, see the facilities and get a feel for the atmosphere of the program.
- Research program requirements (compulsory courses, research vs. thesis options, experiential opportunities available). Program focus and requirements are often discussed in information sessions (usually held in the Fall), check with the program department for dates.
- Evaluate financial assistance through grants, research and teaching assistantships, and fellowships.
- Consider factors such as a school’s geographic location, faculty match with your interests, reputation, campus and community life, and student services.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Typically include:
- Application form and fee
- Resume / Curriculum Vitae
- Transcripts from all post-secondary institutions
- References
- Personal / Research interest statement

May also include:
- Test scores (eg, GRE, GMAT, and LSAT)
- Prerequisite courses
- Experiential component (e.g. 2 yrs related work / volunteer experience)
- Supplementary Forms / application for funding etc.

References

You will need between two and four references who can discuss your abilities, accomplishments and potential in your area of interest with a focus on academic references who can attest to your ability to succeed in, and contribute to, a demanding academic program. Network with your Professors early.

Personal / Research Interest Statements

Admission committees are looking for statements that show how you are a fit for their program. Be sure to cover these areas:
- Your research / professional interests
- Your future goals and career path
- Why their school and program fits your goals
- Your knowledge of, and experience in your chosen field
- What you will contribute to their program

Attend our “Mastering the Personal Statement” Workshop and use our online personal statement module: http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/events-services, then book a critique with our office.

Admission Tests

Some programs require an admissions test (such as the GRE or GMAT) as part of the application. The tests are written in advance so that scores are received by admission deadlines.

Funding Information

Funding may be available through government loan programs, research councils, foundations, university awards offices, academic departments and banks. Academically oriented graduate programs (e.g. Masters and PhD in a specific academic discipline) have different funding options than professional programs (e.g. law and medicine). Check with the School of Graduate Studies, consult with the faculty and visit the financial aid department of your intended institutions to know your options. Funding Graduate School Tipsheet: http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/tipsheets

WHAT IF YOU DON’T GET IN?

Given the level of competition for a position in graduate programs, it is important to have a backup plan. Possibilities include:

• Reapply; contact the program admissions staff and / or faculty to talk about ways to make your application stronger and reapply in the next session.
• Find work; the UTM Career Centre can provide assistance with your job search for up to 2 years after graduation.
• Consider alternate careers; speak to a Career Counsellor who can help you generate parallel career plans, visit our career library for print and video resources on a variety of professions and use our many web based resources to research careers.
• Take a post-graduate diploma or certificate to gain industry-specific knowledge and experience to facilitate entry into a profession in a related area.
• Broaden your horizons - travel, volunteer, and build experience.

Evaluate which of these possibilities is right for you. Use the services and support of the Career Centre to help you find your starting point and develop your plans.

CAREER CENTRE RESOURCES

Services and Programs

• Career Counsellors and Employment Advisors – book an appointment to discuss your career direction, discuss further education options and develop a strategy to reach your goals
• Workshop: The Road to Graduate School offered at least once in fall and winter terms – see the Events Calendar on the CLN https://cln.utoronto.ca/home.htm
• CV and Personal Statement Critiques by appointment
• Extern Job Shadowing Program – investigate career interests in a voluntary placement with professionals in your interest areas http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/extern-job-shadowing-program
• Event: Graduate & Professional Schools Fair. Speak to the representatives from over 70 graduate and professional programs. Held early in the Fall – see CLN Events Calendar

Online Resources

• A searchable Canadian directory of graduate programs http://www.universitystudy.ca/search-programs/
• Explore potential career paths after grad school http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/resources-for-graduate-students

Library Resources

• Admission Information –Cracking the GRE, Graduate Admissions Guide, A Guide to Professional Programs in Canada
• Personal Statements/Essays – Graduate Admissions Essays, 50 Successful Harvard Application Essays
• Tip sheets – Applying to Graduate School, Admissions Tests, Funding Graduate School, Post-Graduate Programs, Professional Schools, C.V.s, Personal Statements

This tip sheet is intended as a counseling document and the information is subject to change. (Updated June 2016)