



MORRISVILLE STATE COLLEGE

Planning for and Applying to Graduate School

Office of Career Services

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Learning objectives for today's session

- what to consider when deciding whether and if you should pursue graduate school
- what to know and evaluate when selecting a program
- what you can do now to prepare and be a competitive applicant for a graduate program
- what the common application requirements, process for applying, and timelines are
- how Career Services can assist you in your graduate school efforts



Why graduate school?

- fulfill your professional ambitions and goals
- your target career goal requires an advanced degree
- you want to specialize in a discipline that you find important and interesting
- you know an advanced degree will help you increase competitiveness in the job market and/or earning potential
- you know an advanced degree will provide job security or opportunity for advancement

don't go to graduate school as a default because you're unsure what you want to do, can't find a job, or others expect you to go



Ask yourself...

- What are your long term goals and how will a graduate degree help you achieve them?
- Are you really looking into graduate school to further your career goals, or to postpone making decisions about them?
- What is the right degree for you to pursue? Is a Master's degree sufficient, or is a PhD required?
- When is the right time to pursue an advanced degree – directly out of undergraduate school or after gaining experience in a particular field?
- Are you mentally, physically, and financially prepared for another one to seven years of study?



Preparing for graduate school – general

From your freshman year:

- achieve and maintain a strong academic record throughout your undergraduate experience
 - meet with faculty and use tutoring services early and often as needed
- develop relationships with faculty
 - you'll typically need at least two faculty members who know you well as recommenders when applying
- develop solid written and oral communication skills
 - good communications will benefit you in your undergraduate and graduate studies, job search, and professional endeavors
- research careers to define your professional goals and determine if and when graduate education is required/desired
 - use the many resources on the [“Getting Started” page](#) of our website



Preparing for graduate school - specific

- research graduate programs
 - do internet searches using reliable sites, attend graduate fairs, talk to MSC faculty, speak with MSC alumni and alumni of programs of interest
- speak with Admissions representatives, faculty, and alumni from your target schools
 - all can provide you additional info, and impact the Admissions process
- complete required coursework and/or work or volunteer experience and/or observation
- prepare for standardized entrance exams
 - scores are often very important to determining allocation of the limited financial aid available in graduate school
 - preparation for standardized exams is usually a matter of months, not days or hours
- maintain good credit history and keep personal debt low



Recommended graduate school timeline

if you are planning on going to graduate school in the semester directly following your graduation:

- sophomore/junior year: start meeting with faculty, research programs and potential scholarships, and prepare for (and take, if ready) standardized admissions tests
- summer before your senior year: secure application materials, request letters for recommendation, visit institutions, start essays
- fall senior year: apply to programs and for institutional and/or independent fellowships or scholarships, complete FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- spring senior year: visit institutions, evaluate offers



Program selection

- focus on the program itself, and department it is in, not the university
- question you need to ask is “Do the goals of the graduate program match my educational goals?”
- create a personal ranking system based on what is important to you and what your research indicates is important for your career goals
 - use criteria from the following slide to create your ranking system



Program selection criteria

- program mission statement
- curriculum
- faculty
- cost
- financial aid
- alumni success
- facilities/resources
- location
- class size
- student/faculty ratio
- part-time/full-time options
- program culture
- campus culture
- program accreditation
- program philosophy
- academic support services
- student support services
- Career Services
- program reputation
- clinical experience, if applicable



Application Process – common required documents

- application forms
 - could be by school or a centralized process
 - make sure to read directions clearly
- letters of recommendation
 - typically, two from faculty, one from an employer or other party
 - some programs require a form be completed on-line, others, just a letter
- [official transcripts](#)
 - must submit for each educational institution you attended
 - must demonstrate passing grades for prerequisite coursework
- graduate admissions standardized test scores
 - some can be taken on-line at designated test centers; others only offered at specific times
 - all require studying extensively (think months, not days) to secure a competitive score



Application Process – common required documents

- [personal statement](#) and other essays
 - personal statement needs to speak to why you want to pursue a specific program
 - critical you plan your essays and write multiple drafts
 - write as many essays as allowed since the more info the decision-makers have for you, the better
- [résumé](#) or curriculum vitae
 - should be targeted to your intended career field
 - a two-page résumé may be allowed, but confirm length before submitting
- writing samples, if applicable
- portfolio, if applicable
 - you must submit exactly what is requested
- school and federal financial aid forms ([FAFSA](#))



Application Process - acceptance

- timelines for when you will be notified about your status varies from school to school
 - some review in batches, and the timeframe before you'll have a decision depends on whether you were at the start or end of the batch process
 - others wait until the application deadline(s) and notify all applicants only after that
 - some offer conditional acceptances based on your academic progress during the current or following semester
 - it can be beneficial to continuing to follow up with Admissions representatives while you await a decision, especially if you have new information such as an academic award, course project, etc.



Application Process - interview

- many programs do not require an interviews, but it is to your advantage to speak or meet with Admissions representatives and/or faculty before and after you apply
 - they'll have more information about you during the decision-making process
 - it demonstrates your interest in their specific program
 - even if an interview isn't require, you should make a stop at Admissions during your campus visit



Financing your graduate education

- there is significantly less financial aid at the graduate level than undergraduate
 - especially true for professional degrees such as MBA, JD, MArch (v PhD programs)
 - what aid is available is usually given for academic performance
 - all students are considered as independent
- most aid given is in form of graduate, teaching, or research assistantships
- federal loans for graduate school are generally at higher rates than undergraduate rates, even if you have good credit
- connect with the Financial Aid office at your targeted schools early in the application process
- use sources like [FinAid!](#) to calculate your borrowing needs and repayment costs



Application Process – tips for success

- start early, submit early!
 - apply in advance of the deadline
 - connect with Admissions representatives with your questions
 - follow up to make sure all documents have been received – in advance of the deadline
 - rolling admission policies vary, but it is to your advantage to submit early
- update your information with Admissions contacts as semester continues
- connect with Career Services and Morrisville faculty on your application



How Career Services can assist you

- researching career fields and educational requirements for entry-level professional positions and advancement
- deciding on when, or if, you should continue your education, given your career goals
- identifying graduate programs offering your intended degree
- reaching out to potential faculty or other recommenders
- connecting with program Admissions representatives and alumni
- finding resources for preparing for standardized entrance tests
- getting started or editing your personal statements
- polishing your résumé
- evaluating your graduate school acceptances



How to connect with Career Services

1/1 appointment: 30 minutes

call 315.684.6615 to find a time and day convenient to your schedule

Drop-in hours: 15 minute sessions, no appointment required

regularly scheduled: T, 10 am-12 pm; W, 11 am-1 pm; Th, 2 pm-4 pm

check your e-mails and the Career Services calendar for changes or additions

Attend a workshop

read your e-mails; see Career Services calendar for days and times

www.morrisville.edu/careerservices

24/7 access to resources and information; Career Services calendar

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