

By Tara Kuther, Ph.D., About.com Guide

It's finally time! You're a senior and can't wait to graduate and move on to graduate school. But first you need to deal with those pesky graduate school applications. Senior year is graduate admissions time. Here's how to go about it and what to do when to get into the graduate school of your dreams:

### **Summer/September**

- If you haven't done so already, take the necessary standardized tests for admissions. You will either take the GRE, MCAT, GMAT, LSAT, or DAT, depending on what your program requires.
- Gather graduate program brochures (which you've collected over junior year and the summer or are working feverishly now to obtain) and narrow your choices.
- Consider which faculty members to ask for letters of recommendation.

### **September/October**

- Research sources of financial aid.
- Carefully examine each of the program applications. Note any questions or essay topics that will require your attention.
- Write a draft of your statement of purpose.
- Ask a faculty member or the career/grad admissions counselor at your school to read your essays and provide feedback. Take their advice!
- Ask faculty for letters of recommendation. Provide faculty with a copy of your transcript, each program's recommendation form, and your statement of purpose. It may also be helpful if you provide the professors with sample recommendation letters. Ask him or her if there's anything else that you can provide to help them.

### **November/December**

- Arrange for your official transcript to be sent to each program to which you apply. Visit the Registrar's office to request your transcript. Request that the Registrar hold your transcript until the Fall semester grades are in.
- Finalize your essays and statement of purpose. Don't forget to seek input from others.
- Apply for fellowships and other sources of financial aid as applicable.
- Check and record the due date for each application.

### **December/January**

- Complete the application forms for each program. Scan the form into your computer or use a typewriter for a neat and clean application form. Reread your essays and statement of purpose. Spell check!
- Mail your applications
- Relax and breathe!
- Most schools send a postcard upon receipt of each application. Keep track of these. If you don't receive a postcard or letter, contact the admissions office by email or phone to ensure that your application has been received before the deadline.

### **February**

- Depending on your field, start planning for the admissions interviews. What questions will you ask? Prepare answers to common questions.
- Fill out the Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application. You'll need your tax forms to do this.

### **March/April**

- Visit schools to which you've been accepted.
- Discuss acceptances and rejections with a faculty member or the career/graduate admissions counselor at your school.
- Notify the program of your acceptance.
- Notify programs that you're declining.

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