

Main Steps in Applying to Graduate School

What is graduate school?

After you complete a Bachelor of Science (BS) or Bachelor of Art (BA), you can go on to earn a Master degree or a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Some programs bypass the Master degree and instead you go directly for a PhD.

What is the difference between 'graduate school' and 'The Graduate School'?

'Graduate school' is pursuing any graduate degree after earning the Bachelor degree. 'The Graduate School' is the central administration of all graduate programs in Bascom Hall. When you apply to graduate school, your application first goes to 'The Graduate School' for scrutiny to make sure all minimum requirements are met, application fee is paid, etc. and then the application is passed on to the individual graduate programs to which you have applied.

Why is it called a 'Doctor of Philosophy'?

Basically, it means love of learning/knowledge.

Masters degree (MS) (Search 'Master' at <https://grad.wisc.edu/academic-programs/>)

A MS degree can be awarded on the basis of coursework, coursework and research, or coursework and field work.

Master of Science (MS)

Master of Arts (MA)

Master of Fine Arts (MFA)

Master of Music (MM)

Master of Public Health (MPH)

Master of Public Affairs (MPA)

Master of Social Work (MSW)

Doctor of Philosophy (love of knowledge) (Search 'PhD' at <https://grad.wisc.edu/academic-programs/>)

The PhD is a research degree and is awarded on the basis of coursework and research. Most areas of study offer a PhD

How long does it take to earn a Master degree?

Usually 1-3 years depending on the graduate program

How long does it take to earn a Doctor of Philosophy?

Usually 4-7. This is totally dependent on the graduate program and the nature of the study.

TIP: You don't 'get' a degree. You EARN it! It is AWARDED'. (It is not a prize.)

What are the steps in going to Graduate School?

- 1) At some point in your undergraduate years, you become interested in a topic. It may or may not be within your major. You want to know more, so **you take a few classes on this topic**. And you talk to the professor teaching the course. And then you meet some more professors interested in this topic.

- 2) At some point you discuss your interests with these professors and see if it is possible to conduct a research project with them to see if you become even MORE interested. If so, GREAT. If not, continue to shop around to find your passion. (This professor is someone from whom you may want a letter of recommendation in the future.)
TIP: You cannot make this decision sitting still. You have to get up, move, and collect information.
- 3) If this topic is your passion, you ask these professors their advice as to which graduate programs in the US or abroad best fit your interest and career goals. Then you check out their webpages to find out more. Some graduate programs will require that you take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), which is an entrance exam. However, more and more programs are not using the GRE score as a requirement for admission as it is a huge multiple choice exams, which have been shown to NOT be a good predictor of the probability of success.

The Problem With the GRE <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-problem-with-the-gre/471633/>

- 4) You may continue to take more courses in this area. Or you might go to a national conference where students present research on this topic. Or you may actually present the results of the research you are conducting as an undergraduate at this conference. This is a great way to get to know people working in the field.
- 5) If you plan to go directly from your Bachelor degree into graduate school, you will apply in the Fall of your Senior year of undergrad. If the GRE is required, you make sure you have taken it in time for the score to arrive before the application deadline. Deadlines for application usually range from December 15 to February 1.)

What you will submit –

A transcript from each college/university attended

The GRE score

An essay called a ‘Statement of Purpose’ or a ‘Personal Statement’. A ‘Statement of Purpose’ mainly where you are and where you wish to go. A ‘Personal Statement’ usually includes an introductory paragraph about the personal path that brought you to college and forward.

TIP: This essay is not a ‘chat’. Not too personal. Not every emotion you ever felt. Pretty formal. More like a report, though it is okay to show your personality and important to show your passion.

TIP: Get help writing this essay. It is absolutely NOT like the essay that earned you admission to undergrad. Not just a ‘story’. It needs to be packed with reasons for admission.

TIP: You do not TELL an admissions committee you are qualified. You give them your information (data) and THEY conclude you are qualified.

TIP: There will be lot of other applicants with your grades, your GRE score, and great letters of recommendation. The essay really can set you apart. (This is why I show people how to write 5 years older than they are, so the admissions committee goes “Hot damn, they are way ahead of their peers!”)

- 6) There are two types of admission procedures: 1) Rolling admissions means they offer you admission when your admission arrives and as soon as they decide they want you. In this scenario, it is wise to apply early. Not at the last possible date. 2) Deadline admissions means the program waits until the application deadline and reviews all of the applications at the same time. It is STILL a good idea to apply early, because they may still look at your application when it comes in and they think ‘I want to remember Marcus or Sonja and hold a spot for them.’
- 7) Graduate programs let you know whether you are admitted by April 15th if not before .

Exceptions to the rule:

The minimum GPA for admission to graduate school is 3.0 at UW-Madison. However if you have a 2.9 GPA and you have been in contact with a professor who wants you in her/his lab, the professor can petition The Graduate School for admission. If The Graduate School says ‘Yes’, you may be offered a conditional/probationary admission in which it is decided you must earn a given GPA in your first semester or two semesters of graduate school. You do so, then everything is fine, and you continue and complete your degree.

See the other documents for ‘How to Interview’ and ‘How to Decide Which Offer to Accept’