



Practice exams and courses

Companies and non-profits offer test preparation programs:

- **Kaplan Educational Center** kaptest.com
- **Cabrillo College** online classes
- **Princeton Review** princetonreview.com

Common Application Components

- ✓ **Application** (usually online)
- ✓ **Statement of Purpose** (or "Personal Statement")
- ✓ **Letters of recommendation**
 The Career Center recommends Interfolio to confidentially store your letters of recommendation online to use at your discretion- interfolio.com
- ✓ **Transcripts**
 all schools attended after high school
- ✓ **Exam score** (GRE, MCAT, LSAT, GMAT, etc)
- ✓ **Resume or CV** (depending on the program)
- ✓ **Portfolios** (Art programs, Journalism, Film, etc.)
- ✓ **Financial aid forms**

Professional Degrees:

- *Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)*
- *Doctor of Medicine (M.D.)*
- *Juris Doctor (J.D.)*

Research your prospective field

- Talk with professors, graduate students, and staff in your department
- Conduct informational interviews with people currently working in the industry and in similar programs
- Check out opportunities in a specific field, types of positions, and job market trends on the Career Center's online resources Career Beam, O*Net, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook
- Identify prospective schools and seek information about their programs
- Attend a Career Center Workshop and guest speaker presentations

Evaluate prospective graduate programs based on:

- **Department:** Certain institutions are known for the strength and prestige of particular programs
- **Faculty:** Research the reputation and areas of specialization of the professors in the program.
- **Program:** Ensure that each school's individual curriculum and philosophy align with your educational goals
- **Size:** Assess the size of the program, the number of students at the university as a whole, and the surrounding area
- **Placement:** Job placement rates of alumni directly in their fields of study is one of the largest indicators of program success.
- **Degree requirements:** Evaluate all academic requirements, including residency, units, language, examination, candidacy, dissertation, or thesis.

Prepare for the Admissions Process

- Complete your bachelor's degree
- Aim for a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. Some schools use your cumulative GPA, others average your last 2 years of school, while others only factor the courses in your major(s)
- Obtain letters of recommendation from individuals who can strongly attest to your academic and/or professional abilities. Before asking for a recommendation, meet with your reference to discuss your career goals and inform them about the programs
- Take the appropriate exam. While the Graduate Records Exam (GRE) is most common, exams vary by program and school- so be sure to take the right one!
- Write a statement of purpose. Unlike the qualitative nature of GRE scores and grades, your statement of purpose is the main qualitative component of the application that describes your unique eligibility and qualifications in your own voice
- Do not include your references on your resume.

Graduate Degrees

Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Education (M. Ed.) and Master of Science (M.S.): usually 2 year programs that includes focused coursework and either a comprehensive examination, thesis, or experience

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.): anywhere between 4-10 years to complete (depending on the discipline) and focus on independent, original research. Requires either a dissertation or research

General Application Process Timeline

Summer before applying

- Determine which type of graduate program best fits your career goals
- Research and review recommended timelines, admissions, and financial aid applications for specific graduate programs
- Apply early, but not at the expense of a quality application
- Prepare to take appropriate exam in fall (take in summer if already prepared-you can always retake in fall)
- If possible, visit the schools you're interested in and speak with admissions staff, department faculty, and/or current graduate students

September-October

- Continue researching graduate programs of interest and prioritize them
- Check specific deadlines for all application materials
- Register and take appropriate exam
- Request letters of recommendation and meet with your recommenders to discuss your graduate school goals and career plans
- Visit a Graduate School Fair and talk to graduate recruiters visiting the area
- Write first draft of your statement and have it reviewed by multiple mentors and career advisers

November-January

- Begin preparing your financial aid application (they're often required at the same time and even earlier than admissions applications)
- Finalize your statement and have it proofread
- Confirm that your transcripts and letters of recommendation have been sent
- Take your appropriate exam- this may be your last chance to do so!
- Submit your application and confirm that each school has received all required materials, including test scores and financial aid application

February-April

- Wait to hear whether you have been accepted
- Keep in contact with the schools' representatives you applied regarding admissions decision progress
- Consider financial aid proposals and offers from schools once accepted

If you don't get accepted, talk to a career adviser to revisit your goals, and to strategize a new plan. Don't give up--many students are accepted on their second, third, and even fourth tries after gaining more relevant experience.

Next steps...

- Attend a Graduate School workshop
- Attend the Graduate and Professional School Fair in Fall quarter
- Meet with a career adviser
- Set up an Interfolio account- visit careers@ucsc.edu for more info
- **Check out more guides from the Career Center**
References Guide and Personal Statement Guide

Finance Your Education

Always contact the schools' financial aid offices directly for the most accurate and up-to-date information!

✔ **Fellowships:** extensive (yet very competitive) funding that does not have to be repaid which is given to students with the exception that they will maintain and achieve high academic standing

✔ **Assistantships:** receive a stipend for performing services related to your field of study

✔ **Grants:** like fellowships, these financial awards do not have to be repaid and are often awarded based upon financial need and/or special qualifications

✔ **Work-Study:** federal subsidy that provides job opportunities for graduate students at their university and at select public or non-profit agencies for up to 20 hours per week

✔ **Loans:** funding that must be repaid, loan options vary by school