

GRADUATE SCHOOL CHECKLIST



Getting Started

The decision to further your education will change your lifestyle in many ways. It's important to start asking yourself the following questions as early as possible:

- Is it required to progress my career?
- Will the outcome increase my job satisfaction?
- When is the best time for me to attend graduate school? Should I consider a gap year?
- How will it affect my finances?
- How will it impact my personal relationships and life plans?

Ideally, begin to prepare for graduate school during your first year at UC Irvine. But even if you're a sophomore, junior or senior, it's not too late to get started. Gain the competitive edge to develop yourself as a strong graduate school candidate by:

- Raising your GPA or maintaining a high GPA
- Building professional and mentoring relationships with professors
- Getting involved in a leadership role on-campus or the local community
- Participating in experiential learning experiences such as internships, studying abroad, volunteering, and part-time or full-time work
- Identifying your research interests and applying to research opportunities

Below is a sample application guide and checklist if you plan to pursue graduate school immediately following your undergraduate work. Keep in mind that this is a suggested timeline. Your individual deadlines may vary depending on your graduate school program.

Summer | Before Graduation Year

June-September

- ☐ Determine which type of graduate degree best fits your career goals (M.A., M.S., MBA, Ph.D., J.D., etc.)
- ☐ Research specific graduate programs of interest and complete SSARC's Comparison Worksheet
 - SSARC Graduate School Database
 - UCI Graduate Degree Search
 - UC Graduate Degree Search
 - CSU Degree Search
 - Peterson's
 - U.S. News & World Report
- ☐ Review and complete the Federal Student Aid's Graduation Preparation Checklist

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- ☐ Prepare and register for required entrance exams: [GRE](#), [MCAT](#), [LSAT](#), [GMAT](#)
- ☐ Take examinations during summer and/or early fall
- ☐ Begin working on statement of purpose and/or personal statement
 - [UCI Division of Career Pathways | Write a Statement of Purpose](#)
 - [University of California Graduate Admissions | Statement of Purpose](#)
 - [UCI Scholarship Opportunities Program | Crafting an Interesting Personal Statement](#)
 - [Purdue OWL | Writing the Personal Statement](#)
 - [University of California Graduate Admissions | Personal Statement](#)

Fall | Graduation Year

September

- ☐ Continue researching graduate programs of interest
- ☐ Attend the [Division of Career Pathways' Graduate and Professional School Fairs and other related workshops](#)
 - Tip: Before attending a graduate school fair, be aware of who will be attending by reviewing the directory or program and preparing a list of questions for admission representatives
- ☐ Request official transcripts from the [University Registrar](#)
- ☐ Request letters of recommendation from your professors and supervisors
 - Tip: Make sure to provide a draft of your statement of purpose and/or personal statement, resume/CV and any additional information the recommender may need to write your letter

October

- ☐ As soon as possible after its October 1 release, submit your [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) form along with any other financial aid applications your chosen grad school(s) may require
 - Tip: Graduate and professional students are considered independent students for FAFSA purposes, so when you fill out your FAFSA form to apply for grad school aid, you won't need to provide parent information
- ☐ Finish statement of purpose and/or personal statement. Receive feedback and edits from faculty, [SSARC Graduate Student Advisors](#), and the [UCI Center for Excellence in Writing & Communication](#)
- ☐ If possible, visit the schools in which you are interested. Talk with admissions staff, department faculty, and /or current graduate students

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- ☐ Retake required entrance exams as needed

November

- ☐ Submit your completed graduate school applications as early as possible; be aware of final deadlines
 - Tips: Most graduate school application deadlines are in December. Some programs provide an early submission date or recommended submission date. Other programs admit on a rolling basis which means applications are evaluated as they arrive. Double check the application timeline of the specific programs you are applying to. There may be graduate programs that accept applications as late as June
- ☐ Apply for as many scholarships, fellowships, and other financial aid funds as you can

December

- ☐ Check on your transcripts and letters of recommendation to see that they have been sent
- ☐ Schedule and prepare for interviews. You will need to research each of your prospective programs to see if they require or offer interviews

Winter | Graduation Year

January-June

- ☐ Continue researching graduate programs of interest and submitting applications before the final deadline
- ☐ Last chance to take the required tests for fall admissions (it may be too late for some schools)
- ☐ Check with each school to see that they have received all materials, including test scores, writing samples, resume, supplemental essays, and financial statements
- ☐ Send thank you cards or emails in appreciation of those who helped you along your educational and graduate school application journey!
- ☐ Review your graduate school acceptances and compare the programs' financial aid offers
 - Tip: If you don't get accepted, don't give up! Talk to a [SSARC](#) team member or a career counselor at the [Division of Career Pathways](#) to revisit your goals and discuss ways your graduate school application could be improved for the next application cycle
- ☐ Once you've decided on a graduate school, respond accordingly to the programs you were accepted or waitlisted