GRADUATE SCHOOL 101 — UNLV

In many fields, earning a graduate degree or certificate is a benefit and competitive advantage. In some, it's necessary for advancement.

Getting accepted into your preferred program requires research, differentiation and extreme project management skills. Here are some tips:

Selecting the right institution and program

Chances are, you'll want to apply to multiple programs to maximize your options. Which are the right ones? There are a number of factors to consider.

1

Faculty
Your relationship with faculty will be a huge factor in the educational experience. Learn the names, departmental positions and academic credentials of the professor or professors you'd be working with.

2

Resources
Research can require significant out-of-pocket costs. Find out if there are resources available at the institution that can reduce these costs.

3

Community/Location
Take a look at the on-campus and off-campus communities. Is the on-campus culture—faculty access, social life, etc.—what you're looking for? Does the local area have the amenities you want and need? Is it in a city or a small college town? Does the program offer online courses? How would these factors contribute to your quality of life?

4

Cost/Funding
The tuition and fees will be an obvious consideration, but you should also take into account living expenses, which can vary widely by region. What sort of stipends and funding programs are available? What are the work requirements?

5

Career Outcomes
What are the career outcomes for program alumni and how does the program support students and alumni in professional development?

Timeline

Because every application should be tailored to each individual program, you'll want to start researching programs as early as you can—a year in advance. This will allow you enough time to take any required standardized tests (i.e. the GRE), seek informational interviews with faculty and program directors, tour campuses, interview recent alumni or currently enrolled graduate students, and line up effective letters of recommendation.

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> *Many competitive programs have due dates between mid-December and early February (for fall admission).*

Preparing your application

While some graduate programs require very specific standardized tests or portfolios, almost all programs require these basic parts of the application:

Application Form & Fee

While this part of the application generally involves inputting basic information about your educational background, take your time to make sure your answers are complete.

Transcript

The transcript provides evidence of your academic record. If there is something anomalous (like withdrawing from a course in one quarter) or if there is a performance issue that you would like the option to explain for the admissions committee, you can sometimes include a brief explanation in your personal statement.

Resume or CV

Most graduate programs require a curriculum vitae (CV), which is a more robust, almost catalog-like version of a resume. While the CV can be more than one page long, be sure to frontload the most relevant information earlier in the document, knowing the committee might not read beyond two or three pages.

Personal Statement (or Statement of Intent)

Some programs have a strict list of questions that need to be addressed in the personal statement, and some are more unstructured. Regardless, write the statement to demonstrate your fi t for the program (in terms of your academic interests), your ability to succeed in the program and beyond (providing some context for your short-term and long-term professional goals), and your distinctiveness as a candidate.

Letters of Recommendation (or List of Recommenders)

When selecting a recommender for graduate school, it's important to think about who knows you well enough to write a compelling letter that provides evidence of your skills and knowledge. Be sure to line up your recommenders well in advance and provide them with your completed resume/CV and personal statement as a way to help them write a supporting letter. Finally, write thank you notes to all your recommenders!