

A Guide to Graduate School

Marietta College



Gilman Center

740-376-4645

cc@marietta.edu

<http://www.marietta.edu/student/career/index.html>

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday

8:00a.m.-5:00p.m.

Hilles Hughes

Bill Fournier

Natalie Wood

Purpose: This guide will answer questions and provide resources for your graduate school search. Good luck during these challenging decisions, and remember, the Career Center is a resource for you.

Table of Contents

Is graduate school right for you?.....4
Should you attend graduate school now or later?5
 Figure 1: Pros and Cons to Immediate Attendance of Graduate School5
Graduate School Timeline6
Graduate School Degrees7
 Professional Master’s7
 Research Master’s7
 Professional Doctorate.....7
 Research Doctorate.....7
Graduate School Admissions Tests.....8
 GRE8
 GMAT.....8
 LSAT8
 MCAT.....8
 DAT8
 PCAT8
 VCAT8
 TOEFL.....8
 MAT9
Admission Test Preparation.....9
 Books and Manuals9
 Courses9
 On-line Resources9
 Kaplan.....9
 Princeton Review.....9
 MCAT Preparation9
 LSAT Preparation.....9
 GRE Preparation.....9
 GMAT Preparation.....9
Choosing a Graduate or Professional School and a Specialization..... 10
 Graduate Catalogs10
 Personal Criteria.....10
 Admissions.....10
 Programs10
 Geographic Location10
 Size10
 Faculty10
 State Regulations11
 Placement Services11
 Financial Aid.....11
National Graduate School Rankings11
Faculty11
Graduate School Directories11
 2006 Peterson’s Graduate Programs Directory.....11
Internet Resources11

Marietta College Career Center: A Guide to Graduate School

General Graduate School Information.....	12
Business	12
Law	12
Medical	12
Applying to Graduate School.....	13
Application Forms.....	13
Application Essay or Personal Statement.....	13
Letters of Recommendation.....	13
Transcripts.....	14
Interviews.....	14
How will your application be processed?.....	14
Financing Graduate/Professional School.....	15
Fellowships	15
Assistantships.....	15
Resident Assistantships	16
Long-Term Educational Loans	16
College Work-Study Program.....	16
Other Employment	16

Is graduate school right for you?

Before applying for further study, be fully aware of the working conditions, employment prospects, physical, and mental demands of the field you plan to pursue. The research, course work, and rigor are part of the graduate school experience and must be considered. Although there are defined course requirements in most school curricula, you are expected to be able to build a program based on your interests and goals.

Dislike of chosen graduate program and realization of unclearly defined career goals are the two most common reasons given by students who do not complete their graduate programs. Knowing these reasons, it is suggested to ask yourself some questions to consider if graduate school is right for you.

- What do I want to accomplish by attending graduate school?
- What are my long and short term professional goals?
- Is graduate study necessary to achieve these goals?
- Am I willing to invest the time and money in another academic program?
- By going to graduate school, am I delaying my career decision-making?

By researching and defining your objectives, you should get a solid idea of whether or not graduate study will be beneficial for you. This is a good time to look at occupational literature and talk with faculty, friends, and alumni who are in your field of interest. The staff at the Career Center is able to assist you in determining your job prospects in various fields at all degree levels.

Without a generally strong idea of what you want to do, you will have a difficult time making a sensible choice. If you do not know where graduate or professional school might lead you, your investment of time and money might have limited benefits. Choose graduate school because you are working toward a goal.

Should you attend graduate school now or later?

There are different perspectives on immediate entry versus delayed entry into graduate programs. You may also want to ask yourself a few questions before making a decision.

- Will related work experience help clarify ambiguous career goals?
- Is there a strong possibility that your career goals could change after a taste of the working world?
- Will work experience enhance your application?
- Would you have difficulty re-adjusting to student life after a break?
- Are you uncertain about a field of study?

If you answer yes to these questions, it may be advantageous to gain some work experience and/or take some time off, before graduate school. A list of pros and cons of immediate attendance is shown in Figure 1.

If you do decide to delay graduate study, yet plan to begin a program within 3-5 years, you may want to take the appropriate standardized entrance examinations during your senior year of college. Scores on most of these tests are generally valid for several years.

Figure 1: Pros and Cons to Immediate Attendance of Graduate School

Pros	Cons
Information is easily available on undergraduate campuses	Graduate schools are selective
Faculty members will remember your achievements for recommendations	Work/life experience is preferred
Study habits are well-developed for transition	Academic burnout
Some schools prefer to recruit from undergraduate programs	Expensive

If further education at this point is an alternative to a job-search, you may wish to better define your career objective to see if they “fit” with the opportunities your chosen program offers. Practical work experience is an education in itself; you can consider a work and study arrangement.

Graduate School Timeline

The following is a suggested graduate school timeline. As you proceed through this guide, more detailed information is provided about the steps along the way.

Suggested Graduate School Timeline

Spring - Junior Year
Research institutions and programs Investigate national scholarships Register and prepare for appropriate graduate admission tests Talk to faculty, alumni, the Career Center about programs and applications
Summer
Take required graduate admission tests Request application materials Verify application deadlines and admission policies Check to see if you need to register for a national application service Visit institution of interest if possible Write your application essay and have it review by faculty and/or career adviser Request letters of recommendation
Fall - Senior Year
Obtain letters of recommendation Write draft or statement of purpose/personal essay Meet with faculty and/or Career Center to review application materials Take graduate admission test if you haven't already Send in completed applications Send thank you notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters Research and complete financial aid applications
Spring - Senior Year
Verify schools received application materials before deadlines Visit institutions that accept you Send deposit to institution of your choice Notify other programs that accepted you Schedule interviews as needed Inform recommenders of your decision Discuss acceptances, rejection and career options w/ faculty

Graduate School Degrees

Professional Master's

The Professional Master's degree provides a specific set of skills needed to practice in a particular field.

- Education
- Business
- Engineering

It is generally a final degree that involves an internship, practicum, or field work.

Research Master's

The Research Master's degree provides experience in research and scholarship. It may be a final degree or a step toward the Ph.D. A Master's Degree usually takes 1-2 years of study.

Professional Doctorate

The Professional Doctorate is the highest degree for some areas.

- Medicine (M.D.)
- Business
- Law (J.D.)

These areas require practical applications of knowledge and skills.

Research Doctorate

The Ph.D., Doctor of Philosophy, is the highest earned academic degree and the primary credential for college level teaching. It typically involves both course work and an extensive and original research project. The Doctorate usually takes a minimum of 4-6 years of full-time study.

Graduate School Admissions Tests

Graduate school is becoming increasingly competitive. It is to your advantage to take the appropriate standardized tests early, even a year in advance. Remember, test registration deadlines are well in advance of the actual test dates, and most are given only a few times a year. Hyperlinks are provided with each admissions exam for registration.

GRE

The Graduate Record Examination is required for entrance to most graduate programs and includes two parts. The GRE General Test is designed to measure analytical, verbal, and quantitative ability. The GRE Subject Test is an examination in a major field of study. Graduate schools may require one or both parts of the test. <http://www.ets.org/>

GMAT

The Graduate Management Admission Test is a requirement to assess students planning to attend management and business schools. <http://www.gmac.com/gmac/thegmat/>

LSAT

The Law School Admissions Test is a requirement for students interested in attending law schools. Interested students should also complete the Law School Data Assembly Service, LSDAS. <http://www.lsac.org/LSAC.asp?url=lsac/about-the-lsat.asp>

MCAT

The Medical College Admission Test is given to applications for admission to medical schools. Interested student must also complete the American Medical College Applications Service, AMCAS. <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/>

DAT

The Dental Admission Test is a requirement for admission to dental school. <http://www.ada.org/prof/ed/testing/dat/index.asp>

PCAT

The Pharmacy College Admission Test is a requirement for admission to pharmacy school. <http://harcourtassessment.com/haiweb/Cultures/en-US/Harcourt/Community/PostSecondary/Products/pcat/pcathome.htm>

VCAT

The Veterinary College Admission Test is a requirement for a admission to veterinary school. <http://www.aavmc.org/>

TOEFL

The Test of English as a Foreign Language evaluates English proficiency of people whose native language is not English. <http://www.ets.org>

MAT

The Miller Analogies Test is a high-level mental ability test.

<http://harcourtassessment.com/haiweb/Cultures/en-US/Harcourt/Community/PostSecondary/Products/MAT/mathome.htm>

Admission Test Preparation

It is important to spend time familiarizing yourself with the design and content of the examination before taking the standardized tests. Preparatory materials are available online, in the campus library, and the Career Center. Links for preparatory website are available below.

Books and Manuals

Preparation manuals have been published for most of the major examination programs and are available at bookstores. These manuals typically contain several practice tests, as well as “refresher” sections designed to assist in updating your skills in recall, judgment, and mathematics. There is a selection of books available in the library and Career Center.

Courses

Private, “short,” courses exist to help you prepare for examinations such as the MCAT and LSAT. Before investing money into one of these services, it is advisable thoroughly research them.

On-line Resources

There are several preparatory resources available online.

Kaplan

<http://www.kaplan.com/>

Princeton Review

<http://www.princetonreview.com>

MCAT Preparation

<http://www.mcat-prep.com/>

LSAT Preparation

<http://www.lsatprepcourse.com/>

GRE Preparation

<http://www.greguide.com/>

GMAT Preparation

<http://www.gmat-mba-prep.com/>
<http://www.admissionsconsultants.com/gmat/>

Choosing a Graduate or Professional School and a Specialization

Once you have decided to attend graduate school, you should begin researching schools and programs. There are several useful resources for gathering information.

Graduate Catalogs

Request catalogs directly from the institutions for further consideration. Most schools are happy to provide information at little or no cost. This can often be done from the schools graduate school homepage. The information found in graduate and profession school catalogs may be of limited value because they are directed at a general audience and not specific programs.

Personal Criteria

It takes a lot of research to identify the program that best meets your needs. Establish your own personal criteria with which to compare graduate schools.

Admissions

- What are the requirements?
- Do you meet the program requirements?
- What type of students does the program attract?

Programs

- What specializations are available?
- Is the program focused on theory and original research, or the practical application of knowledge and skills?
- Do the research facilities suit your needs?
- How long does it take to complete the program?

Geographic Location

- Climate
- Political and social temper
- Setting (Urban or Rural)

Size

- How large is the institution and the department?
- How many students are enrolled?
- What is the student to faculty ratio?

Faculty

- Who are they?
- Are there specific people doing the type of research in which you are interested?
- What have they published?

State Regulations

- In-state preference of applicants?

Placement Services

- Are there opportunities for teaching or research assistantships?
- Will you receive assistance in your job search?
- What companies express interest in graduates from your department?
- How helpful are the departmental faculty in your job search?

Financial Aid

Any application may receive larger awards at some institutions depending on university budgets. Graduate aid is based largely on merit, not need.

National Graduate School Rankings

Take a look at which institutions offer the “best” programs of study. Pay attention to the criteria used to rank the school to find out if those criteria coincide with your personal criteria. Rankings are available online from U.S. News & World Report.

Faculty

You may get more information by talking to faculty in your chosen field. Discuss your interests and which institutions would be most appropriate for meeting your goals.

Admission officials and faculty members can help you with this information. You can request updated course work and faculty lists since some catalogs may not contain the most recent information. Do not hesitate to contact them by phone, letter, email, or personal visit.

Graduate School Directories

Most Directories provide comparative information, particularly useful as you try to gain an overview of the available programs. The following directories and guides are available in the Career Center.

- 2006 Peterson’s Graduate Programs Directory
- 2004 & 2005 Peterson’s Guides to Programs and Admissions Tests
- Selections pertaining to Specialized Professional Degrees
- Graduate School Guide Books

2006 Peterson’s Graduate Programs Directory

Peterson’s Graduate Programs Directory profiles 1,500+ accredited institutions offering Masters and/or Doctoral programs in 300+ disciplines in the U.S. and Canada. It is suggested you begin with Book 1, which offers directories of programs, institutional offerings, and combined-degree programs in addition to information about financial aid, testing, and applications.

Internet Resources

The internet provides many resources for graduate schools and admissions.

General Graduate School Information

- Peterson's Education Center Guide: <http://www.petersons.com/graduate>
- GraduateSchool.com: <http://www.graduateschool.com>
- GradSchool.com: <http://www.gradschool.com>
- Graduate School Guide On-line: <http://www.schoolguides.com>

Business

MBA.com: <http://www.mba.com>

Law

Law School Admission Council: <http://www.lsac.org>

Medical

Association of American Medical Colleges: <http://www.aamc.org/>

Applying to Graduate School

Formal applications vary, but there are several common pieces. Remember faculty and the Career Center can help in preparing your application materials.

Application Forms

All application forms and mailing envelopes should be neatly typed; handwritten applications are generally unacceptable. Have an extra copy to handwrite and review before completing your final copy. Online applications are becoming increasingly popular. Carefully follow all instructions. Be aware of application deadlines. If admissions are handled on a “rolling” basis, meaning qualified applications are accepted as they apply, it is to your advantage to apply early to show your enthusiasm and provide more time to evaluate your application. Early application is also suggested for financial aid. Before submitting your application, make a copy to keep for your records; this is especially useful if the school does not receive your application, which is something you should confirm after submitting.

Application Essay or Personal Statement

Most institutions will ask that you submit a statement of purpose or personal statement. Personal statements provide you the opportunity to supplement standard application material with your goals and objectives with respect to the program. Typically, the institutions will offer suggestions to consider including. Good grammar and writing styles are extremely important. Admission committees may be trying to evaluate a number of things from your statement.

- Motivation and commitment to your field of study
- Expectations with regard to the program and career opportunities
- Education background
- Reasons for deciding to pursue graduate education in a particular field and at a particular institution
- Writing ability
- Major areas of interest
- Research or work experience
- Immediate and long term goals
- Personal uniqueness – what you would add to the diversity of the entering class
- Maturity

In addition to your required application material, it is highly recommended that you engage in research either as your own independent project or as an assistant to a professor. Ask professors for suggestions. Research experience will be looked upon favorably by the application committee.

Letters of Recommendation

Most institutions will request 3 to 5 letters of recommendation. Contact people you wish to write letters well in advance of the deadline.

Letters of recommendation are useful only if the letters tell them something about you that is not particularly evident in the rest of your application material. Obtain recommendations from people qualified to evaluate your academic and/or work performance and potential based on personal observation. Faculty members within and outside your discipline will show the breadth of your academic interests.

It is essential that the person providing the recommendation know you well enough to make a good assessment of your abilities. Do not hesitate to ask recommenders if they feel they know you well enough to write a good recommendation.

It may be worthwhile to have your recommenders interview you before they write your letters. If they agree to an interview, give them a copy of your application essay in advance. Share your reasons for applying to graduate or professional school, updated personal and professional data, such as a résumé or previous work, recommendation forms, and deadlines. It is also a good idea to provide stamped, addressed envelopes. Keep them informed throughout the process.

Transcripts

All transcripts must be “official.” Transcripts must be sent to the graduate school’s admissions office directly from the Marietta College Office of the Registrar. If you receive your transcript first and then sent it, there is no proof that it is “official” and will be considered invalid. For additional information on transcripts, contact the Tina Perdue (tina.perdue@marietta.edu or 740-376-4730) at Office of the Registrar.

Interviews

An interview can be very important for you to persuade an institution’s admissions officer or committee that you are an excellent candidate. Interviews are suggested by most programs and often required by medical programs.

Interviewers will be interested in the way you think and approach problems. They will probably concentrate on questions that enable them to assess your thinking skills, rather than questions that call upon your grasp of technical knowledge. Bear in mind, the interviewer is more interested in how you think than what you think. To prepare for your graduate school interview, schedule a mock interview at the Career Center by calling 740-376-4645.

How will your application be processed?

When the graduate school’s admissions office has received all of your materials, it is usually referred to an admission committee for your particular program or school. This faculty committee reviews your application, reaches a decision, and makes a recommendation to the dean. The candidates that show strength in a combination of the admissions requirements, including academic preparation, test scores, and recommendations, have the best chance for selection.

Financing Graduate/Professional School

Monetary support to attend graduate/professional school is available from several sources.

- Universities
- Government Sources
- Banks and Private Foundations

One major problem lies in discovering what is available at any given time. New sources are continually being created. Government aid is subject to, and regulated by, current executive and legislative policy.

Financial aid information can be found in graduate/professional school catalogs, and in descriptive literature published by universities, federal, state, and local government agencies, and foundations. Financial support of graduate education may vary widely from institution to institution. Prospective applicants should thoroughly investigate the availability and amounts of financial aid in all its forms.

Typically, deadlines are early for financial aid applications. Be sure to request a financial aid application at the same time you request an admission application.

- Parents' Confidential Statement (PCS)
- Family Financial Statement (FFS)
- American College Testing Program
- Graduate and Professional School Financial Aid Service (GAPSFAS)

Some schools will accept any, others require a specific application.

Types of financial aid available for graduate study are somewhat different from aid you may have received as an undergraduate student.

Fellowships

On the graduate level, the equivalent of a scholarship is a fellowship. It is usually a straight monetary award given on the basis of scholastic achievement. Fellowships are often tax-free unless they involve teaching or researching; in these cases, they will most likely have to be reported for income tax purposes. Specific institutions have their own fellowships, which you may identify by contacting the schools financial aid office. The federal government also supports some fellowships; applications may be made through the institution.

Assistantships

Teaching or research assistantships are often available through your program of study. Assistantships usually involve working 10-20 hours per week in exchange for some stipend and/or fee remission. Although fee remissions are common, be aware that in accepting a graduate assistantship you may still be responsible for partial payment of your tuition and/or fees. Requests for information should be made directly to your program of interest.

Resident Assistantships

Some institutions have programs in which graduate students earn a stipend, room and board, or both by working as assistants in undergraduate resident halls. Contact the schools' director of residence life to inquire about such opportunities.

Long-Term Educational Loans

Most institutions have loan programs for which graduate students may be eligible. Such programs include private, state, and federally sponsored Guaranteed Student Loan Programs. The institutions financial aid office will be able to explain these loan programs.

College Work-Study Program

Under this program, eligible undergraduate and graduate students are provided part-time employment opportunities during the academic year, as well as part-time or full-time positions during the summer. Generally, these programs are administered through the financial aid office.

Other Employment

University communities often provide good opportunities for part-time work. Schools may have agreements with neighboring businesses, industries, and/or governmental agencies for student research and/or consultation employment. Check with the institution's financial aid office or the chairperson of your department regarding possible part-time local employment opportunities.