Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success

GRADUATE SCHOOL Preparation MANUAL
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Why Go to Graduate School?

- It will help you attain your personal goals.
- You have a passion for research and/or learning more in-depth information about your field.
- You want to specialize in an area or become an expert and generate new knowledge.
- Employers prefer or require an advanced degree in your profession (such as an M.S.W. or an M.B.A.).
- Make yourself more competitive on the job market and secure a higher pay rate that will continue throughout your lifetime.
- Professional growth and career advancement.
While it may be difficult to consider more schooling, think about graduate school as a potential next step, especially if you want to land a job that requires more than a four-year degree or you want a higher starting salary. Be prepared that your graduate education will differ significantly from your undergraduate experience!

Unlike your undergraduate degree, there are no general education requirements in graduate school. There are no electives. Your field of study is narrower and delves deeper, developing a mastery of your chosen field, and you will spend the length of your schooling on one specific subject. This is because your goal in graduate school will be to gain the specialized training necessary for the career toward which you are working.

It is necessary to be driven, self-aware, and focused in graduate school. Unlike in undergraduate courses, graduate school courses are usually based around the notion that you will largely structure your own work time. While it may seem like you will have MORE free time than undergraduates, professors will expect you to utilize the “extra” time to do research, write papers, attend/teach at conferences, do more reading, and so forth.

The benefits of an advanced degree are numerous, and so are the reasons for earning one. Many people return to school after working for a few years in order to advance in their current career, and many others are returning to change their career, as their interests and skills have evolved.

Once you have determined that graduate school is right for you, think about how to begin preparing and positioning yourself to be a competitive applicant and eventually a successful graduate student.
Start researching the graduate schools that spark your interest early. Make sure to speak with professors, professionals in your field of interest, current graduate students within those programs, and advisors. If you are applying for a doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.) it is particularly important that you seek out professors at your schools of interest whose research interests match your own, and contact them early! Matches in research interests are often a major deciding factor of admissions in these programs.

If a particular field of study interests you enough to consider doing graduate study, pay attention to who is working in that field and where they are. Read their publications. Visit their website. Contact them and ask intelligent questions about their work. Take advantage of opportunities like professional meetings to meet people at other institutions who are working in fields that interest you.

Use a variety of sources such as professional organizations and conferences, research publications, professional journals, career centers, graduate school guides, major publications, university websites and other online resources to decide which programs will work best for you.

Follow your interests, but be realistic. Have a good idea of, and be able to articulate: WHY you are interested in the field you are and what you want to gain from pursuing a degree.
It is helpful to find out:

- Who are the professors in the field you have chosen who are working on your areas of interest?
- Are the professors you want to work with taking on new graduate students to advise? Are they visiting professors who are likely to leave the university, or are they on temporary leave for any length of time? Are they “famous” professors who have little time to work with graduate students closely?
- What projects are they currently working on?
- What universities do they work at?
- Where did they get their degree(s) from?
- What schools do professors suggest?
- What is the graduation rate, and how long on average do students in each department take to finish their degrees (it can be anywhere from 2 to 10 years or more!)?
- At which universities do current professionals find their employees?
- What graduate programs have the best reputation in your field?
- What geographical locations are you willing to consider when looking at schools?
Top Graduate Schools in the Nation
Top 10 Business Schools

- Stanford University (CA)
- Harvard University (MA)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (SLOAN)
- University of Pennsylvania (Wharton)
- Northwestern University (Kellogg) (IL)
- University of Chicago (Booth)
- Dartmouth College (Tuck) (NH)
- University of California-Berkeley (Haas)
- Columbia University (NY)
- New York University (Stern)
Top 10 Schools for Education

- Vanderbilt University (TN)
- Harvard University (MA)
- Stanford University (CA)
- Teachers College, Columbia University (NY)
- University of California-Los Angeles
- Northwestern University (IL)
- University of Oregon
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- University of Washington
Top 10 Engineering Schools

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Stanford University (CA)
- University of California-Berkeley
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign
- Carnegie Mellon University (PA)
- California Institute of Technology
- University of Texas Austin (Cockrell)
- University of Michigan-Ann Taylor
- Cornell University (NY)
Top 10 Medical Schools

- Harvard University (MA)
- University of Pennsylvania
- John Hopkins University (MD)
- Washington University in St. Louis (IL)
- Duke University (NC)
- Stanford University (CA)
- University of California-San Francisco
- Yale University (CT)
- University of Washington
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Top 10 Law Schools

- Yale University (CT)
- Harvard University (MA)
- Stanford University (CA)
- Columbia University (NYC)
- University of Chicago
- New York University
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of California-Berkeley
- University of Virginia
- Duke University (NC)
Top 10 Most Diverse Law Schools

- University of Hawaii-Manoa (Richardson)
- Texas Southern University (TX)
- Florida A&M University
- University of District of Columbia (Clarke)
- St. Thomas University (FL)
- Southern University Law Center (LA)
- University of Southern California
- Loyola Marymount University (CA)
- Northwestern University (IL)
- Rutgers University (NJ)
Top 10 Graduate Schools for Science

- Stanford University (CA)
- Harvard University (MA)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MA)
- University of California-Berkeley
- California Institute of Technology
- John Hopkins University (MD)
- Princeton University (NJ)
- Scripps Research Institute (CA)
- University of California-San Francisco
- Yale University (CT)
WORD TO THE WISE!

- Just because a graduate school is a “top-ranked” school does not mean it will necessarily be the best fit for you! Graduate school is a significant commitment. It is better to consider a full range of factors, including where the professors you want to work with are working, the geographical location of the school, the average amount of time to degree-granting, and any financial aid that you are offered, as well as the prestige of the institution.

- As with undergraduate schools, it is likely to be most helpful to you if you apply to a range of schools rather than only one or two “top-tier” schools, especially with so many people returning to graduate school due to job market difficulties.
Is Graduate School Worth the Price?

We know that generally speaking, people with advanced degrees earn more than those with bachelor's degrees and those without a college degree. But is the bigger paycheck enough to offset the cost of graduate study? Only you can decide.

The first step in determining if graduate school makes financial sense is to consider the sticker price. The price of graduate programs varies dramatically and has increased over 60% in the last few years. In a public state college you might spend $10,000-$15,000 per year whereas at a private school or top tier university you could easily spend $30,000 per year. The average master’s graduate owes about $30,000. As you consider graduate programs, estimate what your monthly loan payments will be after graduation. Although graduate degree holders are more likely to be employed and at higher salaries than other workers, nothing is certain. For example, if you are seeking out a full-time professorship, be aware that the competition for these positions is increasingly stringent and most graduating Ph.D. candidates will NOT be offered a tenure-track faculty position even after having completed their degree.

Cost should not rule out graduate study. Financial aid is available. It varies by school and by discipline. Students in the sciences can expect to receive scholarships and assistantships that cover their tuition and often offer stipends in exchange for work, as they tend to be funded by research grants obtained by faculty to conduct specific research projects. Students in the humanities receive little funding, as humanities faculty do not obtain grants as large as science faculty due to fewer needs for laboratory space and equipment. Whether graduate school is worth it might depend on your discipline.
In addition to the cost of a graduate education, you must consider the money you will not make because you are in school. Many returning students are unemployed, so this piece of the equation may be moot; however, consider that it is difficult to work another job or begin one while completing a graduate degree.

It is nearly certain that you will earn more over a lifetime with a graduate degree, but how much more is questionable. Many students say that their decision is not entirely about money. Graduate school can deepen your intellect and improve your appreciation of life. Be intentional about the reasons that you have to attend graduate school; do not simply choose to go because you can think of “nothing else to do” or are afraid of seeking a job. Ph.D. programs, and particularly programs in the humanities and social sciences require a great degree of sacrifice, work, and stress—which is not to say you shouldn’t go! Consider the cost vs. benefit analysis carefully.

“Be prepared to live a different life than others who continued directly into a career field post undergrad, because your finances will likely remain limited in comparison. You will probably need a roommate. will have to budget carefully, and may not have the “play” money you would like. If possible, save some up for emergencies, and remember that the pay off will eventually be worth it.” Krysten Lobisch, M. ED 2013.

In-State Out-of-State

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University of Massachusetts Amherst
Tips for financing graduate school
Source: US News Advice

BEFORE READING FURTHER!

Keep in mind that Ph.D. programs in particular should be willing to offer you a multi-year funding package upon admission (the reason many let in so few students per year is because they only admit funded students and have limited funding). If they do not, THINK TWICE about enrolling. This can be a vote of no-confidence in you, and you are also committing to a program that can last between 5 and 10 years. You do not want to worry about finding funding for this period of time!

Get your boss to pay: Many companies looking to boost their collective skill set without bringing on a new hire are willing to sponsor all or part of an employee’s graduate schooling through tuition reimbursement. Last year, 54 percent of the 600 employers responding to a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management offered at least some form of financial assistance for graduate school.

Most employers require that the coursework have some connection to the employee’s job role—tax courses for an accountant, say, or computer science training for someone working in IT. And some companies require that the employee work at the firm for a certain period after school or pay back part of the tuition. Even when a company doesn't have a formal tuition remission program, workers can often earn assistance if they demonstrate to the boss how a course of study could add value. And many universities offer reimbursement programs for their own qualifying workers.

Secure a scholarship: Graduate programs typically award scholarships and fellowships based on merit. It will vary from school to school and where that particular student sits in that applicant pool.

At many schools, aid is given out by academic departments or the specific graduate school instead of a central financial aid office, so you may have to do some digging. A graduate admissions official or someone affiliated with your desired program can help you sort through the options. Experts advise applying for funds as early as possible to ensure access to the full pot.
A range of private and public organizations also offer money for graduate school, though these fellowships are typically highly competitive. The Truman Scholarship Foundation, for instance, annually awards up to $30,000 to each of about 60 prospective grad students looking at public service fields. Both Cornell University and the University of California—Los Angeles provide comprehensive online databases of awards across a range of fields.

**Work for the school:** Like scholarships, assistantships are often presented by individual departments. Often, at least some of a student’s multi-year package is a few years of assistantships. Some schools might “stagger” their aid—the top-ranking admits might get a multi-year, fully paid scholarship (no work required besides coursework and writing), the second—tier admits might get a multi-year assistantship (coursework and writing plus 10-30 hours a week teaching or working on campus), and the lowest—tier admits might get minimal or no funding. This will vary between fields and programs. Your assistantship may or may not be directly related to the department you are studying in. For instance, you may end up working in a support center like CMASS.

Most assistantships are also invaluable because they include not only a work stipend (similar to a paycheck) but also tuition and fee reimbursement and often, free health insurance.

Some schools will automatically allocate assistantships and let you know what you will be doing upon admission; others will ask that you seek out assistantships on campus yourself (this is not guaranteed funding, it resembles a job interview and is an interview-by-interview process…you will be competing against students from other departments on campus).
Being proactive is key; once you know a topic you want to study, zero in on relevant programs and find faculty members in the field who might be willing to take you on as an assistant. Doctoral students typically have a better shot than master's candidates, since they're presumably considering a professorial career.

**Borrow smart:** Chances are you will need to borrow at least part of the tab. To be eligible for federal loans, the first step is to file a *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA). Low-income students—which many graduate students are once they're independent of their parents—might qualify for *Perkins loans*, which award up to $8,000 annually (to a maximum, including undergraduate amounts, of $60,000) and have a 5 percent interest rate. *Stafford loans* pay out up to $20,500 a year. The loans carry a 6.8 percent interest rate and a 1 percent fee, and a lifetime maximum of $138,500. For the rest, *Graduate PLUS* loans are available (at 7.9 percent interest plus 4 percent in fees), as are private loan options.

**DON’T borrow more than you need to live on!**

**Take your credit:** Graduate students will also want to see if they qualify for the federal Lifetime Learning Tax Credit, which allows individuals to subtract up to $2,000 annually from their tax bill.

The credit applies to 20 percent of tuition and other required education expenses up to $10,000, and is available to single filers whose modified adjusted gross income is less than $61,000 or married people with under $122,000. (The American Opportunity Tax Credit, set to expire at the end of 2012, is only available for the first four years of postsecondary education.)

The bottom line: Students have to be creative, says Geri Rypkema, director of the Office of Graduate Student Assistantships and Fellowships at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. "Look at all possible sources," she advises, "because sometimes you have to put it together."
In addition to this, there are many comprehensive study manuals including interactive DVD practice tests that are available in bookstores and to peruse at CMASS.

The earlier you take the tests, the better prepared you become. Providing an opportunity for you to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in a realistic testing environment, you can use the resources provided by CMASS to prepare and enhance your overall performance. Remember that the earlier you take the test, the more chances you will have to study again and re-take it if necessary. These tests can also be expensive, so it is worth putting the time in to prepare as well as you can before paying to take them.

In addition, study courses are available through Kaplan and other services. Though these courses are often pricey, many of them guarantee an improvement in score or else allow you to attend again for free. If you’re applying to particularly competitive programs and can afford it, these courses provide an additional option.
The personal statement (PS) talks about who you are, what has influenced your career path so far, your professional interests and where you plan to go from here. This often provides you the only direct opportunity to show your personality. It need not be a bald statement of facts; many successful PS address these questions through anecdotes, stories or by describing their hero. In fact, this can provide you with an opportunity to be more memorable to the committee who will meet to decide your fate. Whether your PS is subtle or to the point, it must be well written to be successful.

Depending on your field and program, the PS can be anywhere from 2 to 10 required pages, and might be broad or ask more focused questions. If you are in the sciences, you may be asked to submit other documents in lieu of/or with your PS.

The primary question admissions committee members ask themselves when they read a personal statement is: **What does this statement tell me about the person who wrote it?**

Each of the items in the application packet: recommendations, extracurricular achievements, work samples—add an extra dimension to your personality. But it is the PS that brings you to life. This is why each essay is read carefully by two or more people before a decision is made on the applicant.

Does this mean that the PS is the main deciding factor? No.

However, only the PS or application essays can bring out your uniqueness, and therefore, they are a crucial part of your application.
Writing your PS is a long and intensive process—four or five drafts over a two-month period are fairly common. It is necessary to put in this hard work to come up with an essay that is uniquely yourself, and a compelling read which convinces the admissions committee that you are right for their school. This is a great opportunity to look inside yourself and be rewarded with a better understanding of who you are and what you want.

“I asked three people to review my personal statement to make sure I got my point across, it wasn’t wordy, didn’t have typos and was organized. The more people can give you feedback the stronger your personal statement will be.” Michelle Youngblood, M.ED candidate
Sample Personal Statement

- **Prompt:** Write a candid description of yourself, stressing those personal qualities, assets, and liabilities that you feel will influence your graduate work. Describe what you consider to be your most important professional and/or academic achievement to date.

- If one were to ask my friends to describe me they would describe me as a very pleasant, diverse, active and intelligent woman. I think one of my most distinguishing characteristics is the diversity of experience I possess. I am a science student with a flair for the arts. I am a woman with technical aptitude and an interest in management. I also have a passion for traveling and understanding different cultures. All these elements have given me a very broad outlook, with varying degrees of knowledge in a range of topics. I strongly believe that although some are not related directly, all these qualities will influence my graduate work positively in these ways…

- My Engineering degree has given a strong foundation to my analytical skills since civil designing involves a lot of long, complex and intricate calculations and the application of basic math skills. Over the past four years, I have been working part-time with my family firm, SnMTech Systems. I am also the co-founder and active member with FOE-Friends of the Environment. I have assisted in the installation of Enterprise-wide Resource Planning (ERP) System at Biotech, a major Engineering Company. More than what I have studied in school and college, it has been these experiences that have shaped the person that I am today.
Paragraph 1:

A good introductory paragraph. This summarizes the next couple of paragraphs and also has a certain intriguing appeal - it arouses the reader's curiosity and impels him to read further. The first sentence, however, could easily have been dropped - the second sentence would make a more compelling introduction to the essay.

I believe that my unique blend of experiences has made me a woman with an original point of view. This blend has given me a broader perspective, a good understanding of life and a goal to aim for. Among other things, I have this diversity of experience to offer Utah University. My most substantial accomplishment has been the success of the software upgrading project that I managed at SnMTech Systems Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, where I have been working as a part time Associate Intern - Management Information Systems since 1994.

Paragraph 2:

Here the writer develops on the thread of diversity. Note that there is an emphasis on aspects that are important to an MBA course (strong analytical skills, math skills, work experience). The writer shows effectively that she has not been 'wasting her time' - besides earning a degree, she has earned valuable work experience and done something for the environment. Volunteer work is a strong advantage while applying to graduate programs - universities love people with a social conscience and diverse experiences. At the same time, it is important that this experience appears genuine - so before making tall claims, make sure that you can substantiate them, preferably by actually doing some volunteer / social justice work. The last sentence ties the paragraph together. The argument 'my experiences have shaped me' is invaluable IF you have strong or unusual life experiences and in some cases can also partially compensate for an average or below-average academic record.

During the first two years of my work at SnMTech, I had an opportunity to observe and work with the existing system being used. Some of the software packages being used were outdated versions. I have always been in touch with the latest software packages thanks to the powerful PC I have at home and am quite used to working with a Graphical User Interface (GUI) environment. At the office, there was great deal of chaos while preparing reports that involved use of more than one software since compatibility between packages usually posed a problem. The difficulty we faced putting different files together led to the final report appearing rather haphazard sometimes.
“I made **TIME** a priority when writing my personal statement. My research for graduate school started a year before I was eligible to apply. Having ample time was key. Working under pressure with limited time can be beneficial for some tasks. Some people work well in that atmosphere, but this is not the right task to rush. Revising and editing your statement several times before you send it out will be a norm. I even kept changing it after I already had sent it out! Use your network, seek advice, ask people to read it and give their honest opinion/input, it will only make your statement stronger.” Thomas Ortiz, M.Ed applicant

○ Paragraph 3

We come to a shift in focus with this paragraph. The writer wraps up the 'diversity' thread well. Saying that she has a diversity of experience to offer, 'among other things', is a good idea—it implies that there is much more to her, qualities and assets that could not be described here because of space limitations.

It might have been a better idea to begin the next topic - 'most important achievement' in a new paragraph. The abrupt change of subject has a slightly disconcerting effect here.

I believe in providing and maintaining non-negotiable high standards and service. I recognized that shifting to a newer GUI based software would not only dramatically improve our document quality, but also increase productivity at the workplace. Presenting the pros and cons to the management of the upgradation was a very challenging task. I was asked to prepare a proposal regarding the upgradation of the firm’s software. Initially, I imagined this project would be rather simple but it turned out to be among the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life.

○ Paragraph 4:

While this paragraph is ostensibly an introduction to the problem handled by the writer, it also makes two points, subtly:
1) She had been working in the family firm on a continuous basis and kept her eyes open to spot an area of improvement
2) She is familiar with popular software packages and very comfortable with a PC.
Through a firm-wide survey of operators and several one-on-one discussions of their own preferences and solutions, I found that while everybody wanted an upgradation, they had doubts since they would have to learn a whole set of new skills. In order to prepare a budget, I procured quotations from various vendors and analyzed possible combinations. I realized the necessity of a training course for the operators because most of them were not familiar with the GUI interface. I examined the various training classes that offered private in-house training for the employees. After a detailed analysis, I presented my report to the management in the next meeting. They were pleased with my efforts and pleasantly surprised at the cost of the project since it seemed to be comparatively less than what they had anticipated.

**Paragraph 5:**

The first sentence risks sounding slightly pompous, but the writer's earnestness comes through after reading the paragraph as a whole.

Once I was given the go-ahead, the next hurdle was to implement the proposal and coordinate the upgrading. To avoid any disturbance to the company's work, training sessions were planned after working hours. The upgrading took a week and the training of the operators took another two weeks. The really tough period started once the training personnel left. The management felt that it was my responsibility to see that the operators didn't face any problems once they actually started using the new software packages. I put in 60 to 70-hour weeks for the next three weeks before everyone was comfortable with the new system. While the benefits of using these packages were not immediately tangible, a few months later our clients acknowledged that the quality of the reports we sent them had improved considerably. In fact, a year later our firm decided to update all of its software packages. I consider this to be a tacit compliment for my efforts.

**Paragraph 6:**

Comes across as systematic, organized and thorough. Good qualities for any graduate applicant.
This project required me to believe in myself and in what I thought was good for the company. I had to take a proactive approach, take the initiative and play a leadership role in motivating people and executing the project to completion. A good manager is one who can figure out where the problem lies, deal with it effectively by involving all the members of the company and improve the overall culture of the company. The problem I saw at SnMTech had to be resolved to sustain the company's image. The fact that I was able to pull off this task alone has boosted my confidence in my abilities.

○ **Paragraph 7:**

This paragraph shows considerable maturity and learning from the event. A problem is not solved when you have a solution for it—implementing the solution is usually the biggest hurdle. Also, she realizes that company-wide changes rarely yield instant results, and must be followed up over a period of time to evaluate their effects. The last two sentences show that this project also had an effect on the company management's thinking.
Tips to Improve your Curriculum Vitae

A curriculum vitae (CV) is an academic resume. It represents your interests, skills and experience in work and school the way a regular resume does, but it may also include conferences you have presented at, any independent research you have done with professors, academic awards or publications, etc. For this reason, CVs are longer than regular resumes.

CVs help create a personal branding statement that describes who you are, your greatest strengths, and what benefits you bring to your graduate school.

Tips:

- Use strong concrete verbs to describe what you did.
- Highlight past skills and experience that fit the program you are applying to, if applicable.
- Make your CV accomplishment driven, not responsibility driven. Quantify wherever possible.
- Do not use italics, script, shading, colors; do use bold and indents sparingly.
- Spell check your CV by printing it and reading it aloud. Have a friend proofread it to catch any mistakes you may have overlooked. Small mistakes make you look unprofessional.
- Name drop— if you worked with professors doing independent research, be sure to include their names and a description of the work you did with them.
- Develop the skill of “spinning”— not lying or making up information about what you have accomplished, but stating it in ways that make it seem most applicable to what you want to do and where you want to go.
“I wish I was more prepared to answer the question of why I wanted a master’s degree. I went to the interview ready to convince the committee on why I should be accepted. In graduate school you don’t get to change your major so having clarity on what you want to do is important to the admissions committee.”

Oscar Collins, M. Ed.
Potential Questions

- “So, tell me a little about yourself.”
  Utilize this question as an opportunity to expand upon particular points of interest, experiences and talents that you have not gotten a chance to yet display. Remember that this is an informal and in-person way for interviewers to get to know you better. Be memorable! Think ahead of time about your answers, since this question will almost definitely be asked in some form.

- “Why do you want to come to this program?”
  Never go into an interview unprepared! Make sure that you have clearly articulated reasons for why you want to come to that graduate school, and be ready to sell them. Research, research, research! Go to the website, check out professors, get all the information that’s available to you. It will never hurt. If you can not answer this question, you should reconsider applying there.

- “What are your biggest strengths and weaknesses?”
  Stop saying, "I'm a perfectionist." It's trite and overdone. Name a strength that makes you stand out for the program to which you are applying. Remember that research, writing, and critical thinking skills are essential. When naming a weakness, pick something that is realistic, and acknowledge that you are constantly working on improving in that area. Ensure that your weakness isn't directly associated with the requirements of the program but be honest. This is another question you should be prepared to answer, as it will arise in almost ANY interview.

- “What skills and experiences do you feel have prepared you for this program?”
  This question can be as broad or narrow as you choose to interpret it. Depending on the desires of the program, your answer may differ from interview to interview. Some programs might appreciate real-life experiences more than others (for instance, education, public health, etc.) whereas others may not (hard sciences). Try not to just repeat things that the committee can already read on your CV or PS. Expand on things that might not be directly obvious.

- For more questions check out: http://www.uwgb.edu/careers/skills/interviewing-graduate-school.asp
After the Interview

- **Show that you are still interested.** Leave no doubt in the interviewer's mind about where you stand. Do not leave the room without a clear idea of what will happen next in the recruitment process. Will select applicants be invited back to meet other people? By what date will you receive notice of acceptance or rejection? Such questions demonstrate enthusiasm for the graduate school, and knowing the school’s time frame will help keep you from panicking if a week has passed without a phone call.

- **Take a deep breath.** Interviewing and applying to schools is stressful. Make sure you take time for yourself to breathe through it and do some self-care. Do as much as early on in the process as you can, so you are not rushing to meet last-minute deadlines.

- **Know when to sit tight.** Most graduate schools do not get back to you about interviews until about 3 to 5 months after the application deadline, and it will take additional time for them to make final decisions after that. Part of the process is being comfortable with the waiting game.

- **Send a prompt thank-you note and follow up on contacts.** It is always appropriate to send a thank-you note after an interview, especially if the graduate school has paid to fly you out and let you stay during the process (some schools will do this for very promising candidates in the final rounds of interviews). Try to email within 24 hours of the interview, then follow up with a handwritten note that arrives one to three business days later. Follow up with professors you met and might want to work with later on, too.

- **Keep thinking and learning about the school.** Be prepared for additional interviews or follow-up phone calls by continuing to research the school and the field. Gain new information about a topic brought up in conversation. Think of additional questions you would like answered. These actions show the admissions committee that you did not stop caring about the school after the interview was over.

- **Accept rejection with grace.** Finally, keep your emotions in check and do not burn bridges if you do not get selected. One never knows what the future might hold. You may still make valuable connections with professors that can help refer you to resources if you end up at another school (there is an informal network that is fairly extensive between scholars in one field who publish together, read each other’s research, attend conferences together, etc.). Understand that even if you are an exceptional candidate, the field may be so flooded, the funding may be so tight, and so forth, that you may still not be accepted. Decide if you are willing to try another round next year and especially if this is the case, stay on their radar.
Letters of Recommendation

Although it can vary, generally, you will be asked for three letters. We recommend that you send only the number of letters requested. Admissions committees do not have extra time to read extra credentials. The best letter writers are those that know you well and can provide an evaluation of your ability to perform and succeed at the graduate level.

Make the letter-writing process as easy for your recommenders as you can. Professors are constantly busy and don’t often have the time or patience to get letters together at the last minute, or even to look up all your information—especially if you did not take a course with them very recently. Remember they are doing YOU a favor.

Tips:

- Ask for the letters you need AT LEAST three months in advance of your deadline. It might even help to give them an “early deadline”—tell them you need the letters a little earlier than you actually do, just in case.

- Prepare a folder that includes: your CV, the schools you are applying to, any professors you want to work with, your research interests, the deadlines/procedures (for instance, some schools require that letters are submitted only by mail or online), a copy of your transcript, and any papers or positive feedback you received in the courses/internships/etc. you took with that professor. Have this ready for every professor you are asking a letter of recommendation from. They will appreciate it.

- **SEND A THANK YOU NOTE! Without these letters, you could not apply. Do not take it for granted.**

- Keep in mind that most schools let you submit either “sealed” (letters placed in a sealed envelope with a signature over the seal) or unsealed letters. HOWEVER, anecdotal evidence suggests that schools take sealed letters more seriously, assuming that professors will be more honest about your performance if they know you will not have the opportunity to read the letter. So this route is probably preferable. Some professors might still let you review the letters before they “seal” them if you inquire.
"I like writing letters for students that come prepared. I ask them to bring a copy of their transcript, their personal statement, stamped envelopes or links to the online forms. I consider them if they have worked for me in the past or have taken a class with me. I focus on what they did above and beyond the rest of their peers, how they digested information learned, if they demonstrated using resources available to them, whether they are enablers and can be part of a team. I particularly enjoy recommending students that are committed to their own creativity. I’m thrilled when they get in the school of their choice.” Joyce Vincent, Adjunct Lecturer

The best letter writer can be:

- Someone who knows you well (i.e., don’t ask a professor who you only had one large or beginning-level course with)
- Someone who is a professor at the school granting your baccalaureate degree
- Someone who has earned the degree which you are seeking in your graduate work
- Someone with an advanced degree who has supervised you in a job or internship aligned with the graduate program you are pursuing (e.g., Public Health, Social Work, Business Administration, etc.)
- Someone who has academically evaluated you in a graduate-level class
- Someone who has a relationship with or has worked with a professor at the school you’re applying to

**Note: Letters from family friends, political figures, and the like are NOT PERMISSABLE!**
THE PROCESS OF SELECTING A GRADUATE PROGRAM
Choosing the Best Graduate Degree Program

Choosing a graduate degree program
Are you thinking about earning a graduate degree but are not sure what field you would like to study? If so, you may want to consider acquiring a master's or doctoral degree that is related to one of the fastest growing occupations in the country. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has identified 30 occupations that are projected to experience the fastest growth from 2008 to 2018. Some of these occupations and their graduate degree requirements are listed below.

Graduate degrees in medical sciences
Medical scientist (excluding epidemiologists) is one of the top 10 fastest growing occupations. With a median income of $72,590 per year, medical scientists conduct research that leads to improvements in human health. This occupation typically requires a Ph.D. in the biological sciences. However, earning both a Ph.D. and medical degree, which is needed for clinical work with patients, provides the most career options.

Master's-level physician assistant programs.
Physician assistants (PA) practice medicine under the supervision of a physician and earn — on average — $81,230 per year. A graduate school degree is not required to become a PA, but most schools offer graduate degree programs that require students to have a bachelor's degree and work experience in the health care field.
Graduate degree programs for computer software engineers

Jobs for computer software engineers (for applications and systems software) are also expected to grow at a fast rate.

Computer software engineers, who earn on average $85,430 per year, develop various types of software including business applications and computer games. They must hold at least a bachelor's degree in disciplines such as computer science, software engineering, or mathematics.

However, a graduate degree, such as a master's degree in software engineering, computer science, or information technology, may be required for some positions — particularly the managerial ones, for which there is great demand in today's job market.

Graduate degree programs for personal financial advisers

Personal financial advisers, whose median income is $69,050 per year, evaluate individuals' finances and help them develop financial plans that incorporate investments, insurance, retirement plans, and education expenses.

Although it is not a requirement, a master's degree in finance or business administration can help people in this field secure managerial positions, obtain employment in competitive firms, and build their own businesses.

What graduate degree program is right for you?

Earning graduate degrees is a serious commitment of time and money, so it is important to choose the right field of study.

If you are unsure about which graduate school degree is best for you, then learning more about the 30 fastest growing occupations might help you choose a graduate degree that leads to a rewarding and lucrative career.
How to Select a Graduate Program

- Provided by GURU: Guide for Undergraduate Research

- It is very important to visit the university and the department if possible to make sure that the environment fits you - your lifestyle and personality. If you are admitted, many departments will encourage you to visit so that you can determine firsthand if there is a good fit between your interests, etc. and their program.

- Important considerations in selecting a graduate school include:

  - **Quality:** The quality of the University and the graduate program
    - At the graduate level, the quality of the graduate program and your faculty advisor are more important than the reputation of the university as a whole. Consequently, in researching academic programs, key considerations in your decision should be the quality of the graduate program, its faculty and students, i.e., of the people with whom you will work and study in the immediate future. Several organizations rank graduate research programs. Two of the most useful include the National Research Council and the US News & World Report.
How to Select a Graduate Program

- Good questions to ask that will help you assess the overall quality of the graduate program to which you are seeking admission include:
  - Where did the faculty receive their advanced degrees? Have they won any national awards or received other forms of recognition for their scholarship and/or research?
  - How productive are the faculty? Check the primary literature for references by those faculty with whom you might like to study. In the field of chemistry, the American Chemical Society's Directory of Graduate Research is a useful resource. How many papers have they written in the last year? Two years? In what journals do they publish their research - what is the quality of those journals?
  - What are the requirements for the Ph.D.?
  - What is the size of the program? How many research active (and research inactive) faculty are there? How many full-time Ph.D. students?
  - What is the range of research activities represented? Very specialized? Broad coverage of your field?
  - Where do the graduate students in the program come from? What were their past undergraduate academic records and exam scores? i.e., what is the overall quality of your peers in the program?
  - How many graduate students receive financial support? In what form (RA, TA, fellowship)?
  - What is the average time-to-degree (You should anticipate 2 years for the M.S. degree and about 5 years for the Ph.D. degree - this varies though from discipline to discipline)? How many graduate students complete the graduate program? How many leave? Why do they leave?
  - Where do the graduate students go after graduation? If you are interested in an academic career: how many students ultimately obtain an academic post? At what types of colleges and/or universities?
Atmosphere: The atmosphere in the department and at the university

Some important considerations in this regard include:

• Is the department intensely competitive? Laid back?

• Is there a graduate student professional organization?

• Do the graduate students seem generally happy? Serious about their studies? Do they seem like they enjoy working with their advisors? Would you like to work with these people? Does it seem like a friendly, social environment conducive to student learning?

• How many faculty are there in the department with whom you might like to study - never know when a potential mentor might choose to move to another academic institution, not be able to take new students (change in funding situation, impending retirement, etc.), etc.
Housing: Availability and cost

Good questions to ask include:

• Does the university offer any on campus housing? If not, is there any low cost housing available close to the university or within a reasonable distance (commuting)?

• What is the cost of housing? Will you be able to afford it on a graduate student stipend? If you must commute, is transportation available to/from the university?

• What forms of transportation are there available - train, subway, bus? What are the normal hours of operation for these forms of transportation?

• If you must commute by car, is parking available on or near campus? What is the cost of parking? Will you be able to afford it on a graduate student stipend?
The Local Area: Does it fit you and your life style

Is this a region of the country in which you can see yourself living for the next two to six years?

Important consideration might include:

• Weather (temperature, humidity, etc.),

• Economic considerations (cost of living for the area, employment opportunities for partner or spouse, etc.),

• Recreational activities (shopping, restaurants, night life, sports, theater, music, etc.)

• Safety (crime rate for city and campus), and

• Family obligations.
What You Need to Know About a Graduate Program Before You Apply

- If you are like most graduate school applicants, you'll spend a great deal of time compiling lists of graduate programs and downloading application materials. Students are often so eager to gain admission to graduate school that they don't consider their own needs and desires. Before you begin a graduate application, you should know the following about each program.

- **Program Emphasis**
  What training is emphasized? Sure, you're applying to a graduate program in your field, likely a subfield within the discipline you studied as your college major, but graduate programs offer training in specific specialties (or "sub-sub-" fields). For example, an applicant may major in Psychology and apply to a graduate program in the subfield of Developmental Psychology, but he or she needs to know more about the graduate program. Specifically, in what areas do faculty conduct research? If you are interested in, say gerontology, but none of the faculty study it, you're not likely to get the training you desire. Some graduate programs explicitly state training emphases. Others don't. In these cases you have to do your homework to make educated guesses. Look at faculty research interests and the research labs within the department. These will offer important clues as to what to expect from your training.
Program Philosophy
Some graduate programs emphasize theory and basic research. Others emphasize application, conducting and applying research findings to solve problems and influence policy. Know the difference because if you tell a theory-oriented graduate programs you're interested in applied research you'll get an immediate rejection letter. Not to mention, if your interests don't match the program you'll be miserable should you be admitted.

Curriculum and Coursework
Most graduate programs list the curriculum and course list. Do the classes look interesting? Do the course requirements look like they will fit your training needs?

Capstone Requirement
Doctoral programs require dissertations for graduation, but the form the dissertation takes can vary across disciplines. Can you locate any information about the dissertation requirements? Is it an empirical dissertation? Is it instead a lengthy literature review and theoretical paper?

Accreditation
Is the university and program accredited by the relevant governing bodies? All US universities must be accredited by a regional accreditation association. At the program level there is a great deal of variation. Discipline-level accreditation is common in applied fields such as social work, nursing, applied psychology, and business. Quality programs in these disciplines must be accredited by the major disciplinary body. Note that graduates of unaccredited programs may
find it difficult to land jobs and sit for certification and licensure exams. This is a very important step in determining whether to apply to a graduate program.

**Price**
Graduate study is an expensive endeavor, but the cost per year can vary dramatically from $10,000 to $40,000 depending on institution. Can you stomach the bill? Is it worth it?

**Sources of Financial Aid**
Most institutions have multiple sources of financial aid. In addition to federal aid, universities have other forms of aid, such as scholarships and tuition remission in which the student does not have to pay tuition. Universities often have work study programs in which students earn some of their tuition or cash for working on campus. Graduate departments offer other funding opportunities in the form of research and teaching assistantships.

**Faculty**
Faculty are the heart of a graduate program, especially a doctoral program. As a doctoral student research is your world. It’s important to work with faculty whose work you find interesting. Many applicants choose a graduate program because they wish to work with a specific faculty member. Don’t focus only on only one professor because the most prominent faculty often are very busy with large labs filled with students and may not take new students each year. Have multiple faculty in mind to increase your odds of acceptance but also to ensure that you get the training you desire.
Ranking

Not all graduate programs are ranked, but any ranking information from sources such as *US News* is helpful.

Selectivity

How selective is the program? Peterson's Guide ([http://www.petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx](http://www.petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx)) provides basic information about programs, including statistics on how many applicants are accepted each year. What are your odds?

Location

If you're applying you obviously know where the graduate program is, as in what city or town, but what do you actually know about the place? Is it a town? City? How large a city? Do you know enough to determine that it might be someplace you would like to live for a few years?
Find the Master Degree Program That’s Right for You

- By Brendan Conway updated on Tuesday, January 29, 2013 Peterson’s Graduate School Research Guide

- Earning a master degree can help you advance your career and your salary in a wide range of industries. Whether you are planning to pursue an academic or professional masters degree, there are many options for you.

- **Popular masters programs searches**

  - Here are some popular searches for master degree programs:
    - Distance learning masters
    - Education masters programs
    - Masters science
    - Masters management
    - Psychology masters
Searching for a master program

When looking for a program to help you pursue your master's degree, be sure to consider the type of field you want to work in. A master's program will be more focused than undergraduate coursework, so it will help to know what subjects you are interested in.

Also, consider whether you want to study on campus or if you would prefer the convenience and flexibility of an online or distance learning program to lead you toward your masters degree.

Check out our keyword search and related programs to help guide your search for the master's degree program that is the best fit for you.

Getting into your master program of choice

After you've found the master degree program you're most interested in, then you're going to have set about the task of assembling your application, honing it to perfect, and sending it in. Peterson's has all kinds of tips that can help you with this process, and you can find more information on our page about graduate admissions.

For graduate admissions essay assistance, you'll also want to look into EssayEdge. With its plethora of expert essay editors, EssayEdge has exactly what you need to craft the finest admissions essay possible. Get some expert assistance on your essay today!
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) related to pursuing the Master of Public Health

What undergraduate major should I choose?

It depends on what area of public health you are interested in studying. Students of public health come from a variety of educational backgrounds; a quality undergraduate education will be a plus for any applicant.

However, there are some undergraduate majors that can be beneficial when applying to a school of public health. For example, if you are interested in epidemiology or biostatistics, a math major or basic science major is ideal. For behavioral sciences or health education, you might want to consider sociology, psychology or anthropology as a major. For studying health services administration, you might want to consider a business background. To study global health, a social science degree is helpful. For those who want to study environmental health, you might want to study either a biology/chemistry. Maternal and child health lends itself to both biology and social sciences.

All schools of public health require competence in effective communication (both verbal and written); therefore, students should try to take advantage of undergraduate opportunities to hone these skills.
How can I get experience in public health before I apply to a school?

There are many options for individuals who are looking to get experience before applying to a school of public health.

• Working part-time or full-time at a hospital or health clinic, such as working on an immunization program, a reproductive health clinic or a health promotion program.

• Volunteering for a non-profit direct services organization, such as a Whitman-Walker clinic or a local chapter of the American Red Cross.

• Working at a non-profit organization that is directly involved in public health advocacy and policy.

• Working or volunteering for a local health department.

• Taking an internship at a U.S. federal agency via the Student Educational Employment Program


Some schools have programs for future students that offer opportunities to get experience before applying to graduate school, so it is advisable to also contact schools of public health directly to inquire about such programs.
Which Schools of Public Health have Master’s International programs with the Peace Corps?

- Boston University School of Public Health
- Emory University Rollins School of Public Health
- George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services
- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
- Loma Linda University School of Public Health
- Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
- University at Albany SUNY School of Public Health
- University of Alabama, Birmingham School of Public Health
- University of Illinois, Chicago School of Public Health
- University of South Florida College of Public Health
- University of Washington School of Public Health

For more information about the Peace Corps Master's International programs in public health, please see:  
http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=learn.whyvol.eduben.mastersint
What is the accrediting body for Schools of Public Health?

The accrediting body for schools of public health is the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). CEPH is an independent agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit schools of public health based on a uniform set of standards. These schools prepare students for entry into careers in public health. For more information, visit CEPH's web site at www.ceph.org.

Why should I attend a CEPH-accredited School of Public Health?

Accredited schools of public health periodically undergo a rigorous accreditation process and are all held to very high standards, which means students can be assured of a quality education.

Attendance at an accredited school of public health offers benefits that may not be present at other institutions. For example, accredited schools of public health must offer a doctoral degree, a degree in each of the core areas of public health and be an independent academic institution rather than a department within a medical or other health professions school.
In what areas of public health can I get a degree?

The five core disciplines of academic public health, which all CEPH-accredited schools are required to offer, are:

**Biostatistics** - The use of statistical methodology for analyzing health related data.

**Epidemiology** - The study of the distribution and determinants of disease and disability in populations.

**Health Services Administration** - The study of health care systems, health care reform, health law, financial management, clinic management, and policy analysis.

**Health Education/Behavioral Science** - The practice of selecting, applying and monitoring appropriate behavioral, social and political change strategies to enhance the health of populations.

**Environmental Health** - The study of issues associated with the adverse chemical, physical and biologic agents in the environment on human health.

In addition, many schools offer these concentrations:

- International Health
- Maternal & Child Health
- Nutrition
- Public Health Practice/Program Management
- Biomedical Laboratory Science

To browse the many degree offerings at the schools, visit [www.asph.org/programsearch](http://www.asph.org/programsearch).
**What are the entrance requirements? How many credits of science classes are required prior to admission? What are the average GPA/GRE scores of accepted students?**

While schools of public health look for high graduate entrance exam scores and GPA, other aspects of an applicant's record, such as a career achievement, professional experience and clarity of career goals, are equally important. Admissions decisions are based on an overall assessment of the ability of applicants to successfully complete the degree track area selected. Each program or track within a given department may set additional requirements for admission, therefore, applicants should refer to the individual programs for details.

**Can I get an MPH offered completely via distance-based technology/off campus?**

Schools of public health offer a variety of programs via distance-based technology. Schools offer degree programs leading to a Master of Public Health, as well as individual courses taught via distance learning technologies. Distance learning programs vary and may include satellite-based courses, audio, print-based, or Internet-based course work. ASPH houses a search feature for [Distance Learning Programs](#) to help students find their ideal program.

In addition, there are many schools that offer non-traditional degree programs such as: executive programs, certificate programs, and summer institutes.
How much is tuition and what is the duration of an education in public health?

The average yearly cost of education including tuition, fees, books, etc in 2010-2011 was $18,000 for in-state tuition and fees and $26,000 for out-of-state tuition and fees; and the median for in-state was $13,500 and $25,000 for out-of-state.

Most master's programs are two years in length, and these figures are based on a two-year completion of degree. However, there are also accelerated programs, distance learning programs, programs for part-time students, etc.

Are there scholarship available for Schools of Public Health?

While ASPH does not collect this information, the admissions offices of schools of public health may have information on scholarship programs applicable to their schools, and should be contacted directly. Other scholarship resources may be found at:
www.idealist.org
www.explorehealthcareers.org
www.internationalscholarships.com
www.wiredscholar.com
www.aauw.org
Financing higher education is challenging today given rising tuitions. Carefully exploring all of your
How can I apply for financial aid?

Financing higher education is challenging today given rising tuitions. Carefully exploring all of your financing options ahead of time will make your life during and after school much easier.
Here are some simple steps to help you get started:

• Contact the school(s) you are interested in attending to learn about the institutional financial assistance programs.
  • Ask what types of assistance are available (scholarships, grants, loans, work programs).
  • Ask what the eligibility requirements are for each program (financial need, academic merit, work experience).
  •Be sure to find out what the application deadlines are - students miss out on assistance they would have otherwise received by applying too late.

• Are you willing to pursue your degree part-time? If so, ask about the school's tuition remission program. Many colleges subsidize or pay full tuition for employees that enroll in courses. If you are working now, ask your employer about tuition assistance. These types of programs are wonderful in helping students to reduce their reliance on student loan programs; however, you must balance that benefit against the additional time it will take to complete your degree program on a part-time basis.

• What are your plans for after graduation? The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) offers tuition assistance and living stipends for students participating in some Public Health disciplines in exchange for service in a federally mandated health manpower shortage area after leaving school. More information about this program is available at http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov or by calling 1-800-638-0824.

• Another new federal program is the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which allows for the forgiveness of college loans after ten years of continuous service in the public sector. For detailed information, please see: http://www.finaid.org/loans/publicservice.phtml.
• If you need to borrow, be sure to take your full eligibility from the federal programs first. Federal loans are the cheapest and offer the most flexibility in repayment.

  • To be considered for federal financial assistance, you must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually (individual colleges may require additional information as well). Depending on your FAFSA, you may be eligible to borrow subsidized loans where the government pays the interest on the loan for you while you are enrolled, during your grace period, and any approved deferment periods. Although interest begins to accrue at disbursement, you can defer your payments until you have finished your program.
  • The amount available from the federal loan programs varies based on your class year, the cost of your program and the other financial assistance you are receiving.
  • Repayment begins six to nine months after you leave school (or after leaving half-time enrollment status) and the standard repayment term is 10 years. There are several provisions to assist borrowers experiencing difficulty meeting payments.

• The 2009 Faculty Loan Repayment Program provides a financial incentive for degree-trained health professionals from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue academic careers. Individuals selected agree to serve on the faculty of an accredited health professions college or university for a minimum of two years. In return, the Federal government agrees to pay, for each year of faculty service, up to $20,000 of the outstanding principal and interest on the participant’s educational loans. To learn more about this program and for application information, please visit http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/dsa/flrp/ or contact the HRSA Call Center at 1-800-221-9393.
The internet makes the process of searching for a private scholarship easier than ever. There are a number of search sites that collect information about you and the educational program you wish to pursue during your first visit. From then on, you will get e-mails each time a new award is put into the database that appears to match your profile. Some suggested websites are:

- [http://www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
- [http://www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

The best time to start searching is in November or December prior to the academic year in which you will enroll. Remember, this information is always free – disregard any websites or mailings that request payment in exchange for financial aid information.

If you still need more assistance, contact the college at which you plan to enroll for recommendations. Do not forget to carefully estimate your existing resources and your anticipated expenses before signing on the dotted line! It is important to borrow only what you absolutely need to make ends meet.
What is the average salary of a public health professional?

Because public health professionals work in such a wide variety of settings and are often work in multi-disciplinary capacities, the salaries vary significantly from job to job. There is currently no national data available to ASPH on the average starting salary that is representative of what a graduate can expect. However, career offices of schools of public health may be able to provide this information for their graduates. Another resource to identify current salaries is [http://www.publichealthjobs.net/](http://www.publichealthjobs.net/)
Where do graduates of schools of public health find jobs?

Students from Schools of Public Health have gone on to a variety of different fields after graduation. The following are places of employment as reported by graduates to schools in exit surveys. Those surveyed graduated between December 2009 and May 2010 and the statistics may not reflect current employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospital or other health care provider</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking employment</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing training</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of College Staff</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal government (US or Foreign)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State or local government</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Profit</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of College Faculty</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not seeking employment</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting firm</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other industrial or commercial firm</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaceutical, biotech or medical device firm</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment Statistics for Public Health Graduates 2009-2010

**Employment Status**
- Employed: 66%
- Seeking Employment: 17%
- Not Employed: 17%

**Job Type**
- Health-Related: 72%
- Unknown: 26%
- Not Health-Related: 2%
Preparation Checklist

Junior Year

- Start researching graduate programs
- Schedule date to take the GRE and/or GRE Subject Tests, and request that your scores be electronically sent to each school where you are applying.

Senior Year

August
- Request application information or research application processes online (be sure to note deadlines for applying and addresses where supplemental materials should be sent).

September/October
- Request copies of your transcript from the Registration Office (it is usually best to have them sent directly to the addresses where supplemental materials should be sent).
- Approach faculty members, employers, etc. to write recommendation letters.
- Compose personal statements or essays for each institution and have your statement/essay revised by a faculty member or Career Services.
- Revise your resume and submit with supplemental information.

November
- Submit applications and application fees for each school by its published deadline.

December:
- Request scholarship/fellowship/assistantship information from each school where you applied.
January/February

- File your Federal Income Tax Return (required before you can complete the FAFSA).
- Complete the FAFSA Online and submit all completed scholarship application forms.
- Prepare for any admission/assistantship interview by scheduling an appointment with Career Services to use the Perfect Interview software program.
- Attend any preview days/assistantship interview sessions/faculty interview sessions for each institution.

March/April/May

- Follow-up on institutions that you have not heard from and make your final decision.
- Submit commitment forms and/or fees to the institution you have chosen, and register for classes.
- Send thank-you notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success.
Law School Preparation Checklist

**Spring of Junior Year**
- Start researching law schools
- Decide when you’ll take the LSAT (June or October) and how you’ll prepare for it
- Register for June LSAT and Credentials Assembly Service
- Prepare for June LSAT
- Identify your ideal recommenders
- Talk with recommenders

**August – September**
- Prepare for October LSAT (if you did not take June)
- Visit law school websites, become familiar with schools and if possible visit schools
- Request transcripts of all schools you attended from Registrar’s Office

**October**
- Give LSAC LOR forms to recommenders
- Make final decisions about which schools to apply to
- Draft personal statements
- Complete applications online
- Check in with recommenders
- Request Dean’s certification letters

**November**
- Finalize applications and submit

**January**
- File FAFSA and financial aid applications
March – April 2013
- Notifications arrive from law schools
- Weigh offers, scholarships
- Make a decision
- Pay seat deposit
Med School Preparation Checklist

Junior Year

Fall Semester
- Plan out when you will complete remaining premedical coursework requirements.
- Schedule a date to take the MCAT (either April or August of this year). http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/
- Start studying!
- Continue to explore the field of medicine through volunteer work, research, and reading about current medical issues.

Spring Semester
- Research and visit medical schools to help narrow down your list.
- Request 3-5 letters of recommendation
- Request copies of your transcript from the Registration Office
- Take the MCAT in April.
- Start filling out the AMCAS application online (available in May): http://www.aamc.org/audienceamcas.htm
- Request and complete applications from non-AMCAS schools.
- Start working on your personal essay.
- Submit your AMCAS application (starting in early June). Many schools accept students on a rolling basis, so it is to your advantage to apply as early as possible.
Summer before Senior Year
- Complete secondary applications.
- Take MCAT in August if you did not do so in April.
- Start preparing for your interviews.
- Start researching financial aid options.  http://www.aamc.org/students/financing/start.htm

Senior Year
Fall Semester
- Prepare for your interviews! Do your research and use the Perfect Interview software program to complete a mock interview.

Spring Semester
- Follow-up on institutions that you have not heard from and make your final decision.
- Submit commitment forms and fees to the institution you have chosen.
- Send thank you notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success
Advise for Managing Multiple Obligations

Graduate school will place strenuous demands on your time. Reading, writing, teaching assistantships/internships/work, research, on top of family/children and previous obligations which may carry over. These demands require prioritization and focus with much less guidance than you received in undergraduate school.

Graduate school by its nature attracts people who are overachievers, leaders, focused, driven, and serious and who may put work ahead of health by “pushing too hard.” Graduate students without assistantships may have to work a lot of hours outside of class to pay bills. In addition student loans may be necessary and a source of stress. Grade standards are stringent in graduate school; the lowest acceptable grade is usually a C. Faculty support and advising is sometimes hard to find since professors tend to be busy and harried. If your advisor is not supportive, ask to switch to a different one or seek out other mentors on campus.

Here is some advise to keep on top your game:

- **Seek social support** from formal sources of support, such as mentoring programs, as well as informal support groups like brown-bag lunch groups and e-mail discussion lists. Seek opportunities to interact with peers, vent, seek assistance, and commiserate, easing perceptions of isolation.
- **Reevaluate your coping style**, and try to use problem-focused and positive emotion-focused strategies (instead of self-denial, blame, dwelling, etc.).
- **Look for opportunities to relax.**
- **Distinguish tasks** that absolutely must be done from those that are simply nice to do.
- **Determine what must be done now**, what can wait, and what requires consistent small bursts of activity. Prioritize, don’t procrastinate. You'll feel stressed and out of control if you put off your work.
- **Seek help at home** if you have a partner or roommate to help with housework.
- **Allocate your time alongside your priorities**: don’t forget to spend time with your family. Decide to let some parts of your life, such as housework, receive less attention.
Make time for yourself. Allocate a couple of hours each week without work, family obligations, errands, or chores. A little bit of “me time” will go a long way in helping you maintain some semblance of balance.

Don’t cram. Research shows that repeated exposure to course material over several sessions is better than “massed practice”-- cramming. You are more likely to understand and retain material that you have covered several times than material crammed over a 1-2 day period.

Make time for spirituality whether it’s in the form of worship, meditation, community, etc.

Sleep. Though it might seem like a good idea to pull an all-nighter, you are better off getting some sleep and returning to it in the morning. Research shows that we need sleep in order to function.

Exercise. Exercise is one of the best stress-relievers around. When we are stressed we experience elevated levels of stress hormones that keep us wound up. We experience tightened muscles and short tempers. Exercise permits us to release the pent-up energy.

Find privacy where the telephone cannot ring and people can not interrupt.

Recognize when exhaustion sets in. Familiarize yourself with the conditions that bring it on, the symptoms by which you identify it and the most efficient means to deal with the problem.

Begin to analyze your destructive “self-talk” -- identify the statements that you say to yourself that minimize your worth and are false statements of your progress and accomplishments. Do not compare yourself to super performers.

Identify your strengths and give yourself the opportunity to rebuild confidence through utilizing them. At particularly low times, list the top fifteen strengths and read them back to yourself.

If stress becomes overwhelming and coping strategies do not help, seek professional help early. By waiting problems can only be exacerbated.
Kaplan & Princeton Review

- Kaplan and Princeton Review offer FREE ONLINE information and FREE testing in your area. All you have to do is go online, log onto Kaplan and Princeton Review, select the test that you are interested in taking and put in your zip code to get a listing of FREE events and FREE testing in your area.
Web Resources


http://www.gradschool.purdue.edu/students/prospective/resources.cfm#preparing
http://under30ceo.com/why-i-chose-starting-a-business-over-grad-school-part-1/
http://gradschool.about.com/od/financialaid/a/worthit.htm
http://www.gradschool.purdue.edu/downloads/students/Preparing%20for%20Grad%20School%20for%20Web.pdf
http://anitaborg.org/news/archive/20-tips-for-improving-your-resume/
https://career.berkeley.edu/grad/gradletter.stm#2
https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/ccp2/www/work/search2.html
http://msn.careerbuilder.com/Article/MSN-2680-Interviewing-10-things-to-do-after-the-interview/?sc_extcmp=JS_2680_advice&SiteId=cbmsn42680&catid=iv
Law School
- http://prelaw.umass.edu/
- http://www.lsac.org/
- http://equaljusticeworks.org/pre-law/guide
- http://www.lawschooltransparency.com/
- http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law.html
- http://www.nalp.org/prelaw_portal
- http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Legal/Lawyers.htm
- http://www.nalswd.org/

Med School
- http://studentdoctor.net/
- https://www.aamc.org/students/
- https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/
Publications

- *Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student's Guide to Earning an M.A. or a Ph.D.* by Robert L. Peters
- *Graduate Admissions Essays: Write Your Way into the Graduate School of Your Choice* by Donald Asher
- *Graduate Study for the Twenty-First Century: How to Build an Academic Career in the Humanities* by Gregory M. Colón Semenza
- *The Smart Way to Your Ph.D.: 200 Secrets From 100 Graduates* by Dora Farkas Ph.D.
- *The Graduate School Funding Handbook* by April Vahle Hamel and Jennifer S. Furlong

(All available on Amazon.com)