



St. Joseph's College
NEW YORK

OFFICE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT
AND ENGAGEMENT



CAREER GUIDE

GRADUATE SCHOOL

MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRADUATE SCHOOL

Applying to graduate school can be an exciting yet overwhelming process all at the same time. The Office of Career Development and Engagement, along with faculty and advisers, are here to assist you in your decision-making process.

If you are considering applying for graduate school, take some time to think about several factors:

- Is an advanced degree required to enter or advance in the particular field I am interested in?
- Am I passionate enough about this field to enter a degree-specific program?
- Do I have the financial resources to cover the cost of attending graduate school if I do not receive enough aid?
- Am I ready to devote the time and energy into another degree?
- Are there specific program requirements that will alter my lifestyle, and if so, am I willing to make those adjustments?
- Do I want to attend on a full-time or part-time basis?
- Am I postponing entering into the workforce?
- How long will it take to complete the program?

The decision to attend graduate school is a personal decision, one that should not be entered into lightly or be heavily influenced by others. If you have decided that graduate school is right for you, the next step is deciding when to apply, what program of study to enter into, what schools offer a program that will fit all of your needs and what information they will require from you.

IMPORTANT FACETS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A PROGRAM: RESEARCH AND COMPARE SCHOOLS

Now that you have made the decision to attend graduate school, it is important to begin your research, as selecting a graduate school program is a much different process than searching for a college while in high school. Graduate school is specific and specialized training for which you will have other factors to consider:

- The reputation and ranking of not only the school but the specific program that you are looking to apply to.
- The curriculum and, if applicable, the specializations that are available.
- The faculty of the department and their areas of expertise and research.
- The types of jobs offered to graduates upon completion of their program.
- The qualifications needed for the candidates to apply.

The following is a list of websites that will aid you in your graduate school research:

- GradSchools.com
- GraduateGuide.com
- Princeton Review
- Peterson's
- U.S. News & World Report
- PhDs.org

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

When doing your research, narrow down and select the schools/programs that you are interested in applying to.

Here is a sampling of questions to help you get started in making your decision of whether or not to apply:

- How many applications does the school/program receive?
- How many students are accepted into the school/program?
- How many students enroll into the school/program?
- On average, how long does it take most students to complete the program?
- How many graduates of the school/program are employed within six months after graduation?
- In which professions can graduates gain employment with this degree?
- What financial assistance does the school offer?

Admission counselors and even representatives from the individual departments are willing to discuss with you pertinent information regarding their program and its requirements.

TIMELINE FOR PLANNING

Applying to graduate school begins prior to your senior year in college. To help you do so, the Office of Career Development and Engagement has put together a suggested timeline:

Fall of Junior Year

- Request graduate school program materials and conduct your research of schools/programs you are interested in applying to.
- Obtain information regarding any required graduate school entrance exams.
- Speak with your professors regarding possible programs.
- Attend graduate school open houses to start gathering necessary information to begin making connections.

Spring of Junior Year

- Begin preparing for required graduate school entrance exams.
- Meet with your academic adviser to ensure you are taking the appropriate courses necessary for the graduate school programs for which you are applying.
- Begin to consider from which professors you would like to request a letter of recommendation; ask those who can write you a strong letter.

Summer Before Senior Year

- Narrow down and finalize the list of schools to which you plan to apply.
- Obtain applications for admissions.
- Note the deadlines and policies for all applications.
- Register for any required graduate school entrance exams and use the time to prepare for taking the exam.
- Begin to draft your personal statement/statement of purpose.
- Request official copies of all college transcripts by contacting each schools registrar's office.

Fall of Senior Year

- Finalize all required documents such as personal statements, résumé, portfolio, etc.
- Take any required graduate school entrance exams.

- Follow up with professors regarding letters of recommendation. Make sure the professor is aware of what each school requires for submission, whether through an online system or paper format.
- Complete and submit all applications and application materials prior to the deadline; verify that all materials were received.
- Complete your FAFSA in January.

Spring of Senior Year

- Schedule any required interviews.
- Submit confirmation and deposit to your chosen school.
- Notify other programs of your decision.
- Follow up with those who completed letters of recommendation with a thank you and notify them of your decision.

Please note that some programs' applications may require additional time for applicants to prepare for, so the earlier you do your research, the better chance you have of being prepared.

PARTS OF THE APPLICATION

Completing an application for graduate school takes a great deal of time, energy and thoughtful preparation. Here are several components to the graduate school application:

Application

Most schools have their application available for you on their website. You may have to create an account through their individual system or have the option to complete a paper copy. Please note whether the program of study that you are applying for requires you to complete a supplemental application.

Application Deadline

The application deadline is an important date to note. Some schools have rolling admissions, meaning they will accept applications for their programs at any point. Other programs have very strict deadlines that can range from December to February. It is important to remember that the earlier you can get your information in, the better off you will be. Also, it is important to note that some schools will allow you to begin a program either in the summer, fall or spring semester, whereas other schools may offer a fall-only start.

Fee

Just like when you are applying to colleges while in high school, you will also have to pay a fee for each application you submit for graduate school. The range in price tends to be higher as well.

Entrance Exams

Many schools have a graduate-entrance exam that you may be required to take, similar to the SAT or ACT that you took in high school. The most common graduate entrance exam is the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), which can either be the general test or a specific content area. Other exams that are required for some program admissions can include the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) or the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT). The following websites will give you further information about the content of these tests, test preparation suggestions and test dates and locations:

- Kaplan Test Prep
- Princeton Review
- Educational Testing Service
- Graduate Management Admission Council
- Law School Admission Council Inc.
- Association of American Medical Colleges
- American Dental Association

Letters of Recommendation

Typically, anywhere from two to three letters of recommendation are requested of applicants when applying to graduate school, so it is important to get to know your professors from all your classes, specifically those in your major area. The professors you choose should be able to write you a detailed letter about all of your qualities and skills that would make you an excellent candidate for the program which you are applying to. Make sure to ask them early on if they would write a letter on your behalf.

When you decide which faculty members you will ask to write you a letter, it is important to make an appointment to sit down with them and discuss your future plans and goals. Provide them with a copy of your unofficial transcript, résumé or activities sheet as well.

A helpful tool would also be to provide your professors with a sheet of the schools to which you are applying, the exact name of the program, deadlines for submissions and how the letter has to be submitted, either electronically or by mail. If they have to mail in their letter, provide them with the address of where to submit the letter along with a stamped envelope.

It is always good practice to follow up with a thank you and the outcome of your applications.

Personal Statement

Many schools require an essay or a series of essays discussing such topics as your desire to pursue the program of study for which you are applying, what experience you have in the field, your level of academic achievement and what your future goals and plans are for your career, just to name a few. It is important to pay careful attention to the requirements of what the school/program is requesting of you. Many schools have a character limit to which they adhere strongly. Other schools have very detailed and specific questions that they want answered in a well-thought-out statement. Make sure to tailor each essay to the individual school's parameters.

Some helpful tips for writing your essay can be found at:

- Kaplan Test Prep
- Princeton Review

Résumé or CV

You may be asked to provide a résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) with your application to graduate school. This is an added piece of information that highlights your experiences both inside and outside of the classroom that include research, internships, activities and/or leadership experiences.

Including a résumé in your application packet, even if not specifically requested, can be a great way to share additional information about your many experiences and skills.

For examples of how to write a résumé or a CV, please visit:

- [Career One Stop](#)
- [CollegeGrad.com](#)
- [Monster](#)
- [Quintessential Careers](#)
- [About.com](#)

Official Transcripts

All graduate programs will require that you submit an official transcript from all colleges and universities that you have attended, even if you did not receive a degree from them.

Please note, that if you took college credited courses in high school, you will have to request an official transcript from the college or university that provided the credit.

You will also need to send an official transcript to the school that you choose to attend once you have completed your degree to show that you have officially graduated from college.

Interviews

Interviews can sometimes be optional or a mandatory piece of the application process. If it is optional, it may be useful for you to attend. The interview is a great opportunity to bring to life what you have put down on paper and present your strengths to people in the program.

Prior to the visit, make sure to review the college's website, catalog, departmental material and the faculty within the department. You will make a better impression if you have done your research in advance and can ask detailed questions.

Financial Aid

There are many types of funding that you can obtain for graduate

school programs. Most graduate students seek funding in the form of assistantships or fellowships within their chosen academic departments, but this is typically more for students who are pursuing their doctoral degree rather than a master's degree. You will need to complete your FAFSA as part of the process to see what options might be available to you. Inquire about grants and scholarships, fellowships, assistantships and the various student loan options that are available.

Here is a listing of websites that discuss the various options for paying for graduate school.

- [Federal Student Aid](#)
- [Council for Graduate Schools](#)
- [Peterson's](#)
- [GradSchools.com](#)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T GET IN

Many programs are highly competitive and selective when accepting candidates. Make sure to review all of the requirements and application material that you submitted. Take the next few months to gain experiences in the form of internships, full- or part-time work, volunteer opportunities and the like. Prepare further and retake graduate admissions tests if your score did not meet program requirements. Remember that not everyone goes into graduate school right away, nor does everyone apply right out of college. But use your time wisely to improve upon your skills and gain hands-on practical experience in the field you desire to enter.

GRADUATE SCHOOL GUIDANCE

The Office of Career Development and Engagement is located at SJC Long Island in O'Connor Hall, Room E301, or at SJC Brooklyn in Tuohy Hall, Room 205. We invite you to make an appointment with a member of our counseling staff to help you with any other career-related topic. Career counseling sessions are generally 30-60 minutes in length, and appointments can be scheduled by contacting the Long Island office at 631.687.1248 or the Brooklyn office at 718.940.5852.





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SJC Long Island

155 West Roe Boulevard
Patchogue, NY 11772
631.687.1248

SJC Brooklyn

245 Clinton Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11205
718.940.5852

SJC Online

631.687.1248

sjcny.edu



ABOUT ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

Founded in 1916, St. Joseph's College is an independent, coeducational college with campuses in Brooklyn and on Long Island, in addition to SJC Online. We have a long history of providing an excellent, yet affordable, education. Our reputation has consistently earned SJC a place in the *U.S. News & World Report's* annual "America's Best Colleges" issue. We also have been highly ranked by *Forbes* and named one of New York's "Colleges of Distinction."