

# Applying to Graduate School

## Evaluating and Choosing Programs

- ✓ What programs interest you and at what institutions are they taught? What are your goals for further study and how well do specific programs meet your goals?
- ✓ Are you looking for a specific research focus? Which faculty members research in your areas of interest?
- ✓ What are the program requirements? Do you have the core qualifications or do you need to pursue further courses and gain experience before applying?
- ✓ Have you spoken with your professors and other experts to learn about an institution's reputation, strengths and weaknesses?
- ✓ Is the campus and location right for you? Where possible, visit the campus. Research the costs, campus life, housing, student services, funding/financial assistance, and other aspects of student life that are important to you.

## What are common requirements for admission to graduate studies?

- ✓ Most require completion of an undergraduate degree.
- ✓ Many require courses in a related area of studies.
- ✓ Grades are important but vary by program and institution. Most institutions require a minimum B+ or 3.0 GPA for the last 5 or 10 credits (1 or 2 years of full-time study). However, institutions report that most successful applicants have grades significantly higher than the minimum. As each program administers this requirement differently, review each program's website and contact the institutions directly.
- ✓ Some programs require related experience in the field.

## When should I start?

Begin the process at least 1 year before you plan to apply:

- ✓ Research programs to find deadlines and application requirements.
- ✓ Register and prepare for any tests (e.g. GMAT, GRE).
- ✓ Complete your statement of purpose or personal statement/biographical sketch at least one month before the deadline to allow time for feedback.
- ✓ Complete the online application before deadline. Deadlines vary by program and can be as early as Fall for entry the following September.
- ✓ Approach your references well in advance of the deadline to request letters of reference. Provide them with a copy of your statement and resume/CV to help them write a strong letter.

Organize the time you need for writing personal statements and graduate school applications with the UTSC assignment calculator:  
[ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/assignmentcal/](http://ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/assignmentcal/)

## Start Early:

Graduate schools require a high GPA, strong references and relevant knowledge and experience.

**Improve your GPA:** Visit the AA&CC and the Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL) to improve your academic skills.

## Cultivate References:

Get to know your professors. Their research is interesting! Professors who know you fairly well are able to write strong reference letters for you.

## Get Involved:

Build relevant experience and skills by engaging in paid work, volunteer and co-curricular activities.

## The AA&CC can help!

Attend the *Graduate & Professional Schools Fair* in early Fall. Review tip sheets on the AA&CC website: *Admission Tests, Post-Graduate Programs, Preparing for the Graduate & Professional Schools Fair* and the *What Can I Do with my Degree?* section.

## What supporting documents may be required?

- ✓ Official transcripts from all previous post-secondary education
- ✓ Online application forms
- ✓ Reference letters
- ✓ Autobiographical sketch outlining notable academic and non-academic activities OR Statement of Purpose
- ✓ Test scores/results where required
- ✓ Résumé or Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- ✓ Writing sample
- ✓ Health records and/or Proof of Residence

## Personal Essay or Statement of Intent

Admission committees typically request a brief essay (500 to 2000 words), sometimes called a Personal Statement (also known as Statement of Interest or Purpose). Length and content will vary by institution and program, but generally these essays provide insight on:

- ✓ Your research and/or professional interests
- ✓ Your future goals and career plan
- ✓ Your knowledge of, and experience in, the field
- ✓ How their institution and/or program will meet your goals
- ✓ What you will contribute to the program
- ✓ Your writing ability

## Where can I find more information?

### Graduate and Professional Programs

- ✓ Association of Universities and Colleges Canada directory of programs: [www.universitystudy.ca/search-programs/](http://www.universitystudy.ca/search-programs/)

### Application & Personal Statement Resources

- Effective Admission Letters (U of T Writing Centre): [www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/admission-letters](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/admission-letters)
- The Personal Statement: How to Get it Started (videos/exercises) [www.utoronto.ca/aacc/applying-professional-graduate-schools](http://www.utoronto.ca/aacc/applying-professional-graduate-schools)
- Purdue University Online Writing Lab: [owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01)



### Funding/Financial Aid Sites

- ✓ OSAP and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program (OGS) [osap.gov.on.ca](http://osap.gov.on.ca)
- ✓ Canadian Institute for Health Research [www.cihr.ca](http://www.cihr.ca)
- ✓ Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada [www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca)
- ✓ Social Science Research Council of Canada [www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca](http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca)

## What if I Don't Get In?

Admission to graduate school is very competitive. It is important to have a back-up plan. Possibilities include:

**Reapply:** Contact the program admissions staff and/or a faculty member to talk about ways to make your application stronger. The AA&CC can strategize with you on improving your next application as well.

**Find Work:** The AA&CC can assist you with your job search for up to 2 years after graduation. Sometimes relevant experience improves your application.

**Consider Alternate Careers:** Speak to a Career Counsellor who can help you generate alternative career plans. See our *What can I do with my degree?* tip sheets. Visit our library, and review our career-focused ebooks in the U of T Library catalogue.

**Take a Post-Graduate Diploma or Certificate:** Gain technical knowledge and skills to facilitate entry into a related field of work.

**Broaden Your Horizons:** Travel, volunteer and experience new things!

Evaluate which of these possibilities is right for you. Use the services of the AA&CC to help you clarify goals and develop strategies. We are here to help!

Please note: While this tip sheet aims to ensure accuracy, requirements do change. Consider it a starting point for your further research. Visit individual school websites for detailed, up-to-date information about admission requirements and application procedures.