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# *Grad School*

*Tips, Techniques and Timeline*

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## *The Brickley Center Career Services*

*Eastern Nazarene College*

*Contact Career Services for Graduate School Help*

*617-745-3892*

Updated 1/08

## **Is Graduate School for Me?**

It is important to evaluate your reasons for wanting to attend graduate school. Unlike most undergraduate experiences, graduate programs require that you have clear direction toward a certain career path. Ask yourself the following questions: Do my career goals require an advanced degree? Am I looking for a specialized degree only obtainable through graduate school? Do I have the motivation and desire to commit myself to the time and effort demanded by graduate school programs? Is it better for me to go part-time or get some work experience first?

To assist you in your decision-making, it may be beneficial to seek out a professional in the field you are considering and ask them to do an informational interview. How did they decide to attend graduate school? How did they select a program? What was it like? Consider talking to ENC alumni who have taken a similar path. Also, make an appointment with a Career Counselor to discuss your questions and formulate a plan.

## **How do I Choose a Graduate Program?**

Finding a program that fits your goals and professional interests is essential to a successful graduate school experience. Keep in mind that just because a program is in the top ranking by *US News & World Report* doesn't mean it's a guaranteed best fit for you. Consider the following criterion when selecting a program:

- **Admissions Requirements:** do your qualifications (i.e. GPA, co-curricular experiences, coursework, test scores, etc) meet the minimum requirements?
- **Program Characteristics:** what is the faculty to student ratio? How long does it take to complete the curriculum? What is the reputation of the program, and how does it measure with comparable programs? Does the philosophy / emphasis of the program fit with my interests and values? What are the facilities like? Will I be required to do research, internships, or a thesis?
- **Faculty:** what are the faculty specialty areas of research interests? What kind of involvement have they had in their respective fields? Are they well known in their areas of expertise? Have they been active in research or publishing (tip: read some of their publications)? What are their distinguished achievements?
- **Alumni:** what are graduates of the program currently doing? What was their experience like in the program? What are the statistics on finding employment after graduation?
- **Financial Aid:** what kind of financial aid is available? How many students secure graduate, research or teaching assistantships? What percentage of the tuition is covered through these opportunities? Are their scholarships available?

## **What do I Need to Apply?**

Different programs have different admissions requirements. It's important to keep track of what each program requires as well as the deadline dates for each. You may want to keep a spreadsheet for each school you are researching. Below are some of the common requirements, depending on the type of program:

- **Official Transcript:** this can be obtained through the Registrar's Office in Gardner Hall
- **Exam Scores:** check to see what, if any, test scores are required (i.e. GRE, MCAT, LSAT, GMAT)
- **Portfolio:** some programs, such as those in the arts, require a portfolio which showcases your work
- **Essays & Personal Statements:** these writing samples should be taken very seriously. Your essays should be tailored to the specific schools to which you're applying. For advice on writing your essays or to have them critiqued, contact the Brickley Center's Career Services.
- **References:** choose individuals (i.e. professors, advisors, internship supervisors, etc) who have seen your best work and recognize your potential. Talk with them about your goals, and ask if they would be comfortable serving as a reference for you. Provide them with a resume, unofficial transcript, and work sample so they can see the extent of your achievements. Be sure to give them plenty of time (at least 1 month) to complete their references for you, and provide reasonable deadlines. Also, include stamped, addressed envelopes for them to mail their recommendation forms. Remember to send your references a thank you note!
- **Interview:** some programs require an in-person interview before they make their final decision. It's critical that you take time to practice! Take advantage of a practice interview session available through Brickley's Career Services.

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Background**

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why do you want to pursue graduate school for \_\_\_\_\_?
3. What impacted your decision to attend graduate school?
4. Why did you select this program / school?
5. What do you hope to do with a graduate degree in this field? What are your future goals?

### **Education**

1. Tell me about your undergraduate experience at Eastern Nazarene College. How did it prepare you for this next step?
2. What was your involvement like outside of the classroom?
3. Tell me about a time when you worked on a project as part of a team? What role did you play? What were the outcomes?
4. How would your faculty describe you?
5. What would contribute to our program?

### **Experience**

1. What related experience have you had? What did you learn from these experiences?
2. Tell me about a particular experience which has helped you to recognize your interests and strengths?

### **Personal**

1. What motivates you to do your best work?
2. What do you see as the biggest challenges you will face in graduate school?
3. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
4. How do you handle stress?
5. What is your favorite book?
6. What is your proudest accomplishment?
7. What do you like to do in your spare time?

### **Conclusion**

1. Why should you be accepted into this program?
2. What questions do you have for us?

## GRADUATE SCHOOL TIMELINE

<b>Late Spring/Summer, One Year Prior to Attending</b>	<p><b>Research</b> various graduate school programs using the easy-to use <a href="http://www.petersons.com">www.petersons.com</a> website and Peterson's Guides to Graduate Schools and Professional Programs located in the Brickley Center.</p> <p><b>Send</b> for catalogs, course listings, research/teaching assistantship applications, and financial aid forms from schools you are interested in.</p> <p><b>Register</b> for GRE, GMAT, and/or other graduate school entrance tests. Registration booklets are available at the Brickley Center. Check out <a href="http://gre.org">gre.org</a>, <a href="http://gmat.org">gmat.org</a>, etc.</p> <p><b>Study</b> for appropriate graduate school admission tests.</p>
<b>Early Fall</b>	<p><b>Register</b> and <b>take</b> appropriate graduate school admission tests.</p> <p><b>Obtain</b> letters of recommendation from faculty.</p> <p><b>Write</b> down application deadlines.</p> <p><b>Write/rewrite</b> essay-professional statement. The Brickley Center has excellent resources on writing your application's essay statement called, <i>How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School</i> and <i>Graduate Admissions Essays- What Works, What Doesn't and Why</i>.</p>
<b>October-November</b>	<p><b>Send</b> thank-you notes to people who wrote you recommendation letters.</p> <p><b>Send</b> completed graduate school applications based on school's deadline dates. (Check with institutions prior to deadline to make sure file is complete.)</p>
<b>Winter</b>	<p><b>Complete</b> the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Financial Aid PROFILE, if required.</p>
<b>Spring</b>	<p><b>Visit</b> institutions that accept you.</p> <p><b>Send</b> thank you notes to people who have been involved in this process informing them of your success!</p>

\*\*This timeline may need to be adjusted due to various graduate school deadlines or career fields. This represents what is ideal for most applicants. Just remember a simple rule: "The earlier the better" in beginning this process!

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## GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

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Stop by Brickley's Career Services for information on...

- Choosing a graduate program
  - Discussing whether graduate school is right for you
  - Starting the application process
  - Assistance with essays and personal statements
  - Choosing references
  - Portfolio reviews
  - Graduate admission exams
  - Practice Interviews
  - Graduate school fairs and info sessions
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### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

#### General Websites on Grad School

- [www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com)
  - [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
  - [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com) (U.S. News)
  - <http://international.gradschools.com> (International Programs)
  - [www.graduateguide.com](http://www.graduateguide.com)
  - [http://www.enc.edu/org/brickleycenter/gradschool\\_resources.html](http://www.enc.edu/org/brickleycenter/gradschool_resources.html)
- (MAT)
- <http://international.gradschools.com>

#### Law School

- [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org)

#### Medical School

- [www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)

#### Essays & Personal Statements

- [www.essayedge.com](http://www.essayedge.com)
- [www.admissionessays.com](http://www.admissionessays.com) ("Writing Tips" section)
- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p\\_perstate.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_perstate.html) (Purdue University Writing Lab)

#### Testing

- [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org) (GRE)
- [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org) (LSAT)
- [www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org) (MCAT)
- [www.gmac.com](http://www.gmac.com) (GMAT)
- [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org) (DAT)
- [www.milleranalogies.com](http://www.milleranalogies.com)

#### Financial Aid

- [www.finaid.com](http://www.finaid.com)
- [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
- [www.gradview.com/finaid/paying.html](http://www.gradview.com/finaid/paying.html)
- [www.graduateguide.com](http://www.graduateguide.com)
- [www.gradschools.com/info/financial.html](http://www.gradschools.com/info/financial.html)
- [www.gradloans.com](http://www.gradloans.com)
- [www.princetonreview.com/grad/finance/](http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/finance/)

**For additional Graduate School information / help, please contact  
Brickley's Career Services at 617-745-3892**