

Graduate School Application Checklist – Prepare Now!



If you are planning to apply to a graduate program of study in Psychology, you should prepare early. The following guidelines, adapted from ‘Getting In: A Step-by-Step Plan for Gaining Admission to Graduate School in Psychology’¹, will help you to approach the graduate school application process in the most effective manner.

JUNIOR YEAR

- Read about careers in psychology. Become acquainted with the APA’s publications, *Graduate Study in Psychology*. Make note of any programs that appeal to you.
- Attend colloquia and other events sponsored by your psychology department. Find out about state, regional, and national psychology conferences. Attend those that interest you if you are able. Information about these events will be posted on the Undergraduate Bulletin Board and throughout the building.
- Discuss your interests with faculty. Meet with your advisor to determine the electives in Math, Science, Computer Science, Psychology, and other areas that might be an asset in applying to graduate school.
- Find out faculty research interests, read their articles, and get acquainted with those whose research interests you. Take a class with these professors.
- Volunteer to assist faculty in their research, or investigate other field-related experiences. Assisting with research is an invaluable way to gain research experience, and to allow professors to get to know you. Having a working relationship with a faculty member will also help in requesting recommendation letters.
- Find out if you are qualified to join Psi Chi, and become a member if eligible.
- We strongly recommend that students planning to apply to graduate programs during their senior year of college consider taking their graduate school entry exams in the spring of their junior year. Below are some helpful resource sites. In most cases, you can register for the tests online.

¹ Privitera, G. (2015). *Getting into graduate school: A comprehensive guide for psychology and the behavioral sciences*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Graduate School Entry Exams

Search online for information about the GREs or MAT. Use study guides or attend a course to prepare for these exams. Take practice exams to estimate what your score may be.

- **Tip:** Be sure to sign up early to avoid fees and ensure that your preferred testing site is available!
- GRE: The Graduate Record Exam is appropriate for students applying to programs in the arts & sciences (psychology, literature, social work, etc.) You can register for the GRE via their website.
 - Not all graduate programs require GRE scores for their application so be sure to check each graduate program's admission requirements
- MCAT: The Medical College Admissions Test is for students applying for careers in medicine. Get more information at <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/>
- LSAT: The Law School Admission Test is for students applying toward training in the law. Visit <http://www.lsac.org/> for more information

SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR

- Fill out an Undergraduate Psychology Major flowchart to assess what requirements you have fulfilled, and which ones remain to be completed. Check your OPUS account to assess your General Education Requirement (GER) completion or Degree Tracker (DT).
- Find out what programs interest you by studying Graduate Study in Psychology or other materials available online or your local library. Compile a preliminary list of programs that offer the area of concentration, degree, and training model that appeal to you.
- Contact your list of programs for additional information on their programs and financial aid. Study this information carefully.
- After reviewing this information, compile a list of programs to which you will apply. If you can afford it and it seems worthwhile, visit the campuses of programs that interest you or about which you have the most questions.
- Call the financial aid offices of the schools to which you intend to apply. Ask for information about the aid available to graduate students, as well as any forms you will need to complete to be considered for financial aid. Ask if there is anyone else to whom you should speak regarding other potential sources of aid.

- Go to the Career Center or library to research sources of financial aid in addition to the ones offered by the Universities to which you are applying.
- Plan and schedule your application strategy. Pay careful attention to application deadlines, particularly with regard to financial aid, which often has earlier deadlines than admissions.
- Calculate application fees and make sure you have enough money to cover them. Some schools will waive this fee if there is a financial hardship; check with individual schools to see if they have this policy. Begin planning how you will cover the expense of any preselection interviews that you may be required to attend.

SENIOR YEAR - September

- Schedule to take the online GREs (if needed to do this) in September or October. Register for the GRE Subject test in Psychology if this is a requirement of any of the programs. Continue reviewing material for these exams until they are taken.
- Print out a current copy of your unofficial transcript from OPUS. You will include this transcript in your packet for those faculty members whom you will ask to write letters of recommendation.
- Prepare a resume for the same purpose.
- Begin to determine which faculty members you will ask to write letters of recommendation.
- Begin thinking about the various essay questions and/or personal statement required by the various programs. Allow time for your ideas to germinate.

SENIOR YEAR - October

- If applicable, take the GREs; request that scores be sent to all schools to which you will apply.
- Begin contacting all individuals from whom you will request letters of recommendation.
- Begin filling out financial aid and application forms.
- Write first drafts of your essays and personal statement; have others critique these and offer suggestions.

SENIOR YEAR - November

- Request at the Registrar's office that your undergraduate transcript be sent to all of the institutions to which you are applying. Make sure that your transcripts will be sent by your earliest application deadline.
- Finalize financial aid forms.
- Get feedback and write final drafts of your essays and personal statement.
- Contact individuals who have agreed to write you letters of recommendation. Be certain to provide them with a packet including all necessary forms and envelopes for each school, as well as a copy of your resume and transcript. Envelopes should be stamped, addressed, and return-addressed, and should be neatly attached to the proper correspondence for each school.

SENIOR YEAR - December

Carefully prepare each application for mailing. Be sure to photocopy each application in its entirety. Consider sending applications registered mail if you can afford it.

SENIOR YEAR - January/February

- Begin to prepare for possible preselection interviews.
- Contact professors whom you have asked to submit letters of recommendation. Confirm that they were sent and thank those who sent them.
- Follow up with schools to confirm that your completed applications were received.
- Attend any preselection interviews to which you were invited.

SENIOR YEAR - March

- Accept or decline any offers from the schools to which you applied.
- If you are not accepted to any of the programs of your choice, consider other options towards reapplication the following year.

SENIOR YEAR - April

- Finalize financial arrangements for attending graduate school.

- Call or write to the people who wrote your letters of recommendation and inform them of the outcome.
- Celebrate (or regroup).

REMEMBER: It often takes students more than one attempt in order to gain admittance. If you have determined that graduate study in Psychology is your goal and have the minimum qualifications to make this a realistic pursuit, do not give up but work to strengthen your application.