Applying to Graduate School 101

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Applying to Graduate School 101

Graduate Studies Resource Center (GSRC)
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Fall 2020
Should I apply to graduate school?...

**Factors to Consider**

- Your career goals: short-term and long-term
- Time: Master’s programs (1-3 yrs); PhD (5-6 yrs); Law (3 yrs)
- Cost / Funding: scholarships, fellowships, grants, loans
- Convenience: location, travel
- Life / Family / Other intangibles
Graduate Studies at CSULB

- Approximately 5,000 students
- Over 100 graduate program options across 65 fields
- 4 doctoral programs
- Standard graduate tuition ~$8,300 per year for full-time students
- Need-based financial aid available for most graduate programs!
Common Program Options

- Master's degree

- Ph.D. with master’s built in (master’s degree typically obtained during year 1 & 2 of doctorate upon completion of qualifying exam/comprehensive exam).

- Ph.D. degree
Types of Graduate Programs

**Master's degrees**
Offered in many fields of study, and vary in coursework and career trajectory

- Two general types of Master’s degrees
  - Non-terminal master’s degrees: designed to lead to a doctoral degree (e.g., sociology, psychology, biology, English)
  - Terminal master’s degree is the highest degree in the field, and does not typically lead to a doctoral degree (e.g., Master of Library Science; Master of Business Administration, Master of Social Work)

- For full-time students, completing a master's degree usually takes 2 years
Types of Graduate Programs

Specialist degrees

- Prepare students for professional certificates, credential or licensing requirements (e.g., credential for becoming a K-12 teacher, counselor, or principal).
- Often earned in addition to a master's degree and will require additional coursework, training, or internship experience.
Types of Graduate Programs

**Doctorate degrees – Ph.D.**

- Focus on the creation of new knowledge via independent research
- Ph.D. recipients typically pursue faculty positions at 4-year universities and/or work in research
- Ph.D. generally takes 5-6 years to complete
I’m graduating soon, when can I apply?

• Get an early start – recommended students begin preparing to applying more than one year before you begin program.

• Application deadlines at many colleges are often 9-10 months before program begins.
  o *Example*: CSULB M.S. Industrial/Organizational Psychology program begins *August 2021* for fall. The application deadline for the program is *December 1st, 2020*
Do I need work experience to apply?

• Many master’s, doctoral, and credential programs do *not require* full-time work experience, but work experience can help – especially if it is relevant to the field you are applying

• Examples of programs that often prefer/require relevant work experience
  o Master of Business Administration (MBA)
  o Master of Public Administration (MPA)
  o Education Doctorate (EdD)
  o Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT)
Materials needed to apply

- Application/Transcripts
- Entrance Exam (e.g., GRE, LSAT, GMAT, CSET)
- Statement of Purpose or Personal Statement (2-5 pages)
- Resume/CV
- Letters of Recommendation (3 generally recommended)
- Writing Sample
- Funding (e.g., scholarships, fellowships, grants, loans)
Materials needed to apply

Application
- Most applications are online and cost from $70 - $90 (fee waivers are available for some schools)
- CSULB application is composed of two parts: (1) Cal State Apply application and (2) separate application to specific program

Transcripts
- Should be sent to each college you apply
- Send transcripts from each school you attended beyond high school (e.g., community college, CSULB)
Frequently Asked Questions

• **What is the minimum GPA for graduate school?**
  - CSU system: 2.5 or higher
  - UC system: 3.0 or higher
  - Private schools: Varies

• **Will I need to interview to get accepted to a program?**
  - Most masters programs do **not** require an interview
  - Examples of fields that may require an interview: counseling, K-12 teaching, business, and occasionally STEM fields
Resources for GRE Prep

• **Paid services**
  o Magoosh – online service ($79-179)
  o College of Professional & International Education (CPIE) – on campus ($500)
  o Kaplan, Princeton Review, Manhattan Prep ($800+)

• **Free test prep material**
  o Long Beach Public Library
  o Crunch Prep (33 free practice tests)
  o GSRC prep workshops
Frequently Asked Question

• **What is an acceptable GRE score for applying to Ph.D. programs?**
  
  o Math & Verbal: typically 60\textsuperscript{th} percentile and above
    (score varies by test date)
  
  o Analytical Writing: generally 4.0+ (4.5+ for competitive programs)
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What role does the statement of purpose play in my application?

• GPA and Exam Scores are telling, but limited…
• Indicator of whether you “fit” within a program/field
• Sample of your ability to write
• Serves as a proxy for interview
• Can be the difference in getting accepted
• Opportunity to sell yourself!
Materials needed to apply

Statement of Purpose or Personal Statement (2-5 pages)

- Reviewed by admissions committee (i.e., faculty in your program)

- General areas to cover
  - Personal background (only if it is relevant)
  - Your educational / professional experience (e.g., work experience, research experience)
  - Why you are a good fit for the program
  - What you plan to contribute to your area of study/field
  - Your future professional goals
Materials needed to apply

• Resume/CV (Curriculum Vitae)
  o Focus on academic/scholarly work – research, scholarly presentations (e.g., professional conference), professional affiliations (e.g., AERA, ASHE)
  o Include work/volunteer experience, particularly if relevant
  o Keep formatting simple
  o Have people in your network proofread
Materials needed to apply

• Letters of Recommendation
  o Typically 3 required
  o Who to ask? Faculty, work/volunteer supervisors
  o How to ask? In-person (email, only if in-person is not possible)
  o What to provide recommender? A list with names of programs, deadlines, resume/CV, draft of statement of purpose
  o When to ask? 2 months before you need them
Materials needed to apply

• Funding your graduate studies
  o Scholarships: on-campus and external scholarships
  o Grants (similar to scholarships): CSU students can receive University Grant covers most of tuition (approx. $7k/year); need-based
  o Fellowships: may cover all tuition/fees and offer stipend; typically involves work as research assistant, intern, or teaching assistant (very common for doctoral studies)
  o Loans: Similar to undergrad loans, repayment begins 6 months after graduation
How do I become a stronger applicant?

• Make your time at CSULB worthwhile…
  o Join clubs/organizations that support students on the path to grad school
  o Building your resume/CV through research experience, internships related to your field
  o Community service/volunteer work in your field
  o Research different graduate programs and offerings
  o Learn about the application process and create timeline → Get an early start!
How to Contact GSRC

Online Appointments
Monday-Thursday: 10am-6pm
Friday: 9am-5pm

Website
www.csulb.edu/gsrc

Email
gsrc@csulb.edu