



Graduate and Professional School Guide

Career Development Office

Grinnell College

1127 Park Street

Grinnell, IA 50112

Phone: 641-269-4940

Fax: 641-269-4508

Web: [Career Development Office Website](#)

E-mail: career@grinnell.edu

Table of Contents

Defining Graduate School Degrees	3
Deciding if Graduate School is Right for You.....	4
Do's and Don'ts.....	4
Informational Interviews	8
Deciding When to Attend.....	9
Research Resources	10
Criteria for Evaluating Graduate Schools	11
Applying to Graduate School	12
Graduate Admission Tests	14
Financing Graduate/Professional School	15
General Timetable for Graduate School.....	16
Pre-Law	18
Pre-Law at Grinnell College	19
Timetable for Law School	21
Pre-Med.....	22
Pre-Med at Grinnell College	23
Timetable for Med School	25
Business School	26

Defining Graduate School Degrees

When you consider graduate school, you may be thinking of:

- professional school (law, medicine, business)
- master's programs, or
- doctoral programs, all of which require specialized knowledge and concentrated study in one area.

Research Master's Degree

Provides experience in research and scholarship, and may be a final degree or a step toward a Ph.D. A master's degree usually takes 1-2 years of study. A qualifying final comprehensive exam or thesis typically required for completion of this program.

Professional Doctoral Degree

The highest degree for areas such as medicine, business and law requiring practical applications of knowledge and skills. M.D. for medical practice and J.D. for law are the most common.

Professional Master's Degree

Gives a specific set of skills needed to practice in a particular field, (e.g., education, accounting, business, engineering, social work). Generally a final or terminal degree, and involves an internship, practicum, field work and/or professional exam.

Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy)

The highest earned academic degree and primary credential for college level teaching. The Ph.D. involves course work and an extensive and original research project (e.g., dissertation). Usually takes a minimum of 4-6 years of full-time study.

Dual Degree Programs

Combines professional and research degrees within specific areas of interest. Others may combine professional programs. (e.g., J.D./M.B.A., M.A./J.D., M.D./M.B.A., M.D./Ph.D). May have more stringent admission requirements.

Deciding if Graduate School is Right for You

Do's and Don'ts

Before applying for further study, you need to be fully aware of the working conditions, employment prospects, as well as physical and mental demands of the field you plan to pursue. In addition, the more immediate demands of research, coursework and major papers are all part of the graduate school experience to be considered. Although there are defined course requirements in most graduate and professional school curricula, you will build a program for yourself based on your interests and goals.

1.) *Do start thinking about your values, interests, and priorities for your career and life.* Use the worksheet on page 5 to explore your values, interests, priorities, and goals. The more you understand about yourself, values, work style, and goal, the more you will find a post-Grinnell step that is truly right for you for the long term.

2.) *Do have a clear purpose and goal for attending graduate school.* Use the worksheet on page 6 to think about what you want out of a graduate program. What do you hope that a graduate degree will do for you? How will a graduate degree add to your career direction?

3.) *Do research the graduate school option in many different ways.* Triangulating information will allow you to obtain a comprehensive understanding of not only the program, but also how your choice will affect your life and personal goals. Make sure you understand the field your pursuing and its place in the work force. Use the worksheet on page 7 to assess your research options.

1.) *Don't use graduate school as a way to postpone making a career decision.* Some individuals enter graduate study with the idea that they can postpone the inevitable—deciding on a career and searching for a job—for another year or two. ***If this is your sole motivation for entering graduate school, it could have serious implications for your career development.***

2.) *Don't perceive graduate school as the automatic next step.* If you do, you may not be prepared for the focused direction that graduate school provides. Two of the reasons most frequently given by students who have dropped out of graduate programs are a dislike of concentrated academic work and a realization that they have not defined their career goals clearly enough.

3.) *Don't rely on only one source for your graduate decision information.* There is no “right” or “wrong” way to pave your career path, so seeking only one perspective may limit your understanding of your options.

Choose graduate school because you are working towards a goal. Graduate or professional study can be a worthwhile and rewarding career additive; it should not be a disappointing employment alternative.

Deciding if Graduate School is Right for You

Do start thinking about your values, interests, and priorities for your career and life.

- What do I want in my lifetime?
- What is important to me?
- What kind of work and/or experiences do I find meaningful?
- What tools and/or goals do I already have?

Deciding if Graduate School is Right for You

Do have a clear purpose and goal for attending graduate school.

- What are my long and short-range goals?
- What is necessary for me to achieve these goals?
- What is my interest and ability in a graduate program?
- What would be the benefit of not going to graduate school?
- What will a graduate degree will do for me?
- How will a graduate degree add to my career direction?

Deciding if Graduate School is Right for You

Do research the graduate school option in many different ways.

- What information do I have available? How do I feel about the information presented?

- What mentors do I have available (e.g., faculty, friends, professionals)? How do I feel about their perspectives and advice?



See p.8

- With whom could I conduct an **informational interview** to build my understanding of graduate/professional programs? What can I ask them to further critically evaluate my options?

- What are the time and money investments to take on another academic program? How will those affect me?

- What is my interest and ability in a graduate program? What are the different kinds of programs in my field and which will most benefit my goals?

- What can I do without a graduate or professional degree?

Deciding if Graduate School is Right for You

Do research the graduate school option in many different ways.

Informational Interviews

An informational interview is a brief (20-45 minutes) interview (although not an actual job/graduate school interview) with an individual in your particular field/graduate program of interest. It may be an individual in the specific type of job/graduate program you are looking for, or someone involved with the program (e.g., current students or alumni). Informational interviews are designed:

- To explore careers/graduate programs and clarify your career goals
- To discover assistantship/fellowship opportunities that are not advertised
- To expand your professional network...
- To build confidence for your graduate school essays/interviews...
- To access the most up-to-date career/graduate program information...
- To identify your professional strengths and weaknesses...

Be sure that the interviewee knows from the start that you are looking to gather information, not ask for a spot in the program!

How to Arrange an Informational Interview

It is recommended to send a letter or e-mail to your contact for your initial communication to give him or her a chance to get to know you and what you're seeking. The main purpose of this letter is to obtain an interview. Open each letter with a warm personal statement about why you are writing to this particular person. State who suggested you talk to him or her (if the referral was made by someone whose name the person would recognize). Clearly explain that you would like advice and information. Continue the letter with an explanation of your current situation and what you are attempting to do. Inform your contact where you are in the process. Mention that you have enclosed a resume if you have done so. Explain that you would like to set up an informational interview to get his or her reaction to your résumé and discuss your plans for marketing yourself and pursuing a graduate education.

Remember you will be talking to professionals with busy schedules; request a brief meeting and be flexible. Proofread all of your correspondence.

Preparation for the Informational Interview

You should always remember that while this meeting is for informational purposes, you are still on display. You will be scrutinized; therefore, you are in a position to make an important and positive impression. You may use the contact person in the future to find a job. Informational interviews are an opportunity to leave a very positive impression without the heavy pressure of an actual interview.

Informational interviews can be very relaxed affairs, and may be used to find out about certain industries, organizations, and graduate programs, the future of certain types of business, degrees or training required to do various kinds of work, and how comfortable you feel in certain environments—in short, almost anything you wish to learn. Of course, you need to know what information you are searching for, and you must be brief.

People want to help. You should not be intimidated. If they are human, and they are, then we can predict three things that are in your favor:

- They love to talk about themselves;
- They are proud of their work and love to talk about it; and
- They feel good when they help other people.

Deciding When to Attend Pros and Cons

You may need more time to clarify your professional goals. This is common. A frequently asked question about graduate school is “When should I attend?” There is really no “right” or “wrong” answer. For that reason, you need to evaluate all factors in your life when determining your best time to begin graduate study.

In conjunction with your responses on the “Deciding if Graduate School is Right for You” worksheets, fill out the pro/con tables below. It is highly advisable to take these tables to faculty advisers, alumni, or students currently enrolled in programs of interest in order to reflect on your ideas and hear other perspectives on when to attend.

<i>Immediately After Graduation</i>		<i>Another Time</i>	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons

If you decide to complete your graduate study another time, yet plan to begin a program within three to five years, you may want to take the appropriate standardized entrance examinations during your senior year of college, or shortly after, as scores on most of these tests are generally valid for this period of time.

R e s e a r c h R e s o u r c e s

Peterson's Graduate Programs Directory profiles more than 1,500 accredited institutions offering master's and/or doctoral programs of over 300 disciplines in the U.S. and Canada. Profiles include general institutional information, a directory of institutional offerings, academic contact persons, and a listing of departmental faculty and their research interests. Directories are located in the Career Development Office Library and Burling Library. Website: [Peterson's Graduate Programs Directory](#)

Comprehensive Online Guides:

[Graduate School Guide](#)

[PhDs.org](#)

[GradSchools.com](#)

[Princeton Review](#)

Medical School Admissions Requirements is a publication by the Association of American Medical Colleges that provides listings of U.S. and Canadian medical schools with information and advice about applications and financial aid. This guide is available in the Career Development Office Library. Website: [Association of American Medical Colleges Website](#)

The Student Doctor Network provides forums for medical students to post opinions and information related to the application and interview process. (**Opinions and information posted here may or may not be accurate**). Website: [The Student Doctor Network Website School Database](#)

The MBA Explorer is the official GMAT website, offering test information, MBA program search tools, financing resources, a recruiting calendar, advice for those considering programs, and more. Website: [MBA.com, The Official GMAT Website](#)

The Law School Admission Council is the official LSAT registration source. The LSAC also provides free sample LSAT exams, access to the LSDAS service, Candidate Referral Service (CRS), Law School Forums, MILE Program (Minorities Interested in Legal Education), and additional test preparation resources. Website: [Law School Admission Council Website](#)

Graduate School Rankings provide detailed program information on programs, often by category: Law, Medicine, Engineering, and Business. Visit the CDO library or the website to view the print copy of the [U.S. News Graduate School Guide](#) for the condensed online version. Other sites and companies with compiled rankings for programs include: [PhDs.org](#), [Business Week Website](#), [Forbes Magazine School Rankings Website](#), and [CNN Money.com](#).

Faculty and Alumni The numerical rankings assigned to various school programs are based on a number of different criteria and should not be taken as the final consensus. Discuss plans with alumni and faculty as well. Ask which institutions would be most appropriate for meeting your goals. In addition, visit the [CDO website](#) for post-graduate survey data (programs and schools attended by recent graduates). Remember, the advice and rankings provided by others are useful, but it is important to establish your own personal criteria to compare graduate schools.

Criteria for Evaluating Graduate School

Institutions and academic departments may vary greatly in one or more of the following factors: programs available, size, location, cost, facilities, faculty interests, reputation, and requirements. Matching your own abilities and personal requirements against the varying factors is an important task in selecting the institutions to which you wish to apply. You may want to take the following factors or questions into consideration as you evaluate various programs:

Admissions: What are the admissions requirements? Do you have the test scores, courses, research and experience required for the program? What types of students does the program attract? Some programs require demonstrated knowledge of one or two foreign languages. Universities may also require, or permit, a substitute for a foreign language (e.g., knowledge of a programming language). Similarly, you will want to investigate research options and whether a thesis and/or comprehensive examination is required at the master's degree level.

Programs and Facilities: Do opportunities exist for specialization in areas of your own interest? Do the research facilities suit your needs?

Geographic Location & Size: The climate, the political and social temper of an institution, and its setting (whether urban or in a smaller community) are all worth considering. How large is the institution and the academic department? The number of students, and particularly the student/faculty ratio, will affect the amount of individual attention you will receive.

Faculty: Who are they? Are there specific people doing the type of research in which you are interested? Could you contact these people? What have they published?

Philosophy: What is the average length of time spent in the program? Do opportunities exist for specialization in areas of your own interest? Some institutions may approach the subject matter theoretically where others may be more pragmatic in their approach.

Residence Requirements: How much time must you spend taking courses at a particular institution in order to earn your advanced degree? If you are at a public university, residence requirements also determine whether you pay in-state tuition. Many state universities are required to give preference to in-state applicants.

Available Experience: Are there opportunities for teaching, research or assistantships?

Career Services: Will you receive assistance in your job search when you are ready to graduate? Check with the career center at each institution to find out what types of employers express interest in graduates of the academic department you are considering. What are alumni of the program doing now?

Financial Aid: The amount of financial aid awarded will vary by student and by institution. The reasons may have as much to do with university budgets as an applicant's merits. Keep in mind that while awards may vary, graduate aid is often based on merit, not need.

Applying to Graduate School

Formal applications vary from one institution to the next, but each usually consists of the following:

- An application
- Graduate admissions test scores
- Official transcripts
- Separate financial aid application
- Application essay/Personal statement
- Letters of recommendation
- Application fee
- Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Quick Tips:

- ⇒ Keep records noting admission requirements and application deadlines.
- ⇒ Make sure you keep track of nonrefundable applications fees as they may limit the number of schools to which you will apply.

Usually \$40-\$120/application

- ⇒ Show your depth! Candidates that show strength in a combination of the requirements—academic preparation, test scores, previous experience, volunteer experience, and recommendations—have the best chance for selection.
- ⇒ Follow up with the school to make sure your application is complete (leave enough time to follow up on a letter of recommendation or request for additional information if needed.)
- ⇒ Be aware of application deadlines listed in graduate school bulletins. If admissions are handled on a rolling basis (i.e., qualified applicants are accepted as they apply), it is to your advantage to apply at the earliest possible date in order to show your enthusiasm and give them more time to evaluate your application.
- ⇒ Early application is also an advantage if you are applying for financial aid. Medical, law, and
- ⇒ veterinary schools have centralized applications.

Check out [AAMC Resources for Future Physicians](#) or [Law School Admission Council Website](#)

Transcripts

All transcripts must be "official"; that is, transcripts must be sent to admission offices directly from the Office of the Registrar. If you receive your transcript first and then send it on, there is no proof that it is "official" and therefore it will be considered invalid.

Need info? Contact the Grinnell College Registrar

Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Many graduate school applications require either a curriculum vitae (CV) or resume. While a resume typically consists of one or two pages, a CV is often much longer and includes all academic activities and achievements, research and publications, and other relevant information. You want graduate schools to have the most complete image of you as possible, and the CV can include information that might not fit in other sections of the application.

Once you have put together your resume or CV, we encourage you to have a career counselor at the CDO review it for formatting suggestions, targeted content, and errors.

Applying to Graduate School

Application Essay /Personal Statement

Most institutions will ask that you submit a statement of purpose or personal statement in addition to basic data requested on the application. Personal statements provide you with the opportunity to supplement standard application materials with your own goals and objectives with respect to the program. Typically, programs will offer suggestions on items to consider, such as your reasons for applying in relation to personal goals and professional expectations. Good grammar and writing styles are extremely important. Make sure to consider what your reader might be looking for. Admission committees may be evaluating a number of things from your statement, including the following:

- Motivation and commitment
- Expectations and goals
- Educational background
- Reasons for deciding to pursue graduate education in a particular field and at a particular institution
- Personal uniqueness – what you would add to the diversity of the entering class
- Writing ability
- Major areas of interest
- Research or work experience
- Maturity

Please stop by the CDO for Application letter/Personal statement assistance.

Letters of Recommendation – Quick Tips

- ⇒ Most institutions will request between three and five letters of recommendation on your behalf.
- ⇒ Contact people whom you wish to write letters well in advance of the deadline dates.

Who Should You Ask? Obtain recommendations from those persons qualified to evaluate your academic and/or work potential and performance based on personal observation, perhaps from a professor in an unrelated discipline in order to show the breadth of your academic interests.

- ⇒ The reference person needs to know you well enough that he or she can make a good assessment of your academic and work abilities. You might find it very worthwhile to have a meeting with references before they write your letters of recommendation. Do not hesitate to ask references if they feel they know you well enough to write a good recommendation.
- ⇒ Give your references a copy of your application essay in advance.
- ⇒ Share with references your reasons for applying to graduate or professional school.
- ⇒ Give your references updated personal and professional data, (e.g., resume or previous work done for faculty, recommendation forms (if required by the institution), and a list of deadlines).
- ⇒ It is also a good idea, as well as courteous, to provide stamped, addressed envelopes.
- ⇒ **It is good practice to send a thank you note to those who assisted in your application process.** Once accepted, it is thoughtful to let your recommenders know of your acceptance.

The CDO utilizes [Interfolio](#) for online storage and submission of recommendation letters/credential files.

Graduate Admission Exams

Graduate Admissions Exams

Most graduate and professional schools require that you take one or more standardized examinations for admission. Listed below are the commonly required examinations:

General
Entrance to
Grad School

GRE: This test is required for entrance to most graduate programs. There are two parts to the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE General Test is designed to measure analytical, verbal, quantitative, and writing ability. The GRE Subject Test is an examination in a major field of study. Graduate schools may require one or both parts of the test; investigate this thoroughly. Website: [Educational Testing Services](#)

Management
& Business

GMAT: The Graduate Management Admission Test is a requirement to assess students planning to attend management and business schools. Some schools may substitute the GRE. Website: [MBA.com, The Official GMAT Website](#)

Law School

LSAT: The Law School Admissions Test is a requirement for admission to law school. Interested students should also complete the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS). Website: [Law School Admission Council Website](#)

Medical
School

MCAT: The Medical College Admission Test is given to applicants for admission to medical schools. Interested students must also complete the American Medical College Applications Service (AMCAS). Website: [Association of American Medical Colleges Website](#)

Dental
School

DAT: The Dental Admission Test is a requirement for admission to dental school. Website: [American Dental Association](#)

Pharmacy
School

PCAT: The Pharmacy College Admission Test is a requirement for admission to pharmacy school. Website: [Pharmacy College Admission Test](#)

Non-native
English
Speakers

TOEFL: The Test of English as a Foreign Language evaluates English proficiency of students whose native language is not English. Website: [ETS-TOEFL](#)

MAT: The Miller Analogies Test is a high-level mental ability test accepted by several graduate school programs. Performance on the MAT reflects candidates' analytical thinking. Website: [Miller Analogies Test](#)

General
Entrance for
Grad School

Note: *It will work to your advantage to take the appropriate standardized test early in your application process, potentially up to a year in advance of this desired entry date. Remember that test registration deadlines are often well in advance of the actual test dates, and subject tests are given only a few times a year. Research how long tests scores are valid for your particular field and exam. Often scores may be submitted to programs within three to five years of the original exam date.*

Financing Graduate/Professional School

Financial support to attend graduate/professional school is available from several sources: universities, government sources, banks, and private foundations. However, sources change continuously. Typically, deadlines are quite early for financial aid applications. If you will require financial assistance, be sure to request a financial aid application at the same time you request an admission application. In most instances, you will be required to submit a completed copy of the Student Financial Statement (SFS), a Parents' Confidential Statement (PCS), or a copy of the Family Financial Statement (FFS) to the American College Testing Program. Some graduate schools will accept any of the three; others require a specific one. Types of financial aid available for graduate study are somewhat different from aid you may have received as an undergraduate student. General types of financial aid include:

Fellowships: On the graduate level, the equivalent of a scholarship is a fellowship. It is usually a monetary award given on the basis of scholastic achievement. Fellowships may be taxable if they involve teaching or research. Specific programs and universities have their own fellowships, which you may identify by contacting the school's financial aid office. The federal government also supports some fellowships programs.

Assistantships: Teaching or research assistantships are often available through the academic department or program of study. Assistantships usually involve working 10-20 hours per week in exchange for a stipend and/or fee remission. Although fee remissions are common, be aware that in accepting a graduate assistantship you may still be responsible for partial payment of your tuition and/or fees. Requests for information on graduate assistantships and applications should be made directly to the academic department or program of interest to you.

Resident Assistantships: Some institutions have programs in which graduate students earn a stipend, room and board, or both by working as assistants in undergraduate residence halls. If you do not receive information on such a program, along with your application materials, you may contact the school's director of residence life to inquire about such opportunities.

Long-Term Educational Loans: Graduate students may be eligible for a variety of loan programs. The institution's financial aid office will be able to explain these loan programs to you.

College Work-Study Program: Under this program, eligible undergraduate and graduate students are provided part-time employment opportunities. Generally, financial aid officials administer these programs, and they can explain application procedures in detail.

Other Employment: University communities often provide good opportunities for part-time work. Check with the institution's financial aid office, or the chairperson of the academic department to which you are applying, regarding possible part-time employment opportunities in the local community.

Financial support of graduate education may vary widely from institution to institution. Begin the process early to identify potential funding sources. Also, check to see if specialized financial support exists for your particular field.

General Timetable for Graduate School*

When:	What:
<p>First Year Fall/Spring/ Summer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the CDO to learn about our services • Start your resume; the CDO can help! • Assess your interests, abilities, personality, and values • Identify possible majors and career fields and professional associations • Meet individually with a career counselor to learn how to find out more about careers, make decisions, and set goals as well as exploring careers • Utilize the CDO lending library to aid in your career research • Consider “The Day in the Life” program—this pairs students with alums willing to share knowledge with students interested in learning more about particular careers • Take a variety of classes in areas that interest you to explore majors • Identify and join student organizations or volunteer activities that will provide leadership opportunities, and enable you to explore interests and build skills • Obtain relevant work experiences through GRINNELLINK internships, volunteering, part-time jobs and summer jobs • Develop good time management, goal setting, and study habits; establish a strong GPA • Attend the GRINNELLINK Reception each semester to meet alumni in various fields
<p>Second Year Fall/Spring/ Summer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue first-year activities • Develop relationships with contacts in your field of study • Attend CDO presentations to learn more about resume writing, interviewing, and internships • Conduct research and solicit information from professionals and upper-class students to finalize decision on your major • Meet individually with a career counselor to develop short and long-term goals; learn where recent graduates are working • Utilize the CDO lending library to aid in your career research • Develop and enhance your skills through student organizations, volunteer opportunities, part-time employment, and GRINNELLINK internships or Grant Program internships • Consider “The Day in the Life” program—this pairs students with alums willing to share knowledge with students interested in learning more about particular careers. • Build skills in areas of importance to employers including oral and written communication, teamwork, leadership, problem solving, and computer skills • Update and revise your resume • Explore study abroad, Grinnell-in-Washington, and Grinnell-in-London programs

General Timetable for Graduate School*

When:	What:
Junior Year Fall/Spring/ Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Browse resources and guides to graduate programs • Contact admissions offices and programs to request information • Determine test requirements, application requirements/deadlines, and test dates • Consult with counselors, faculty members, and Grinnell alumni • Prepare for exams: utilize practice tests and CDO resources • Investigate national scholarships and determine financial needs • Take standardized exams • Outline or draft personal statement/essay/statement of purpose/resume
Senior Year September/ October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take standardized exams (if you have not yet) • Write a draft of application documents • Utilize the CDO and other resources for review of application documents • Research financial aid sources, fellowships, and assistantships • Request recommendations early from faculty members • Apply for fellowships, grants and assistantships
November/ December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order official transcripts from the Office of the Registrar • Ask the Office of the Registrar to send a transcript with your fall term grades in time to meet the deadlines • Finalize personal statement/essay • Submit your applications- even if deadlines are later, it is good to get applications in early-fellowship deadlines may follow a separate schedule
December/January/ February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact schools about the possibility of visiting or schedule interviews • Complete appropriate financial aid forms—if you are applying for need-based aid, you may have to file a copy of your federal tax return • Contact schools at least two weeks before the deadline to make sure your applications are complete
March/April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss acceptances, rejections, and other career options with a faculty member or a Career Development Office Career Counselor • If you would like to defer enrollment for one or two years, contact your graduate department concerning that possibility-many programs may not offer deferral options-if you are rejected it may be helpful to contact the school and discuss the reasons for your rejection and obtain suggestions on how to get admitted in the future • Send thank you notes to people who wrote your recommendations or assisted you in the process

*This timetable is based upon a typical program with a December/January application deadline. Some programs may have earlier, later, rolling, or spring admittance deadlines.

Pre-Law



- ◇ Join the Pre-Law Distribution List at Grinnell College
 - ◇ Criteria for Admission
 - ◇ Fellowships
 - ◇ Law School Admission Test (LSAT)
 - ◇ Recommended Coursework
 - ◇ Law School Forums
 - ◇ Personal Statement
 - ◇ Timetable for Law School

Helpful Websites

[Law School Admission Council](#) . [American Bar Association](#) . [FAFSA on the web](#) . [Law School Numbers](#) . [US News and World Report](#) . [Law Jobs](#) . [LawCrossing](#) . [Practice Tests for Logic Games](#) . [National Lesbian and Gay Law Association](#) . [Attorney Jobs](#)

Pre-Law at Grinnell College

Join the Pre-Law Distribution List at Grinnell

The Career Development Office is dedicated to providing guidance and advising to those interested in law. No matter what your current level of interest in law school is, you can make an appointment to discuss plans by contacting the CDO, e-mailing career@grinnell.edu, or calling (641) 269-4940.

Criteria for Admission

There are various criteria for admission used by law schools. This list of criteria is in a typical order of importance as determined by law schools.

- LSAT scores
- GPA
- Letters of recommendation
- Application essay/Personal statement
- Course of undergraduate study (rigor)
- Out of class activities
- Work experience
- Motivation for law school
- Ethnic background
- State of residency

Fellowships

The American Bar Foundation sponsors a program of summer research fellowships to interest minority undergraduate students in pursuing graduate study in the social sciences. The summer program is designed to introduce students to the rewards and demands of a research-oriented career in the field of law and social science.

Applications will be considered only from students who have completed at least the sophomore year and who have not received a bachelor's degree by the time the fellowship begins. Applicants must have a GPA of at least 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) and be moving toward an academic major in the social sciences or humanities. Application materials are available at the [American Bar Foundation's Website](#).

The ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund will award \$5,000 of financial assistance annually to each scholarship recipient attending an ABA-accredited law school. An award made to an entering first-year student may be renewable for two additional years. Applications can be downloaded from the [ABA Website](#).

Law School Admission Test (LSAT)

The LSAT is required as a part of LSAC member law schools' application procedure. The LSAT is intended to give no advantage to test takers from a particular academic background and does not test specific knowledge obtained in college classes or achievements in any given area. The scored sections include one Reading Comprehension section, one Analytical Reasoning section, and two Logical Reasoning sections. There is also an unscored writing sample section that is sent to each law school to which you apply. Application materials are available in the CDO library. Take the test that is offered in the fall (October) of your senior year, if not in the summer between your junior and senior year. For more information visit [LSAT Information and Test Dates Website](#).

Pre-Law at Grinnell College

Recommended Coursework

There is no established pre-law curriculum at Grinnell. In keeping with the philosophy of a liberal arts education and Grinnell's open curriculum, there are no prescribed courses that students must take.

However, this does not mean that you should not be thoughtful about your course selections. The deans of law schools nationwide list the four things an entering student must be able to do to be successful in law school: read critically, think analytically and write and speak well. Each of these skills can be developed in courses across the curriculum. No one major provides better preparation for law school than another. Similarly, no set of courses guarantees admission. You should choose courses with professors who challenge you to read critically, think analytically and write/speak well.

Law School Forums

You may want to consider attending one of several free Law School Forums, located in major cities throughout the United States. Each forum offers the opportunity to talk with representatives of Law School Admission Council (LSAC)-member law schools from across the U.S.; obtain admission materials, catalogs, and financial aid information; view video programs about the law school admission process, legal education and careers, and multicultural perspectives on legal education; attend informational sessions on the law school admission process, financing a legal education, and issues of importance to multicultural applicants.

Review the [LSAC Forum Schedule](#) for upcoming event dates.

See p. 14

Personal Statement - Do's and Don'ts for Law*

Beyond the tips already given about the personal statement, here are some additional law school-specific tips:

DO....

- Be specific, accurate, and truthful
- Have statement support and be supported by the rest of the file
- Look beyond fraternity/sorority offices or athletic experiences
- Acknowledge negatives in your file
- Mention sensitive subjects in an appropriate way (not overly dramatically)
- Tell them why you have chosen law
- Show them who you are - this is your interview

DON'T....

- Use the third person.
- Title your statement.
- Gush about law school or the role of law in society
- Be too cynical
- Come across as a "victim"
- Be too specific about what you want to do with your law degree, unless your experience shows that it is a logical extension of what you've already done
- Focus too much on another person, even if they have been influential in your life
- Just list the activities and experiences that are already in your application

* From the National Association of Pre-Law Advisers

T i m e t a b l e f o r L a w S c h o o l *

When:	What:
Junior Year Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join the CDO Pre-Law Distribution List • Establish ties with the faculty members who later may write your letters of recommendation • Attend the CDO Graduate and Professional School Fair
Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register to take the June LSAT and begin preparing for the test
Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the LSAT • Begin drafting your personal statement and construct a resume to be included with your applications • Research law schools; prepare a list of places to which you will apply • Receive LSAT score
Senior Year September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register with the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS) • Have official transcript(s) sent to LSDAS • Check LSDAS report for accuracy • Register for and take the October LSAT if you did not take it in June • Request letters of recommendation be sent to LSDAS • Send away for catalogues and application materials or order the LSDAS electronic application • Finalize personal statement and have it reviewed by the writing lab, the career development office, and several other readers
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend the Career Development Office Graduate and Professional School Fair or a law forum
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete and send applications • Begin investigating sources of financial aid and obtain applications and submit as early as possible
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with law schools to be sure your files are complete • File your financial aid applications • Have an updated transcript with your fall term grades sent directly to law schools • Evaluate offers of acceptance and financial aid (You will not be required to place a deposit at any particular school until after April)

***This timetable is based upon a typical program with a December/January application deadline. Some programs may have earlier, later, rolling, or spring admittance deadlines.**

Pre-Med



- ◇ Join the Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC)
 - ◇ First Semester Recommendations
 - ◇ Top Criteria for Admission to Medical Schools
 - ◇ Minimum Course Requirements
- ◇ National Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) Suggestions
 - ◇ Timetable for Medical School

Helpful Websites

[Association of Schools of Public Health \(ASPH\)](#) . [American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service \(AACOMAS\)](#) . [American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy](#) . [American Dental Association](#) . [American Medical Student Association](#) . [American Nursing Association](#) . [Association of American Medical Colleges](#) . [Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges](#) . [Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry](#) . [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) . [Post-Baccalaureate Programs](#) . [Search for Medical Schools of the United States and Canada](#)

Pre-Med at Grinnell College

Join the Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC)

The Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC) at Grinnell College coordinates activities involving the preparation for careers in the health professions, and its members serve as advisers for students who are planning a career in one of the health care fields. The Committee also gathers information for the evaluation of students, and is responsible for the preparation of committee letters of recommendation. Contact any member of the Health Professions Advisory Committee (see member list at bottom of this page) or the Career Development Office with questions you have about preparing for a career in one of the health professions. Visit [HPAC Website](#) for more details.

First Semester Recommendations

It is of utmost importance that you get started your first semester by taking either BIO 150 or CHM 129 (or possibly CHM 210 if you have an AP chemistry score of 4 or 5).

Minimum Course Requirements

- 1 year Biology (Biology 251, 252) (Note: Bio 150 is a prerequisite for Bio 251);
- 2 years Chemistry (Chemistry 129, 210, 221, 222);
- 1 year English (your tutorial counts for one semester; second semester should stress literature);
- 1 year Physics (Physics 131, 132); and
- Calculus I (Calculus is not required for admission to most medical schools, however Calculus I is required for physics at Grinnell, and Calculus II is recommended).

Top Criteria for Admission to Medical School

According to Dr. Jim Phillips, Senior Associate Dean and Professor of Pediatrics of Baylor Medical School, admissions boards consider many criteria, GPA and MCAT scores being the most influential. In addition to GPA and MCAT scores, the following criteria (in descending order of importance) influence admission to medical school:

- GPA
- MCAT scores
- Letters of recommendation
- Interview (see comments from students who have gone through the interview process)
- Extra curricular activities (e.g. shadow a physician multiple times)
- Health related experiences other life experiences
- Academic progression (e.g. have you shown improvement during your career as a student?)

For admission to medical school in the Fall following college graduation, the medical college admissions test (MCAT) should be taken in the spring of your junior year. All of the material covered in required courses is subject to examination on the MCAT. Therefore, all of the requirements listed above must be completed by the end of your junior year. It is important to note that for incoming students without any advanced placement, this averages two courses in the science division per semester. See potential course scenarios below. A major in science is not required for admission to medical school.

Pre-Med at Grinnell College

National MCAT Examinations

Verbal Reasoning:

Designed to assess your ability to understand, evaluate, and apply information and arguments presented in prose texts, this test consists of several passages, each 500 to 600 words long, taken from the humanities and social sciences and from areas of the natural sciences not tested on the MCAT Physical and Biological Sciences sections. Each passage is accompanied by 6-10 questions based on the information presented in the passage. Test questions do not cover a specific set of topics; all the information needed to answer each question is provided in the accompanying passage.

Physical and Biological Sciences:

The MCAT Physical Sciences section is designed to assess reasoning in general chemistry and physics. The MCAT Biological Sciences section is designed to assess reasoning in biology and organic chemistry. Each section contains 10-11 problem sets, each about 250 words in length, that describe a situation or problem. Each problem set is followed by 4-8 questions. An additional 15 questions are independent of any passage and each other.

Neither the passage-related questions nor the independent questions test the ability to memorize scientific facts. Rather, both types of questions assess knowledge of basic physical and biological science concepts and your facility at problem solving in general chemistry, organic chemistry, physics, and biology.

Writing Sample:

Consisting of two 30-minute essays, the writing sample is designed to assess skill in the following areas:

- Developing a central idea;
- Synthesizing concepts and ideas;
- Presenting ideas cohesively and logically; and
- Writing clearly, following accepted practices of grammar, syntax, and punctuation consistent with timed, first-draft composition.

Each Writing Sample item provides a specific topic that requires an expository response. Topics do not pertain to the content of biology, chemistry, or physics; to the medical school application process or reasons for the choice of medicine as a career; to social and cultural issues not in the general experience of college students; or to religious or other emotionally charged issues. Topics do not assess subject matter knowledge. Visit [AAMC MCAT Website](#) for more details.

Please make an appointment with the CDO to discuss your interest in medical school and further preparation!

T i m e t a b l e f o r M e d i c a l S c h o o l *

When:	What:
<p>Junior Year Spring/ Summer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study for and take the MCAT exam. Most students take the MCAT exam on one of the test dates in April through July • MCAT scores are valid for a three year period • Fill out HPAC Form 1.pdf "Request to Prepare a Committee Letter of Recommendation". This form is available on the HPAC Website and should be filled out before the deadline (near the end of April), and absolutely before you leave campus for the summer. • HPAC has a new Form 1b.pdf that is designed for alums who want to update the information HPAC has available. You do not have to relist your courses, but you may want to let HPAC know about new research positions, course work, or health-related experiences you have had after graduation. Please submit Form 1b before submitting HPAC Form 2.pdf so that new information can be included in your committee letter. • Most medical schools admit students on a rolling admission basis. Therefore, it is important that you begin the application process early. • Fill out AMCAS primary application on-line. AMCAS will send your application to the schools you indicate (students usually apply to six to ten schools.) As part of this process you will need to request from the Registrar that official transcripts be sent from Grinnell. You will also need to indicate that Grinnell College will be submitting a "committee letter" on your behalf. In addition, you will obtain a Letter Request Form pdf file. • If a medical school chooses to take further action on your application, you will be sent a secondary application four to six weeks after submitting your primary application to AMCAS. Once you begin receiving secondary applications, only then do you request that a committee letter be sent from Grinnell. • Fill out and submit HPAC Form 2.pdf "Authorization to Send Committee Letter of Recommendation". Check with AMCAS to find out if the schools you're applying to are "AMCAS participating schools" (most will be), for these schools, we will send our letter electronically to AMCAS (given that you have provided us with the Letter Request Form) and AMCAS will send it on to the schools. For these AMCAS participating schools, just write AMCAS on your Form 2 under the institution name, you need not list the individual schools. You must, however, list any schools NOT participating with AMCAS plus the schools due dates on your Form 2. It is easier for us if you submit a completed form with all schools indicated. However, if you have not heard from all schools, you can submit HPAC Form 2.pdf with the schools you have heard from, then add schools to the list via a letter or email once a copy of HPAC Form 2.pdf is on file with the Health Professions Advisory Committee.

*This timetable is based upon a typical program with a December/January application deadline. Some programs may have earlier, later, rolling, or spring admittance deadlines.

Business School



- ◇ When is the best time for a MBA?
 - ◇ Suggested Curriculum
 - ◇ Researching Programs
 - ◇ Application Timeframe
 - ◇ Essays
 - ◇ Interviews
- ◇ What the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) Measures

Helpful Websites

[Graduate Management Admissions Council](#) . [Princeton University Career Services](#)

Business School*

When is the Best time for an MBA?

The Masters in Business Administration (MBA) is a professional degree that seeks to integrate leadership, management experiences and team projects into the classroom environment. The broadly trained and highly skilled individuals are able to assume positions in a wide variety of settings (e.g., corporate, healthcare, nonprofit, entrepreneurial).

Experience is a key factor in selection of applicants for most schools. Although there are business schools that will accept students directly from an undergraduate program, the more competitive graduate programs in business are typically looking for two to four years of experience. They are very willing, however, to consider experience from a range of industries and opportunities (corporate, nonprofit, entrepreneurial, government service). As long as you have developed the quantitative, analytical, teamwork, leadership, communication, and other skills business schools seek, you can still be a competitive applicant without "traditional" business experience.

Work Experience Suggested

MBA programs are unique amongst graduate schools. While there may be some suggested coursework that you will need to complete prior to applying, the real requirement for most programs is work experience. Check the specific program's website to see if they require a certain number of years of professional, post-graduate work experience prior to admittance.

Researching Programs

Individuals often place more emphasis on which schools might accept them than focusing on which schools are best for them based on their interests and goals. Schools vary in curriculum, specialty areas, teaching methodologies and overall atmosphere. It is important that you consider a number of factors before you begin the application process.

There are a number of places online where you can get more information about business careers and MBA programs. The [Graduate Management Admissions Council Website](#) is a wonderful site for exploring various programs, financial assistance information and a calendar of events.

Application Timeframe

Many schools have multiple application rounds, with final deadlines typically falling between March and April. It is in your best interest to apply early, as many admissions decisions will be made prior to the official deadline. Applications may be reviewed as early as October and November, but be sure to read each schools' information regarding deadlines and admissions procedures. The popularity of the MBA degree has created a very competitive atmosphere, such that it has become increasingly important to submit applications early for the greatest chances of success in being admitted.

*Information provided by [Princeton University Career Services](#), 2010

B u s i n e s s S c h o o l *

Essays

Essays are extremely influential in the business school admission process. Some applicants to business school sometimes assume that grades, GMAT scores, or the prominence of their past employers will be more significant; however, MBA programs read essays carefully.

The manner in which you express your work experience and discuss your goals and achievements, both professional and personal, can have a major impact on the final outcome of your application. It is critical that your interests are in keeping with the programs that you have selected.

Be sure to allocate sufficient time to the preparation of your essays. Most MBA applications require at least four essays, but some schools, such as Harvard, require even more. Essays should be written for each school rather than attempting to develop four or five standard versions. There is a fair amount of variation among schools in the topics that they would like addressed.

Interviews

Many business schools require or offer optional interviews. The MBA admissions interview is similar to an employment interview. You are given the chance to highlight your accomplishments, skills, strengths, and personal qualities. The focus of the interview will be your work experience, the benefit of an MBA to you at this point in your career, and the goals that you wish to achieve. It is also wise to carefully review your research about the program prior to an interview, so that you are clear as to why you wish to pursue an MBA and why their program fits your goals. The interviews may be conducted by the admissions staff, faculty members or, in some cases, alumni of the school.

If you are offered the opportunity for an optional interview, in most cases you should accept. Because they extended the interview option to you, it could be a signal that they are interested in you as an applicant but hope to learn a bit more. It also provides you with a wonderful opportunity to gather more information that will help you make a decision about whether or not this program is a good fit. If you have questions about how to best prepare for these interviews, you may speak with a counselor in the Career Development Office and also use the [Loggia](#) to gather advice from other alumni who have been through the process.

B u s i n e s s S c h o o l *

What the GMAT Measures

The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) examination is a standardized test designed to measure verbal, mathematical, and analytical writing skills that have been developed over a long period of time through education and work. The GMAT exam measures these skills in three sections:

- Analytical Writing Assessment Section
- Quantitative Section
- Verbal Section

The GMAT exam does NOT measure:

- Knowledge of business
- Job skills
- Specific content in undergraduate or first university coursework
- Subjective qualities such as motivation, creativity, and interpersonal skills
- Abilities in any other specific subject area

Analytical Writing Assessment Section:

The Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) is designed as a direct measure of the test taker's ability to think critically and communicate ideas. The AWA consists of two writing tasks: Analysis of an Issue and Analysis of an Argument. The issues and arguments in the test questions concern topics of general interest related to business or other subjects. Specific knowledge of the essay topic is not necessary—only the test taker's capacity to write analytically is assessed. See the "[Understanding and Using the Analytical Writing Assessment Score](#)" of the [GMAC Website](#) for a more detailed description.

Quantitative Section: This part of the GMAT exam measures mathematical skills, understanding of elementary concepts, and the ability to reason quantitatively, solve quantitative problems, and interpret graphic data. Two types of multiple-choice questions are intermingled throughout the section: Problem Solving and Data Sufficiency. Both types of questions require knowledge of the following:

- Arithmetic
- Elementary algebra
- Commonly known concepts of geometry

Verbal Section: This part of the GMAT exam measures the test taker's ability to:

- Read and comprehend written material
- Reason and evaluate arguments
- Correct written material to conform to standard written English

Three types of multiple-choice questions are used in the Verbal section of the GMAT exam: Reading Comprehension, Critical Reasoning, and Sentence Correction.

**Information provided by the [Graduate Management Admissions Council](#), 2010*