Graduate and Professional School
Researching Programs and Institutions

Start your research early to identify the programs and institutions that best match your interests and career goals.

- Clarify the specific area in which you hope to earn your advanced degree as similar programs can vary in focus.
- Research faculty in each program and their areas of specialization including research interests and projects.
- Visit campuses to meet with faculty and current students.
- Talk to faculty in programs of interest about their training, research and publications.
- Contact admissions representatives to learn about standards and procedures, degree requirements, length of the program, costs, financial aid, assistantships, and fellowships.
- Communicate with current students from programs, asking about their experiences, impressions of faculty, coursework and campus life.
- Identify typical career paths of graduates and communicate with alumni about their experience.
- Consider geographic location, population, housing, cost of living, and cultural and social opportunities.

Resources for Research

The following websites may be helpful to research institutions and programs as well as admission tests. In addition, visit Career Services for print resources about graduate and professional school.

Gradschools.com
gradschools.com

Peterson's Graduate Schools
petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx

Princeton Review
princetonreview.com/college-education

U.S. News & World Report
usnews.com/education

Deciding to Attend

Pursuing a graduate or professional degree is a major commitment of time, energy and funds. Before beginning the research, application process and courses, consider the following questions:

- What are your long-term career goals?
- Which degree programs contribute to those goals, if any?
- Are you aware of and prepared for the academic challenges?
- Do you have the financial resources necessary to complete the degree?
- Are you passionate about your intended field of study and career plans?

Career Services can help you clarify interests, goals and options for pursuing a graduate or professional degree and assist you in the application process.
Preparing to Apply

Application procedures, requirements and deadlines can vary widely by institution and program.
Adhere fully to all instructions. Late or incomplete applications will likely not be considered.

Recommendations

Graduate schools usually require two or three letters of recommendation from university faculty, staff and/or employers.

Develop strong relationships with your professors and academic advisor by participating actively in classes, connecting during office hours, and attending department events. Choose people to write letters who can accurately assess your abilities in relation to the graduate program you plan to pursue. Make your request in a professional manner with plenty of time. Provide your most recent resume and detailed instructions on how, where and when to submit the letter. Be sure to send each writer a thank you note.

Sample Application Timeline

The timeline below is a general guideline for a May graduate pursuing graduate programs. Keep in mind that deadlines and requirements vary by program, so develop your own timeline based on your research of each program of interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Junior Year</th>
<th>Senior Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fall</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research potential programs and institutions.</td>
<td>• Begin filling out applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify top programs of interest.</td>
<td>• Re-take admissions tests if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review application process of programs of interest.</td>
<td>• Choose and ask writers of letters of recommendation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arrange a visit if possible.</td>
<td>• Provide all forms and required information to letter writers at least a month ahead of the deadline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a personal timeline for the application process.</td>
<td>• Obtain appropriate interview attire.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Write a first draft of an academic resume.</td>
<td>• Submit application forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research test preparation resources.</td>
<td>• Schedule a mock admissions interview.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Spring</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accept or decline offers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Submit financial aid paperwork.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Write thank-you notes to letter writers and others who helped you throughout the process.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Share your plans with Career Services by filling out a brief survey for new graduates at unl.edu/careers/survey.</td>
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Admission Tests

To determine which admission tests you must take, if any, consult each institution and program to which you are applying. The most up-to-date information about the format, dates, costs and registration process are available at specific test sites.

Common Admission Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dental Admission Test (DAT)</td>
<td>ada.org/dat.aspx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT)</td>
<td>gmac.com/gmac/thegmat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Record Exam (GRE)</td>
<td>ets.org/gre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law School Admission Test (LSAT)</td>
<td>lsac.org/JD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)</td>
<td>aamc.org/students/applying/mcat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometry Admission Test (OAT)</td>
<td>ada.org/oat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT)</td>
<td>PCATweb.info</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Format & Locations

With the exception of the LSAT and the GRE subject tests, which are administered on the UNL campus in paper and pencil format, other tests are administered online. While you may take the tests at any established center, tests are administered at the following locations in Lincoln:

- DAT, GRE, MCAT, OAT
  Prometric Testing Center
  5715 S. 34th St., #300
  prometric.com

- GMAT, PCAT
  Pearson Professional Center
  300 N. 44th St., #104
  pearsonvue.com

Personal Statements / Application Essay

Most programs require an essay, personal statement or answers to specific questions as part of the application. The purpose is to evaluate your written communication skills, motivation, and commitment for entering a particular field as well as your ability to succeed academically and professionally.

Basic Guidelines

- Adhere to length, organization and content instructions.
- Identify your main message and focus on it throughout the essay.
- Make your main point early and support it using specific examples.
- Tailor each essay for its intended institution and program.
- Seek feedback from faculty, Academic Advisors and Career Services.

What to Write

While some programs may specify the topic or set of questions to which you must respond, others may leave the content up to you. In general, the following topics are of interest to graduate programs:

- Your reasons for pursuing a graduate or professional degree.
- Areas of study in which you plan to specialize.
- Career goals and plans for the future.
- Reasons for interest in the specific institution and program.
- Preparation and fitness for study in the field which may include academics, involvement and work experience.
Academic Resumes

An effective resume for application to graduate or professional school differs from one used to apply for a job or internship. An academic resume is also appropriate when applying for scholarships, fellowships, research programs, honor societies, and academic awards. It should highlight your academic achievements, campus involvement, leadership, and relevant experience.

Resume, Academic Resume and Curriculum Vitae (CV)

There are similarities between resumes, academic resumes and curriculum vitae and sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. The primary differences between a resume and a curriculum vitae (CV) are the length, sections included, and the purpose for which it is used. A resume is a one or two page summary of your education, relevant skills and experience. A CV tends to be longer, and more detailed and is most often used when applying for academic, scientific and research career positions.

An academic resume may go beyond a single page. Use section headings that best highlight the qualifications you have. Possible headings for an academic resume include:

- Academic Honors/Awards
- Scholarships
- Study Abroad
- Research
- Publications/Presentations
- Internships
- Shadowing/Clinical Experience
- Language Skills
- Professional Affiliations
- Volunteer/Service
- Leadership and Involvement
- Work Experience

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JANE SMITH
301 North 19th Street | Lincoln, NE 68502 | jsmith@gmail.com | 402.555.7956

EDUCATION
Bachelor of Arts (Anticipated May 2016)
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Major: Psychology, Minor: Math, GPA: 3.87/4.0

HONORS, AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS
- Dean's List, College of Arts & Sciences, three semesters
- J.T. Livingston First-Year Scholarship

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
Research Assistant - Dr. Taylor, UNL Department Name, Spring 2014
- Project: (Title, research tasks or course in which you provided assistance)
UCARE Research - Dr. Miller, UNL Department Name, Summer 2013
- Project: (Title of UCARE Project)

STUDY ABROAD/INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL
University of Bristol (Bristol, England), Fall 2013 - Coursework in Abnormal Psychology, Psychological Interviewing and Qualitative Research.
- Additional Travel - Canada, Bolivia, England, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Portugal, Denmark, Nigeria

LANGUAGE SKILLS
Fluent in Spanish; Proficient in French; Basic skills in German

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE
- Tutor, America Reads Program, Randolph Elementary, Lincoln, NE, Spring 2013
- Reader, UNL Services for Students with Disabilities, Fall 2013
- Server, Matt Talbot Kitchen, Lincoln, NE, Fall 2012

LEADERSHIP AND INVOLVEMENT
- Vice President, UNL Psychology Club, Fall 2014 - Present
- Secretary, UNL Amnesty International, Fall 2013 - Spring 2014
- Member, Lincoln Junior Investors Club, Spring 2012 - Fall 2013

WORK EXPERIENCE
- Intern, Gallup, Lincoln, NE, January 2013-May 2015
- Sales Associate, Kohl's, Lincoln, NE, June 2011 - January 2012

Opportunities at UNL

Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experience (UCARE). Participate and collaborate with UNL faculty/staff in research or creative activities.

unl.edu/ucare

Student Organizations. Grow as a leader and team member. UNL offers hundreds of organizations in a wide variety of interest areas.

involved.unl.edu

Service Learning/Civic Engagement. Engage with UNL faculty, staff, and students to make a positive impact at UNL, in the Lincoln community, and beyond.

engage.unl.edu

Education Abroad. Gain independence, develop communication skills, and learn about other cultures while taking courses abroad.

educationabroad.unl.edu
Admission Interviews

Some graduate and professional programs, require an admissions interview. Each program will have a different format and process as outlined on their website.

Sample Interview Questions
In general, interviewers are evaluating communication skills, knowledge of the field, problem-solving skills, academic preparedness, self-confidence, and ability to work as part of a team.

Self-Assessment:
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you think a friend or professor would describe you?
- Do you think your grades reflect your academic ability?
- What personal characteristics will make you successful in this field?
- Why are you a stronger candidate for this program than others?
- Why should we accept you into this program?

Preparation:
- What college subjects did you like best? Least? Why?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- Describe your preparation outside of academics.
- Describe a recent current event or development in your field.

Motivation:
- Why did you choose this profession?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- What led you to choose your field of study (major)?
- Why did you decide to apply to this program/institution?

Expectations:
- What two or three things are most important to you in a career?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this profession?
- In what ways can you make a contribution to this profession?

Goals:
- What are your long and short range goals?
- When/why did you establish them and how will you achieve them?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What will you do if you are not admitted?

Tips for Interviewing
Research each program and institution thoroughly so that you may tailor your answers.

Identify a particular strength, feature or a notable faculty member to reference when asked why you are interested in the specific program.

Talk with current or recent students from the program to learn what to expect in format and questions.

Evaluate your interests, skills, experience, strengths and weaknesses for each program/institution.

Choose an interview outfit that is neat, clean and professional just as you would for employment opportunities.

Participate in a mock interview with Career Services or the Explore Center.

Take a portfolio, pen and copies of your resume.

Know the exact location of the interview and identify parking options ahead of time.

Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early.

Be kind and respectful to everyone you encounter including other applicants.

Greet each member of the interview team with a firm handshake and good eye contact.

Bring a list of questions to ask about the program that shows you are serious about the program and profession.

After the interview, make notes about the questions asked and how you responded. This will be helpful if you will be interviewing at more than one institution or if you are not admitted and plan to reapply.
Graduate and professional school programs vary in cost. Start planning early, evaluate your financial position, and research institution and program costs and financial support. You will have to determine whether or not you will pursue a graduate or professional degree if you do not receive academic funding. Opportunities for financial support may include:

**Assistantships**

Assistantships may pay any combination of tuition, fees, books and/or a stipend for living expenses. Titles and responsibilities include:

- **Teaching Assistants (TA).** Support and instruct undergraduate courses.
- **Research Assistants (RA).** Work with professors on specific research projects.
- **Graduate Assistants (GA).** Work in a role and department which may or may not be related to their area of study.

**Fellowships**

Fellowships fall into many categories and vary widely in application and selection process as well as requirements and activities. Some provide funding for studies. Others fund you to study or to conduct research overseas. For more information visit the Office of Fellowships at [unl.edu/fellowships](http://unl.edu/fellowships).

**Financial Aid**

Student loan programs offer long-term, low-interest educational loans which require repayment. Carefully consider the amount of debt you will incur and identify your future financial obligations. Like any other debt, a student loan is a serious financial obligation.

Before applying for federal, need-based loans, you must be admitted to your graduate or professional school program. You, and possibly your parents, must then complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA may be filed electronically at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov) by the deadline established for your state of residence. For more information on financial aid for graduate education, visit the UNL Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid at [financialaid.unl.edu](http://financialaid.unl.edu).

**UNL Student Money Management Center**

237 Nebraska Union, 402.472.9093, [unl.edu/smmc](http://unl.edu/smmc)

Visit the Student Money Management Center for free assistance with financial questions and planning. Participate in a one-on-one money management advising session, learn from the financial education resources online, and/or attend a skill-building workshop or event to positively impact your current and future financial well-being.
Developing an Alternative Plan

Getting into a graduate or professional school program is challenging for even highly qualified candidates. It is also costly and time consuming. Before applying, realistically assess your level of competitiveness by researching past admissions data for each program of interest. Develop a back-up plan in case you do not gain admission.

Pursue Other Career Paths

Career Services can help you identify your skills and qualifications that transfer to a variety of career opportunities. Our services and resources remain available to you even after graduation. We can help you develop and pursue a back-up plan.

Apply Again

If you plan to reapply for the same type of program in the future, identify areas where your application could be stronger. Some graduate and professional school programs offer exit interviews where feedback on the admission decision is offered. Communicate with admissions representatives carefully and respectfully when requesting feedback. Make a plan for addressing specific deficiencies in your application to improve your competitiveness. This may mean gaining more experience in your field, taking additional coursework, retaking an admission test, or applying to a different set of institutions. Talk with your academic advisor and/or Career Services advisor to discuss next steps in this process.

Husker Hire Link

Husker Hire Link is a free online resource where UNL students and alumni can connect with employers.

Our site allows you to:

- Post and send resumes to employers.
- Search jobs, internships and employers.
- Request on-campus interviews.
- Stay up-to-date on career opportunities.

unl.edu/careers/hhl