



Grad School Applications: Strategies for Success

SHALOM LEO BOND, MA, LMHC

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FACILITATOR SR.

Grad School Applications

Preparing to apply

What's inside a grad application?

Tips and strategies



When does the grad
school application
process start?

Preparing to Apply

Deadlines vary, but the application process begins years before you submit your application

Possible requirements:

- College major
- Prerequisite courses
- GPA
- Test scores
- **Other experience!**

Preparing to Apply

You may have started the process already

- Exploring careers and programs
- Gaining subject mastery
- Getting experience through internships, jobs and volunteer work
- Building relationships with professors and mentors

Preparing to Apply

It's okay if you don't meet all the requirements yet

Take some time to prepare

- Prereq courses
- Grade replacements
- Internships and other experience
- Test prep

Consider taking a graduate course as a nondegree student

Same applies if not accepted on first try

Experience Counts

Hands-on experience is often the most important part of an application

Get as much experience as you possibly can

- Research
- Internships
- Volunteering
- Shadowing
- Jobs
- And more!

An important way to test drive the field/profession

- And form relationships with people who can write letters of recommendation

How many programs
should you apply to?

How Many Programs?

It depends!

What are your priorities?

Choosing Programs

Know **your** priorities

Possible considerations:

- Program focus and resources
- Faculty and research opportunities
- Rankings and reputation
- Costs and funding
- Location and access
- Culture of community, university and program

What goes into a grad application?

What's Inside a Grad Application?

Application forms and fees

Exam scores

Transcripts

CV or resume

Application essay

Letters of recommendation

Interview



Forms and Fees

Application forms

- University
- Graduate program
- Financial aid
- Scholarships

Fees (often \$50-\$100 per program)

Exam Scores

GRE, MCAT, LSAT, etc.

Testing dates & deadlines

Preparation courses

Preparation materials

Practice tests

How much does it matter to this program?

Transcripts

Official transcripts from every college or university you attended

Don't procrastinate!



CV or Resume

Tailor closely to program

- Research programs: CV
- Professional programs: resume or CV-resume hybrid

In general, longer is okay (2-3 pages)

What's the difference
between a letter of intent
and a personal statement?

Application Essays

Both are persuasive essays arguing that you are a great candidate for the program

A **letter of intent**, also called a **statement of purpose**, is a formal document describing relevant experience and goals

- Academic cover letter

A **personal statement** is a work of creative nonfiction in which you tell a story about who you are and why you belong in this program

- Professional memoir

But, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, including by grad programs!

- Research programs are more likely to ask for a letter of intent
- Professional programs are more likely to ask for a personal statement

Application Essays

The prompt is your best friend

You can't write a great essay at the last minute

Plan to spend weeks to months on this

Get lots of feedback

- Career Services and Graduate Resource Center
- Professors and mentors

Who should you ask to
write your letters of
recommendation?

Letters of Recommendation

Ideal letter writers are people who:

- Think you are awesome
- Know you well
- Know the field/profession
- Will be seen as convincing and relevant by the admissions committee

Typically professors and professionals in field of interest or a closely related field

Ask well in advance of deadlines (at least 4-6 weeks)

Quality counts!

Most programs require 3 recommendations

Recommenders may ask to see your CV and essay



Interview

Often required

A lot like a job interview

Interview formats

- Regular one-on-one interview
- Panel interview
- Group interview
- Multiple mini interviews

Practice!

Costs and Funding

Varies widely by program and field

Funding may be available through the department

- Assistantships in teaching and research
- Professional programs vs. research programs

Consider a national service program

- AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, National Guard

Scholarships and grants

Employer tuition assistance

Loan forgiveness programs



Open Remotely!

505-277-2531

onlinecareerservices@unm.edu

unm.joinhandshake.com

career.unm.edu