

The Florida State University — The Graduate School

Timeline for Prospective Graduate and Professional Students



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL AT FSU

“Graduate study is a time of exploration and immersion in a particular specialty. It is a time for the free exchange of ideas, acquisition of new skills, and creation of new knowledge. It is a time when professors change from being your teachers to being mentors and colleagues.”

- Nancy Marcus, Dean of The Graduate School

To request information about graduate study at The Florida State University, please contact:

[The Graduate School](#)

314 Westcott Building

The Florida State University

Tallahassee, FL 32306-1410

www.gradschool.fsu.edu

Phone: (850) 644-3501 Fax: (850) 644-2969

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I. Timeline for Applying to Graduate or Professional School

As an undergraduate, use this *Timeline* to guide you toward graduate or professional school.

Visit the graduate or professional resource center or the career services office on your campus for a more accurate timeline for attending medical and law school. If you are an FSU undergraduate, access the [FSU Career Center](http://www.career.fsu.edu) at <http://www.career.fsu.edu>.

Sophomore and Junior Year

Consider mentoring/extracurricular/study abroad opportunities

Conducting independent research as an undergraduate, joining academic student organizations, or tutoring other students can provide excellent leadership experiences.

If possible, participate in a study abroad program. If you are an FSU undergraduate, find out about study abroad programs at <http://www.international.fsu.edu>.

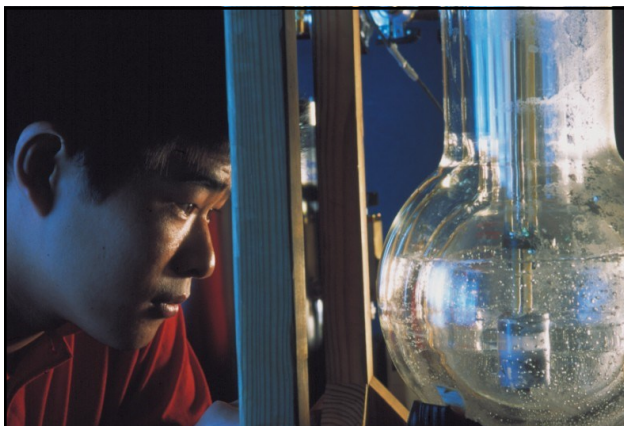
Attend graduate/professional school and career fairs

Many businesses and universities offer summer internship positions to students. If you are an FSU undergraduate, access the [Career Center](http://www.career.fsu.edu) at <http://www.career.fsu.edu>.

You can also find out about internship opportunities by attending career fairs on campus or elsewhere.

Before attending a fair, be sure to look up information (via the Internet) about businesses and universities who will be in attendance. For information about graduate programs at FSU, access <http://www.gradschool.fsu.edu>.

When attending a fair, bring your resume and dress professionally (e.g., slacks rather than jeans).



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Junior Year

Discuss your interests with faculty, pre-graduate advisors, and graduate students. They can be your best resources.

Attend workshops about graduate school. See The Graduate School's Professional Development Workshop Series at <http://www.gradschool.fsu.edu/Professional-Development/Professional-Development-Workshop-Series>.

Check the internet for graduate schools with academic programs that interest you and request catalogues and publications.

Accessing <http://www.gradschools.com> is a good starting place. The FSU online *Graduate Bulletin* is located at <http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/default.htm>.

Read articles in your academic discipline to familiarize yourself with graduate faculty publishing in your area of interest.

Continue to attend graduate/professional and career fairs.

Begin planning to take the standardized test required in your discipline and/or university [e.g., [Graduate Record Examination \(GRE\)](#), [Law School Admission Test \(LSAT\)](#), [Graduate Management Admission Test \(GMAT\)](#), [Medical College Aptitude Test \(MCAT\)](#), [Test of English as a Foreign Language \(TOEFL\)](#)].

Participate in undergraduate research and/or a summer internship.

Look for publication opportunities for the research that you have conducted.

Present work/research at conferences or symposia.

Summer Before Senior Year

Draft a Personal Statement

You will need to provide this as part of your application to graduate school.

Prepare to take a standardized admission test

Inquire about qualifying for a fee waiver from the [Educational Testing Service \(ETS\)](#) if you receive financial aid. (Visit your financial aid office to ask about this). If you are an FSU undergraduate, access the [FSU Office of Financial Aid](#) at <http://www.finaid.fsu.edu> or the [ETS](#) website at <http://www.ets.org>.

Register for the general and, if needed, subject [Graduate Record Examination \(GRE\)](#), [Law School Admission Test \(LSAT\)](#), [Graduate Management Admission Test \(GMAT\)](#), [Medical College Aptitude Test \(MCAT\)](#), and [Test of English as a Foreign Language \(TOEFL\)](#). It is typically recommended that general and subject GRE tests be taken on separate dates. ETS has practice materials and/or tests for some of the standardized admission tests. Access <http://www.ets.org> for more information.

[GRE – www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)
[LSAT – www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org)

[MCAT – www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)
[TOEFL – www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)

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Senior Year

Attend visitation programs hosted by a university or an academic department.

Contact faculty whose research is in your academic area of interest.

Identify the universities where you wish to apply. Request admission and fellowship/assistantship application forms or any other information you may need. Most universities offer electronic applications. At FSU, [graduate admissions](#) information is located at <http://www.admissions.fsu.edu>. Funding information is available at <http://gradschool.fsu.edu/Funding-Awards>.

Check for supplemental application forms required by departments.

Apply early! Some academic program deadlines are earlier than the university deadline.

Complete Financial Aid Forms

Application for financial aid and application for graduate school admission are two separate processes often with different deadlines. In January, file the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. This form must be completed in order to receive financial aid. The FSU Office of Financial Aid administers several programs (work study and loans) that may be used by graduate students. Most support is in the form of deferred loans. Applying for loans is a complex process that requires a long lead time. The FSU list of Preferred Lenders includes Florida State University and several external companies. This process should begin at least four months prior to the term in which aid is needed. If you have any questions, contact the [FSU Office of Financial Aid](#) at (850) 644.1641.

Complete Fellowship, Scholarship, and Assistantship Application Forms

Most graduate students seek some type of assistance to help finance their graduate studies. Such assistance can take different forms (e.g., fellowships, research and teaching assistantships, and loans), with funds derived from various sources. Assistantships and university or college fellowships are awarded by the student's university, college or academic department while many fellowships are awarded by external funding sources, such as the [National Science Foundation](#).

Students need to make separate applications for each award sought. Most fellowships and assistantships require the GRE, GMAT, or LSAT scores. The appropriate test should be scheduled such that scores will be available prior to the application deadline.

Deadlines for financial award applications are often earlier than deadlines for graduate school applications. The FSU Graduate School administers merit and need-based fellowships and awards and strongly encourages all prospective and current graduate students to complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) to ensure that they are eligible for the widest range of assistance.

Research and teaching assistantships, and some fellowships are handled at the departmental and/or college level. For more information about departmental or college-level funding at FSU, students should contact the director of graduate studies for their specific program.

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Senior Year (continued from previous page)

September - November

Take the standardized admission examination (e.g., [GRE](#), [GMAT](#), [LSAT](#), [MCAT](#)) that pertains to your academic area. Contact institutions and departments for this information.

Order official transcripts and request letters of recommendations from individuals who are very knowledgeable of your skills (e.g., faculty, mentor, or advisor).

FSU undergraduates applying for graduate school at FSU do not need to order their FSU transcripts, as FSU Graduate Admissions has access to all FSU transcripts.

Finalize your personal statement and ask your faculty advisors/mentors to read it.

Fee Waivers

Check to see whether you qualify for a fee waiver to cover application costs.

Inquire about this at your financial aid office. If you are an FSU undergraduate, access the [FSU Office of Financial Aid](#) at <http://www.finaid.fsu.edu>.

Complete Admission Application Forms

Make copies of everything for your records.

Contact the university once you have submitted your application to make sure that your application materials are complete. For many universities, the process will be electronic/online.

January-March

In January, file the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>.

Make sure that all applications and supporting materials have been received by the respective departments/Graduate Admissions. You can contact [FSU Graduate Admissions](#) at <http://www.admissions.fsu.edu>.

Admission, fellowship, scholarship, and assistantship offer(s) should be received during this time.

Notify the university of your choice of your decision to attend their program. (You cannot be pressured to provide your decision until April 15th).

Write to the other universities that accepted you, declining their offers of admission.



Describe personal attributes or qualities that will help you successfully complete graduate study (determination to achieve goals, initiative and ability to develop ideas, perseverance).

II. Personal Statement

Your personal statement should be clear, concise, and complete in sentence structure. However, try to be as informative as possible throughout your statement.

General Information before you write:

Research the university and academic program.

If possible visit the campus and faculty in the academic program.

Write a positive personal statement. If you are a FSU student, the FSU Reading/Writing Center will provide assistance <http://wr.english.fsu.edu/>, as will the FSU Career Center <http://www.career.fsu.edu/>

Length should be 500-600 words, 1 to 1-1/2 pages typed, single-spaced. Please contact university/department if the requirements are not clear.

Opening Paragraph

Introduce yourself and give general reasons for pursuing graduate study.

State your particular talents and individuality.

Qualifications

This section should build a foundation for your forthcoming work. Discuss the following:

Explain why you chose this field. What motivated you?

Describe your expertise and accomplishments in your major field (e.g., research you have performed) – include name of faculty member.

Discuss your undergraduate studies in general. How do they relate to what you intend to study in graduate school?

Mention your specific experiences that demonstrate your motivation and inspiration for continued study.

Talk about other relevant experiences (jobs, extracurricular activities, awards, honors).

Explain any discrepancies on your transcript, which would include having any fluctuation in your GPA.

Mention specific faculty with whom you are interested in working.

Background

Tell the university/academic department about yourself, your family and community.

Explain who influenced your interest in graduate school (faculty member, family, etc.).

III. Letters of Recommendation

Academic departments/programs generally require three (3) letters of recommendation.

See if there are recommendation forms provided by the university to accompany your letters of recommendation.

Suggestions

Ask faculty if they can write you a “good” letter of recommendation. If they cannot, look elsewhere.

Make sure you ask faculty with whom you have had classes and a great rapport.

Choose faculty who know your character and your work, and will describe your most positive attributes.

Meet with your professors who will write your letters of recommendation and give them a generous amount of time to draft your letter. Talk to them about your interests and plans for graduate study.

Prepare a brief resumé that indicates the courses you have taken, GPA, conference presentations, and honors you have received.

Provide a draft of your personal statement/statement of purpose.

Ask non-faculty or people from career/major related areas to write letters of recommendation depending on disciplines/major. Generally, this is only from one person.



IV. Interviews/Professionalism

Applying for graduate school is not just on paper.

Professionalism During Interview

Dress - Professional; minimal jewelry and cologne/perfume

Timeliness - Arrive early for interviews.

Communication - Display good verbal communication, body language, and non-verbal cues.

Correspondence - Professional email and voicemail

Preparedness - Arrive with a list of questions about the prospective academic department, faculty and financial opportunities.

Follow up with people in the program of interest; send thank you letters.

(TREAT THIS AS IF YOU WERE LOOKING FOR A CAREER/JOB)

Respect/Patience/Graciousness (Anyone could be watching)

Positive Attitude

Politeness/Sincerity

Listen; do not interrupt.

REMEMBER: THESE PROGRAMS DO NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT YOU!!!



V. Test Schedule

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and other standardized tests are offered at various times during the year. Most of these exams are electronic. Some examinations require an advance registration date so be sure to look into this early.

[Graduate Record Examination \(GRE\)](#)

Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Rosedale Road
Princeton, NY 08541
(609) 921-9000
<http://www.gre.org>
Offered in computer- and paper-based formats

[Graduate Management Admission Test \(GMAT\)](#)

Graduate Management Admission Council
1600 Tysons Blvd., Suite 1400
McLean, VA 22102
(703) 749-0131
<http://www.mba.com/mba/TaketheGMAT>
Offered in computer-based format only

[Test of English as a Foreign Language \(TOEFL\)](#)

Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Rosedale Road
Princeton, NJ 08541
(609) 921-9000
<http://www.toefl.org>
Offered in internet-, computer-, and paper-based formats

[Law School Admission Test \(LSAT\)](#)

Law School Admission Services
P.O. Box 2000
Newtown, PA 18940-0998
(215) 968-1001
<http://www.lsac.org>
Offered in paper-based format only

[Medical College Admission Test \(MCAT\)](#)

American College Testing Program
P.O. Box 4056
Iowa City, IA 52243
(319) 337-1357
<http://www.aamc.org>
Offered in computer- and paper-based formats



Adapted with permission from the University of Georgia
Graduate School's *Resource Guide*.