

# Graduate School Timeline for Fullerton College Students

Think it's too early to plan for graduate school? Well, think again. The following is a generic timeline if you are interested in pursuing a graduate degree including a checklist associated with the application process. As a Fullerton College student, once you have decided that you want to transfer to a college or university, this timeline is helpful as you gear towards applying to graduate schools for the fall term after your senior year. This is vital information to keep with you as you progress through your academic career.

## Undergraduate Freshman and Sophomore Years:

- Utilize the [Career and Life Planning Center](#)'s resources to explore various careers and academic interests. Be sure to follow the [Career/Life Planning Process](#) as a strategy in your educational and career pursuits. Depending upon your interests, research the requirements for graduate school early. This will allow you to know what is important or necessary well in advance as you prepare for graduate school.

## During Junior Year (after Transfer):

- As you consider your academic interest areas, meet and talk with faculty, advisors, and professionals about graduate programs in your field. Perform [informational interviews](#).
- Identify and read professional journals in the field. Learn as much as you can about the current research and trends. Identify the leading researchers and institutions for your field of interest. Identify where these experts in your interest area instruct and review that program for consideration in graduate school.
- Consider assisting professors in their research and special projects to receive hands-on experience and to learn more about your field of interest.
- Research what admission test is the most common for the graduate program you want to enter and investigate preparation programs. Some admission tests include:
  - Graduate Record Exam (GRE)
  - Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT)
  - Law School Admission Test (LSAT)
  - Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
- Begin the process of researching graduate programs. Some resources include:
  - [www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com)
  - [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
  - [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)

## Summer after Junior Year:

- Develop your personal criteria important to you in making a decision on a graduate program. This may include type of degree (PhD or PsyD), coursework, cost, etc.
- Check out graduate schools' websites, visit campuses, and attend informational sessions.
- Investigate scholarship, fellowship, assistantship and financial aid options.
- Request program information from schools of interest such as:
  - Acceptance rates
  - Test scores and GPA ranges for students accepted to the program
  - Placement rates for graduates
  - Typical employers of graduates
- Start preparation to take the admissions exam.

- Register for the required admission exam. Scores must be sent directly to the schools from the exam organization.
- Begin writing your personal statement which needs to be modified for each school. The following resources are helpful:
  - Graduate Admissions Essays by Donald Asher
  - How to Write the Perfect Personal Statements: Law, Business, Medical, Graduate School by Mark Alan Stewart
  - [www.statementofpurpose.com](http://www.statementofpurpose.com)
  - Various personal statement books to specific types of graduate schools are available in local bookstores and online.

## **Senior Year:**

### *September*

- Finalize list of schools to which to apply. It is recommended that you apply to 5 or 6; however, for highly selective programs applying to 10 schools is not uncommon.
- Take appropriate graduate admission exams, if you have not already done so. Scores must be submitted to the graduate school prior to the deadline or your application may be considered incomplete, forfeiting the possibility admission.
- Begin asking faculty members for letters of recommendation. Usually you will need at least 3 letters of recommendations, but be sure to check the requirements in the application.
- Continue revising your personal statements and have someone else proofread it.
- Based on the information received from the schools, develop a personal timeline for the application process:
  - Check on application deadlines and rolling or early admissions policies, as well as financial aid, scholarship, fellowship, and assistantship deadlines.
  - Read the applications thoroughly and prepare any other materials requested.
- For medical, dental and law school, register with the appropriate application and data assembly service ([LSAC](#), [AAMC](#), [ADEA AADSAS](#)). These services collect your materials and forward them to your schools.

### *October*

- Continue to gather, organize, and complete application materials.
- Take graduate admissions exams, if have not done so already.
- Complete personal statements, adjusting each to meet each program's requested criteria. If you need assistance, check out the Writing Center on campus and ask a faculty member to review your personal statement.
- Order official transcripts from all post secondary institutions even those from which you did not earn a degree. The transcript must be sent directly from the school attended to the school you are applying to or the data assembly service. These need to be sent to each school to which you apply. Some schools charge a fee to send an official transcript.
- Provide your faculty and supervisors who are providing letters of recommendations with all the materials they need to complete the letters.
  - Provide these individuals with a deadline 2 weeks prior to when you plan to have your application materials complete. (This is well before the actual application deadline date.)

- Send them the appropriate form, the latest version of your personal statement, resume and stamped and addressed envelopes.
- Contact schools to schedule visits during the fall semester. See “Interviews & Campus Visits” in Graduate School Application Process. If unable to afford a visit, request from the department current and recent graduates you can talk to about the program. Also, contact faculty with questions about the program. Not only will you get your questions answered but you will also make yourself known to those making a decision about your admission to the program.
- Research the professors in the programs to which you are applying and learn about their areas of expertise. Read journal articles they have written about their research.
- Start completing the applications. Many are online and some will be paper. For paper applications, it is a good idea to make a copy to fill in the information and then transfer this information to the application you plan to send.

#### *November*

- It is advisable to send applications in by Thanksgiving Break or shortly thereafter. Some programs have early deadlines such as December while others have deadlines in January or February. Be sure check when your applications are due.
- Keep complete copies of all the application materials you have sent for your records.

#### *December*

- Follow-up with the programs to which you have applied, to verify receipt of all the application materials. You are responsible for verifications of your application materials being received. Typically, schools do not track down your missing application materials. If they do not have all the materials to your application it will be considered incomplete.

#### *January*

- Get serious about the application process for financial aid. Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA online – to qualify for financial aid you need to complete the FAFSA starting January 1. If you haven’t already researched any alternative sources of funding such as scholarships, fellowships, and/or assistantships, do so now. The last resort is looking into private loans.

#### *April*

- Typically you will find out in March where you have been accepted.
- Compare the financial aid packages offered to you.
- Once you have made your decision, notify other institutions you have applied to so they can remove your name from their process.
- Send thank you notes to those who wrote recommendation letters letting them know of your future plans.
- If you have not already, make a trip to the school you consider your top choice.

