APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

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MCNAIR SCHOLARS PROGRAM
Pre-Application

Understanding graduate education
Preparing for the application process
Researching graduate programs
Factors to consider

Application

Components of an application
Contacting faculty, students and staff
Graduate admissions process
Admissions Timeline

Post-Application

Funding, housing and special programs
• What is graduate school?
• Why should I go to graduate school?
• How is graduate school different from college?
• How is graduate education structured?
• Should I complete a master’s degree first?
• Should I work first?
• What can I do to prepare for graduate school?
- Clarify your career plans and goals
- Research the requirements of your career
- Research the requirements of your career path
- Maintain a competitive undergraduate GPA
- Develop positive relationships with faculty
- Participate in undergraduate research programs
- Begin talking with graduate students in your prospective field of study path
Tell them what you are interested in studying

Ask them if they can recommend schools or particular programs of study

Ask them how you can best prepare yourself academically for graduate school

Ask them what their experience in graduate school was like
- Review the literature from your classes.
  - What were some of your favorite articles, books, studies?
  - Collect authors and citations and then see where those people are working
- Visit Graduate Division websites
- Visit department websites
- Search for professional academic organizations in your field (MLA, AAAS, APA, ASA, etc.)
- Attend the California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education
  April 17, 2010: CSU Channel Islands
- Try a Google search using terms such as “choosing a graduate school”
  - http://gradschool.about.com/cs/choosingaprogram/a/select.htm
  - http://www.phds.org
  - http://www.gradschools.com
Some factors to consider when selecting schools...

- Intellectual environment (grad students, faculty, collaborative, interdisciplinary)
- Reputation of department, faculty
- Social environment (esp. among grad students)
- Demographics of students...% minorities...% women
- Administrative competence/assistance
- Location (geography relative to family/significant other, city characteristics, available extracurricular activities)
- Focus on graduate students vs. undergraduates?
- Are you interested in multiple professor’s work
- Faculty publishing record
- Sufficient library, laboratories, research infrastructure
- Size
- Housing, transportation to school
WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION?

- Application Form
- Statement of Purpose
- Letters of Recommendation
- Exam Scores (GRE, GRE-Subject, CBEST, etc.)
- Transcripts
- Application Fee (Waiver?)
- (Supplemental Materials--writing sample, lab hours)
You should apply to 3-8 schools

Find online application materials and email the department staff with any logistical questions about deadlines, application materials, appropriateness of visiting/contacting faculty, etc.

Contact faculty (where appropriate) that you are interested in working with*
  - Inquire about compatibility of your interest and the research they are currently conducting
  - Tell them you are interested in applying to their program

Contact students in the program
  - Have them share their own experiences/satisfaction
Decentralized among campuses
- You apply to each campus separately

Decentralized among departments
- Your application must specify an academic department

Role of the Department vs. Graduate Division
- Departments make “decisions” and Graduate Divisions handle administrative details (and finalize financial packages)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Online application opens at <a href="http://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu/eapp">www.graddiv.ucsb.edu/eapp</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>December 1-15</td>
<td>Many department deadlines close: each department has its own deadline, ranging from Dec. 1 to May 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Departmental nominations for central fellowships begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>January - February</td>
<td>Admissions notification begins for some departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Admissions processing and notification continues</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Student response &amp; SIR deadline for financial support offers</td>
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<td>May 1</td>
<td>Final application deadline for some departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Registrar sends a reminder email to all students who have submitted an SIR confirming 1) Perm No, 2) PIN, 3) online registration instructions: “Welcome New Students” <a href="http://www.registrar.ucsb.edu/welcome/welcome-newdirect.htm">www.registrar.ucsb.edu/welcome/welcome-newdirect.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>Graduate Division asks for final admissions decisions and any outstanding SIRs &amp; SLRs</td>
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**GRE:**

- Taken on a computer-based system
- Test are taken on appointment-bases (offered throughout the year - no set date)
- Scores:
  - Verbal: max 800
  - Math: max 800
  - Writing: 6 points (on a .5 scale)
- Subject Tests:
  - Biochemistry
  - Cell and Molecular Biology
  - Biology
  - Chemistry
  - Computer Science
  - Literature in English
  - Mathematics
  - Physics
  - Psychology

www.ets.org/gre/

Law School- LSAT
Business School- GMAT
Medical School- MCAT
Teaching Credential- CBEST
Teaching Credential- CSET
Writing samples are often required for admission to PhD programs in the humanities and social sciences. (Students in the sciences tend to be required to take the GRE subject tests and/or submit lab hours instead.)

Each of the programs you are applying to will have different requirements regarding the length and subject of your writing sample. Some programs will want long writing samples; others will ask you to send a sample that does not exceed ten pages. Some programs will require writing samples that illustrate your ability to do independent research; others are less restrictive about what you can send. Be sure to make careful notes of the writing sample requirements for each of the schools you are applying to.

Carefully proofread your writing sample for spelling, grammatical, and sentence-level errors.

After proofreading, ask at least one faculty member to review your writing sample. Be sure you make any changes according to their comments before you submit it.
• Extramural funding opportunities
  • Housing Application
• Special Programs (AG EP, DIG SSS, etc.)
  • Summer Programs
SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAMS

What are they:
• Opportunity to engage in a research project under the guidance of a faculty member, research team and/or graduate student(s)
• Most undergraduate summer research program range from 6-10 weeks

Benefits:
• Undergraduate research experience
• Exposure to undergraduate research at in a different academic setting
• Possible opportunity to get a faculty mentor to write a letter of recommendation for you
• Often stipend (ranges can be between $2,500-$6,000)

Common deadlines:
• Jan 15-March 15

Where you can find them:
• Specific campus websites
• Online searches
Questions?
McNair Scholars Program

Two-year undergraduate research program for juniors and seniors who want to pursue a Ph.D.

*Must apply as a sophomore

For more information:
Building 477, Office 124
805.893.3615
mcnair@mcnair.ucsb.edu

http://mcnair.ucsb.edu/
McNair Scholars Program Staff
We are here to help!