

Graduate School

Creating a successful application

As a George Fox student, you are well-positioned to obtain entrance to one or more first-tier graduate institutions. There are a few reasons for this. First, our faculty have earned their degrees at top-tier institutions (e.g. Harvard, Yale, Columbia, UCLA, Vanderbilt, Cambridge, etc.). Because our faculty want to see you succeed they will leverage their professional network, and that of their alma mater, on your behalf.

Second, due to the professional research and publication record of our faculty members, George Fox has earned a strong institutional reputation among first-tier academic institutions. Your degree will impress graduate admissions boards who are aware of the broad interdisciplinary education you have obtained here.

Third, our small faculty-to-student ratio creates a learning community of intellectually engaged faculty and students. You might not realize it yet, but this vibrant learning community has profoundly shaped you both professionally and intellectually. Due to this formative educational environment, you will stand out against other applicants.

Finally, the IDEA Center staff is committed to helping you achieve entrance to your programs of choice. We will work along with faculty to advise you and support you in the process of applying to graduate school. The following summarizes basic advice to get this process underway.

1. Find your Schools

- a. Inquire with faculty about what programs they recommend you consider and listen to their advice. Faculty will not only know which programs you are best positioned to obtain entrance to, but also which programs they have academic pull with.
- b. Think about your research interests and find several programs that specialize in your interests.
- c. We recommend you identify at least four schools to which you will apply.

2. Identify the Requirements for your Schools

- a. Most graduate programs will list the average GPA and GRE scores of students offered admission in the previous years.
- b. Graduate programs will typically require a personal statement. And they will often give you a prompt or a list of prompts from which to respond.

3. Draft your Personal Statement

- a. In the first paragraph tell your story in a compelling way.
- b. Explain why you are applying to that particular school, which faculty you are impressed with (cite some of their publications you have read), and how you would hope to contribute to their institutional heritage and future. Flatter them.
- c. Give a copy of your personal statement to your George Fox faculty recommenders for review and feedback. Examples can be found on the IDEA Center website.
- d. Two recommended books:
 - i. *Personalize your Grad School Essays*, Michelle Hubbard
 - ii. *Graduate Admissions Essays: Write your Way into the Graduate School of Your Choice*, Donald Asher

4. Obtain Letters of Recommendation

- a. You will need to request these letters in a formal and structured way so follow the documented instructions in “Recommendations – Knowing How to Request Letters,” published by the IDEA Center. You will likely need three letters of recommendation.

5. Craft your Written Work

- a. Many graduate programs will request a writing sample as part of your application. Give yourself plenty of time to edit and revise the writing sample and to ask for feedback from friends and faculty. You may consider paying someone to professionally edit your written work.

6. Prepare for your Interview

- a. During the application process some graduate programs will conduct video interviews. To prepare for this interview discuss your pitch with relevant faculty members who are most likely to know the particulars of that institution. Be sure to read faculty publications and know about original research that is associated with that institution. In the interview, it is important to communicate how your graduate work will align with and advance the mission of the institution. Practice for your interview on Big Interview (a video platform found on the IDEA Center website).

7. Go to Graduate School

- a. While you are applying to graduate school, begin reading now how you cannot only land in your program of choice, but also how you can thrive once you get there. We recommend the following books.

- i. *Getting What you Came For: The Smart Student's Guide to Earning an M.A. or Ph.D.*, Robert Peters
- ii. *Playing the Game: The Streetsmart Guide to Graduate School*, Frederick Frank and Karl Stein