



# Grad School Timeline

There are a variety of reasons to pursue graduate or professional school; it offers new challenges, and opportunity to focus on a specific area of study and the chance to develop your career.

**Know why you go:** Graduate school requires a substantial commitment, both in terms of time and (potentially) cost. Consider how a degree or credential will help you attain your long term goals.

**Pick a program, not a school:** Picking an undergraduate college or university is often about choosing an entire school and everything it offers (size, location, degrees offered, culture, etc.). By contrast, picking a graduate program is much more about picking a specific *program* within a university that offers the faculty, research priorities, and facilities that match your interests. As you research your options, pay attention to these factors so you can identify the best-fitting programs for you.

## SUGGESTED TIME LINE

**Adjust this timeline as needed:** The following timeline is geared toward students who plan to start graduate school right after they graduate from Clark. If you plan to take a year or two off to work or travel, adjust the deadlines to match your situation.

### Sophomore Year:

- Start considering whether your career plans will include grad school. To explore your career options, see our [Explore Careers](#) page or [make an appointment with your career adviser](#).

### Fall of Junior Year:

- Consider: Do you prefer to enter grad school directly after Clark, or whether you will wait until you have accomplished other goals?
- Which degree? Explore whether a Master's, PhD, or other degree will be most helpful to your career goals.
- Research the options offered in Clark's Accelerated Master's Program, and whether they will fit your career goals.
- Begin researching potential schools. See the Career Connections Center website for resources.

### Spring of Junior Year:

- Finances: Set aside money for the cost of the GRE (or applicable test), application fees, and travel to interviews. Look into fee waiver requirements if you need them.
- Extra resources: Check with your major's (or minor's) department office for grad school resources specific to your field.
- Finalize your list of prospective schools, and familiarize yourself with the professors who share your research interests at each school.
- Learn what standardized tests, if any, each graduate program on your list requires.

- Take a GRE (or other appropriate) practice test to determine how much prep you need, and in what areas.
- Learn what subject-area tests you might need or want to take.
- Make a dedicated effort to cultivate relationships with the Clark faculty who will probably write your letters of recommendation.
- **Pro Tip:** Study weekly for the GRE.
- **Pro Tip:** Begin to network with faculty at grad schools of interest (mostly, about their work).

### Summer After Junior Year:

- Take a GRE prep course if necessary.
- Register to take the GRE in August if you have not already done so.
- Take any prerequisite courses you may need for grad school, which are not available at Clark, at another institution.
- Consider taking any GRE subject area tests you may need during the summer (leaving time to re-take them in fall if necessary).

### Fall of Senior Year:

- Take the GRE in August. If you're not happy with your scores, sign up to take it again.
- Take any GRE subject area tests you still need to take.
- Finalize the list of grad schools to which you will apply. Note their application deadlines.
- Begin drafting your statement of purpose. Tailor to each application according to their prompt questions. (See the Writing Center for tips.)
- Request official transcripts from Clark (and *any other* college and university you've attended) to be sent to the grad schools you apply to.
- Make contacts with students and professors at these schools if you have not done so already.
- Draft your CV. (See the Career Connections Center resource page for a template with tips.)
- Polish your statement(s) of purpose and CV early enough to give copies to people writing your letters of recommendation. Let professors, Career Connections Center staff or writing resource center staff give you feedback.
- Request letters of recommendation from professors. (Ask, rather than assume.)
  - **Pro tip:** Give them plenty of time to write, given their other commitments. You'll get better letters if they aren't rushed.
- Complete and submit all grad applications 30-90 days ahead of deadlines. Keep copies of every section for your records. (Fellowships/scholarships may have earlier deadlines.)
- Verify that your letters of recommendations have been sent.

### December - January of Senior Year:

- If your program includes an interview, prepare by learning about typical questions and practicing your interview skills.

### Spring of Senior Year:

- Follow through on any other requirements for fellowships, scholarships, etc.