

QUICK TIPS

Graduate and Professional School

{ WHY GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL? }

Graduate and Professional School affords the opportunity to expand knowledge of a particular area of study, enter academia as a profession, or prepare for a specific career.

Is graduate or professional school the right choice for you?

- Do you feel that it will make you more marketable?
- Is a graduate degree required for entering your field of choice?
- Should you go straight to graduate or professional school or take time to test your interest or prepare for graduate school by working in the field?



{ RESEARCHING SCHOOLS }



Pay attention to the quality and reputation of graduate programs and departments. However, ranking is not the only factor to consider when selecting graduate programs. Consider the scholarly interests and research of the faculty

within the department. Facilities, institution, placement, and degree requirements are also factors that play a role in the decision-making process. The following resources may also be useful during the research process:

- www.princetonreview.com
- www.petersons.com
- www.mba.com
- www.gradschools.com



{ PREPARING FOR THE ADMISSION PROCESS }

- ◇ Applications for graduate school typically include admission exam scores, letters of recommendation, a personal statement, and transcripts.
- ◇ Determine which admission exam is required for your program of interest.
- ◇ Complete practice exams and consider an exam preparation course before taking the admission exam required for your field.
- ◇ When requesting letters of recommendation, be sure to give plenty of time (at least a few weeks) for your references to write before the deadline.
- ◇ Provide your references with a resume and/or list of your accomplishments so that they may include those in your recommendation.

{ ADMISSIONS EXAMS }

- ◇ Graduate Record Examination (**GRE**) www.gre.org
- ◇ Graduate Management Admission Test (**GMAT**) www.gmat.com
- ◇ Law School Admission Test (**LSAT**) www.lsac.org
- ◇ Miller Analogy Test (**MAT**) www.milleranalogies.com
- ◇ Medical College Admission Test (**MCAT**) www.aamc.org

{ FUNDING YOUR ADVANCED DEGREE }

What financial aid options are available for graduate students?

Most awards are given by the academic department under your plan of study. Nevertheless, there will also be general assistantships throughout the university.

- **Graduate Assistantships:** 10-20 hours/week; typically pay full or partial tuition and offer a stipend
- **Teaching Assistantships:** teaching recitation courses and/or assisting a professor with office hours, half time
- **Research Assistantships:** Assist professor with research; may lead to own research project
- **Residence Assistantships:** Room (in college residence hall), board and stipend are often covered



SCAN THE QR CODE FOR ADDITIONAL CAREER SERVICES RESOURCES



CAREER SERVICES

North Carolina Central University | 1801 Fayetteville Street | PO Box 19585 | William Jones Building, Lower Level
Durham, North Carolina 27707 | (919) 530-6337 | nccucareerservices@ncsu.edu

Writing Personal Statements

{ WRITING TIPS }

Answer the Question

If the application asks you to state the reason you are applying to a particular academic program or company, do not spend the entire letter talking about your qualifications. Instead, talk about what attracted you to the program. To keep yourself accountable to answering the question, keep the question in front of you as you write, and refer to it often.



Consider The "I" Problem

This letter is about you. It is okay to use first person, plus it keeps your writing more active and succinct. However, to demonstrate creativity, do not start every sentence with "I."

Avoid Unnecessary Duplication

Do not reiterate information that is already seen elsewhere in your application, resume or transcript. If the reader has access to your transcript, you do not need to list your grades and course titles. You can be more general in mentioning these topics. For example: "I was on the Dean's List" or "I have taken numerous courses in the field of nutrition" and then move on to discuss appropriate experiences in more detail.

Make Your Statement Distinctive

To make your letter unique include at least one detailed example specific to your own experience (e.g. Describe an important family member or personal moment that influenced your decision to pursue a particular career or degree). Be wary of using humor to connect with the reader. Most of us are not very good at making someone laugh whom we have never met before. The safe option is to avoid any "funny-business".

Keep It Focused

Focus each paragraph on a single idea (e.g. one paragraph on the strengths of the program, one on your research experience, one on your extracurricular activities, etc.) to keep the essay from becoming too long. Consult your specific department for details on essay length and formatting. Typically, essays are brief (around 250–500 words or one typed page), therefore it is important to write concisely yet detailed.

{ FORMATTING TIPS }

Requirements for personal statements differ, but generally a personal statement includes certain information and can follow the format below:

Introduction

Gain the reader's attention by starting with a catchy opening, such as the distinctive personal example mentioned earlier. Then, connect the example to the actual program/position for which you are applying. In this first paragraph mention the specific name of the program, as well as the title of the position or degree you are seeking. If you have a fine-tuned personal statement, use it. However, it is better to start with a straight forward option than try to create some grandiose personal philosophy. Avoid cheesy clichés and egotism. Avoid using famous quotes.

Detailed Supporting Paragraphs

The next few paragraphs should address specific questions from the application. Each paragraph should be specifically focused and support a topic sentence. You may be addressing your qualifications, why you are interested in the program, etc. Regardless, keep your examples relevant to supporting your qualifications.

Conclusion

Tie together the various examples and claims you have raised in the essay, and reiterate your interest in this specific program or position. You might also mention how this job or degree is a step towards a long-term goal.

{ DOS AND DON'TS OF PERSONAL STATEMENT WRITING }

Do...

- Outline and plan your essay before you sit down to write
- Use concrete examples from your life to support your thesis
- Write about a topic that excites and interests you; your passion will become evident through your writing
- Proofread your essay and have it reviewed by others

Don't...

- Try to be funny or make jokes
- Use vocabulary you are not familiar with attempting to impress the reader
- Be dishonest or exaggerate
- Take any political views
- Repeat the same information that is already in your application or resume
- Rely only on your computer for spell and grammar check