General Checklist for the Grad School Application Process

You have decided to pursue your master’s degree in your chosen field. Awesome! Here is a checklist to help you in conquering the admissions process.

Deadlines for master's programs tend to hit in January, February or March. Starting early will give you more time to prepare and polish your application. Applying earlier will also increase your odds of being admitted. Many graduate programs have rolling admissions, so applications are evaluated as they arrive (rather than all at once). Spots fill up as the final deadline draws near.

Here's a sample schedule for a student hoping to enter grad school in the following year during fall. This is a best-case scenario which leaves time to craft a great application, resolve unforeseen problems (a lost transcript, a delinquent recommender) and submit with time to spare. Of course, you'll need to tweak this schedule to fit your schools' deadlines.

**Immediately**

- Maintain highest GPA possible.
- Make sure you have gained experience in the field you want to pursue in graduate school.
- Talk to current faculty members to explore options and access their expertise.
- Think about additional classes you may need your senior year.
- Schedule time to study for the necessary graduate exam(s) and set an early deadline for taking the tests in order to allow for needed retakes.

**Junior Year – Spring**

- Begin researching a minimum of 6 potential schools and requesting information (online) from those institutions. Remember to have 2 “reach” schools; 2 “strong possibility” schools; 2 “safe” schools. Find out admission requirements (online) for the different schools.
- Determine application procedures, graduate exam requirements, and application deadlines.
- Take a practice GRE test. Your score will help you determine how much preparation you'll need in order to succeed. If your practice scores weren't too hot, sign up for a GRE test preparation course.
- After appropriate test preparation register for the required graduate entrance exams, both general and subject test, as required by individual programs.
- Go over an unofficial copy of your transcript, checking for any errors.
- Investigate national scholarships and grants and their deadlines.
- Create preliminary list for letters of recommendation. They should be from faculty and professionals.
- Throughout this whole year you need to be networking among faculty. They can recommend good programs and may even help you make connections with your target schools.
Junior Year – Summer

☐ Take graduate entrance exams. If you're not happy with your scores, sign up to take it again. If satisfied with your test results have them submitted to your chosen schools.
☐ Request (online) updated application materials from your chosen schools.
☐ Write your personal essay(s) and get it critiqued by trusted faculty and by the DSU Career Center located on the 5th floor of the Holland Building.
☐ Double check application deadlines and rolling admissions policies at your chosen schools. Keep in mind that many medical schools and law schools have separate national application processes as well.
☐ Visit the institutions you are most interested in and meet the appropriate faculty/departments/students (if possible).

Senior Year – Fall

☐ Complete applications, personal essays, and other information requested by graduate programs. Make your own deadlines of 4-6 weeks earlier than the actual deadlines. (Make and keep copies of all application materials).
☐ Request official copies of your undergraduate transcripts from the registrar’s office to be sent to graduate programs. Remember you cannot use unofficial transcripts for admission purposes. In order to be official they must remain unopened and officially sealed.
☐ Ask professors and employers to write letters of recommendation. Carefully follow instructions given by each graduate program. Remember to provide them with any required recommendation forms, your resume, transcripts, a stamped/pre-addressed envelope, and the deadline for submission.
☐ Confirm that grad school application materials, recommendations, and test scores have been received by the deadlines. Do this well before the actual deadlines, in case you need to resend information, track down letters of reference, etc.
☐ Note application deadlines for each program/school’s graduate assistant/research assistant/fellowship positions. These are often different from the actual grad school application deadlines.
☐ Apply for national scholarships and grants, follow individual deadlines.

Senior Year – Winter

☐ Complete the Federal Financial Aid form (FAFSA.gov) even if you don’t want or don’t think you’ll qualify for federal aid.
☐ Relax and wait to hear from the school(s).

Senior Year – Spring

☐ Visit institutions that accept you, and continue your decision process.
☐ Send a deposit to your institution of choice and submit commitment forms.
☐ Notify other institutions that accepted you of your decision.
☐ Send thank you notes to your references/recommendations, informing them of your plans and your success!
☐ Register for classes.