



Graduate School Essay Guide

Whether an essay or a personal statement, the graduate school essay is an important element of the overall application process. Review these suggestions in crafting your document.

Pay attention to requirements: Word count, prompts, and other requirements are important details to take into account as you begin to write.

Brainstorm: Start with some thoughts, examples, or key words that come to mind when considering the prompt. If you do not have a prompt or specific question being asked of you, consider writing about why you are considering the profession and why you are considering the school. Furthermore, what makes you a good fit for the institution? Similar to preparing for a job interview, a graduate essay requires a little research about the institution in order to identify key traits or attributes that align with personal values or accomplishments.

Provide Examples: Use your essay to discuss specific examples of research or experiential learning such as an internship or service project to help you stand out compared to other applicants. By providing personal examples, you help the committee reviewing your application have a better understanding of what contributions you can bring to the program. With some programs having a much greater number of applicants than open spots, it is important to make it personal.

Additional Circumstances: If you have circumstances such as a lower test score, GPA, or disciplinary sanction that requires further explanation, consider writing an additional essay or including information in your personal statement. Address any circumstances surrounding the situation, how you have learned from what happened, or what techniques have been employed to ensure future success in the program. The key here is a combination of addressing what happened and the growth or learning process that has occurred as a result.

Be concise: Specifically when given a word limit, you might have to get to the point quickly and efficiently. Cut out sentences or phrases that are not essential and be sure to use language that is clear and articulate.

Carefully proofread: Your essay is a demonstration of your writing ability, so ensure it is error free. The Center of Career Development is happy to help you with crafting your essay and also consider consulting an advisor or department representative for specific subject content.

Save document with your contact information: If the essay requirements indicate the essay should be attached or printed, make sure to include your name on the essay or personal statement. A good idea is to use the same header and contact information from your resume as on the essay to keep your documents consistent.

