

## The Graduate Application Process

Career, Mentoring, and Professional Development Center  
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania  
career@ship.edu · www.ship.edu/career · 717-477-1484

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### Timetable

Start gathering information early to be able to complete your application(s) on time. Most individuals should begin the process a full 1-½ years before the anticipated start date. There are some exceptions to this rule. The time frame is different if you are applying for national scholarships or if your undergraduate institution has an evaluation committee through which you are applying. In such cases, you may need to allow additional time to successfully complete graduate admission tests and arrange for letters of recommendation.

Application deadlines range from August (1 year prior to matriculation) for early decision programs at medical schools using the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) to late spring or summer (when beginning graduate school in the fall) for a few programs with rolling admissions. Most deadlines for fall entry are between January and March. **Plan to meet all formal deadlines.** Be aware that many schools with rolling admissions encourage and act upon early applications. Applying early to schools with rolling admissions is usually advantageous. It shows enthusiasm for the program and gives admissions committees more time to evaluate subjective components of your application, rather than just the “numbers.” Applicants are not rejected early unless they are clearly below an institution’s standards.

You may not be able to adhere to this timetable if your application deadlines are very early or if you decide to attend graduate school at the last minute. In any case, keep in mind the various application requirements and be sure to meet all deadlines. If deadlines are impossible to meet, call the institution to see if a late application will be considered.

### Ideal Timetable for Most Applicants

#### *Six months prior to applying:*

- Research areas of interest, institutions, and programs.
- Talk to advisers about application requirements.
- Register and prepare for appropriate graduate admission tests.
- Investigate national scholarships.
- Obtain letters of recommendation (if appropriate).

#### *Three months prior to applying:*

- Take required graduate admissions tests.
- Write for application materials.
- Write your application essay.
- Verify application deadlines and rolling admissions policies.
- For medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use.

#### *Fall (one year before matriculation):*

- Obtain letters of recommendation.
- Take graduate admission tests.
- Send completed applications.

#### *Winter (before matriculating in the fall)*

- Complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Financial Aid PROFILE, if required.

#### *Spring (before matriculating in the fall):*

- Check with the institution before deadlines to verify your file is complete.
- Visit institutions that accept you.
- Send a deposit to your institution of choice.
- Notify other institutions that accepted you so they can admit students on their waiting list.
- Send thank-you notes to people who wrote recommendation letters, informing them of your success.