

# Applying to Graduate Programs in Communication

## Researching Graduate Schools

- Give yourself enough time to fully consider the options. Researching schools a week before their application deadlines is too late.
- Create your own list of potential programs. Start with a large list (NCA maintains a database of Master's and Doctoral programs in Communication) and narrow down the schools based on factors like location, available concentrations, or cost.
- Develop a spreadsheet to compare and contrast each school. You'll want to work down to a manageable list of a few preferred schools and a few backup schools.
- Seek the advice of your advisor and professors, but also remember these conversations are most helpful when you've done your research.

## Personal Statements<sup>1</sup>

- Before you begin writing your personal statement, read the guidelines set by each program.
- This is not the time to tell your whole life story. Pick an aspect of your life that can illuminate who you are as a person and why you want to study the issues you're interested in exploring as a graduate student.
- Remember who your audience is. When reviewing what you've written, ask yourself, "Would the Graduate Director want to read this? Would this stand out among countless other personal statements?"
- Demonstrate an awareness of the discipline. Express your goals, whether they are scholarly or professional. This degree will provide you with the foundational knowledge necessary to develop disciplinary research and will assist you in establishing the essential skills necessary for professional success.
- Be yourself. Truly exceptional statements show vulnerability, honesty, and highlight your personal experiences to build a narrative that explains who you are and where you are going.

## Reaching out to Graduate Schools

- Email the admissions counselors and graduate school directors associated with your top programs.
- Do your homework. Make sure to ask questions that aren't already answered on the website.

- Ask to connect with current graduate school students. Often, these students can give you a sense of what everyday life is like in the program.
- Don't miss an opportunity to connect with graduate school directors and professors if you find an open house or networking event nearby.
- Don't hesitate to ask about money! You'll want to know exactly how much the program will cost and whether financial assistance is available.

## Application Requirements

- Organize each program's application requirements into a to-do list and make sure you know the deadline for each requirement.
- Register to take the GRE and determine how long you'll need to study for it. Make sure to leave some time in your calendar to retake the test if you're unhappy with your scores.
- Ask your professors for references early on and give them the time and information necessary to write quality references.
- Revisit your writing samples! If you're submitting work produced in class, make sure to update the document with the feedback of your professor.

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<sup>1</sup> — <https://www.gograduate.org/resources/graduate-school-personal-statement/>