



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY



GRADUATE
DIVERSITY PROGRAM

Getting into Grad School





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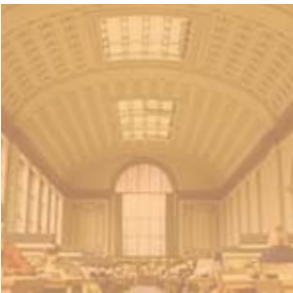
Greetings from Fiona M. Doyle, Dean of the Graduate Division

It's my pleasure to encourage you to consider the University of California, Berkeley, for your graduate studies!

Berkeley has a long history of providing opportunities for a diverse population of graduate students. Our programs are enriched by the variety of cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds of our students, faculty, and staff. Berkeley has led the nation in awarding the highest numbers of Ph.D.s to students who are historically underrepresented in graduate education. We believe that diversity and excellence go hand-in-hand.

Choosing to pursue a graduate degree — and finding the right place to do so — may be among the most important decisions you will ever make. Start by learning as much as you can about the academic program that interests you and about what UC Berkeley has to offer. Visit the campus, if possible; meet our graduate students and talk with members of our faculty. If you are not able to visit us in person, be sure to contact a faculty member in your field of interest who can discuss the resources available to you here.

I hope you'll find that Berkeley offers the breadth, depth, and vision in its graduate programs that you seek, and that you will consider becoming part of our dynamic community of scholars and future leaders.



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Greetings from Na'ilah Suad Nasir, Vice Chancellor, Division of Equity & Inclusion

Here at Cal, we believe diversity is an essential part of excellence, one of the many reasons I encourage you to consider graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley.

As the top public research institution in the world, Berkeley understands that the very best education is achieved when diverse viewpoints, socio-economic status, ethnicities, and experiences unite. Whether you study educational access and achievement, seventeenth century Irish poetry, engineering microbes to produce biofuels, or planets in other galaxies, Berkeley has the faculty, facilities, and the synergy of a diverse community that puts us at the vanguard of research and education.

In addition to being at the forefront of many fields, Berkeley has been a pioneer of equity and inclusion. We seek to develop, improve, and adopt new strategies focusing on sustaining a campus that reflects the country's diverse demographics. We actively engage and recruit students and faculty from diverse backgrounds, and we encourage research projects that seek significant advances in knowledge regarding topics of critical importance to society.

Our campus philosophy is to make the world a better place, which ultimately guides every aspect of the work we do, from research, to teaching, to service, and more. Graduate students are the innovators of knowledge and creators of change, making Berkeley the enriched and inspired institution we are today.

I hope you'll find that our expertise and vision motivates and excites you. Consider joining Cal and become a part of our innovative and inclusive dedication to excellence.



Thinking about Graduate School?

Preparation

Build relationships

Professors can help you build connections at other universities and provide strong recommendations that you'll need for your graduate school applications. Also get to know your fellow students, as well as current graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Many people will fuel your interests and academic development when you keep an open and curious mind.

Gain research experience

Conducting research during your undergraduate years will give you a competitive advantage by demonstrating that you're capable of the type of study graduate school requires.

Ask your professors if they will supervise an independent project. Take advantage of research opportunities during the academic year, as well as structured summer programs.



Many research universities offer summer research programs in all disciplines, including social sciences and humanities. Visit their websites to find ones for which you qualify. Programs are competitive, so

apply broadly. Don't worry about where you do your research--just do it!

Track your achievements

When you apply to graduate school, you will be asked to write a statement of purpose, a short essay that highlights your accomplishments, motivation and goals. Keep track of your research, internships, and activities so you'll have a complete list of achievements when you write your essay.

Find the right programs

Investigate the many graduate programs and campuses that could be a good fit for your research interests. Your professors can point you to ones that will be good matches. When you find interesting articles or books written by researchers in your field, look into programs offered by their schools. When possible, visit potential campuses and meet faculty and students. You can also send e-mails to professors to ask about their current research.

Build a strong academic record

Seek to distinguish yourself academically by going beyond satisfying general curricular requirements, write an honors thesis, conduct independent research, or apply to research scholar programs.

Don't let finances be a deterrent

Many resources are available to help defray the costs of your graduate education. Plan ahead and apply for funding. **Go to grad.berkeley.edu/financial/fellowships/.**

Gathering Information

- » Talk to faculty on campus and at other institutions that teach in the field you plan to pursue; they often can provide you with the best information that will help steer you in the direction of good programs.
- » University websites are a great resource to find information quickly and easily. Contact programs directly to get more detailed program information such as courses, professors, costs, financial aid and application forms.
- » At the Career Center Infolab, or local library, you will find books, brochures, catalogues, directories and guides that list information on universities that grant graduate or professional degrees. One such guide is the Peterson's Guide to Graduate and Professional Programs, which contains both short and long descriptions of virtually all accredited graduate programs.
- » Conduct informational interviews with current graduate students, professionals, and faculty in the graduate programs you are considering to gain insider information about programs.
- » Read professional and academic journals related to your area of interest.

Decide Where to Apply-Factors to consider:

After researching your options, the next step is to decide where to apply. Here are some factors to consider when evaluating programs:

- » **The Reputation of the Faculty:**
What are their academic degrees/credentials and research specialties? What is the student/faculty ratio? Some faculty may have home-pages that include some of the above information.
- » **The Quality of the Program:**
This is measured by many different factors, many of which are mentioned below. Talk to several faculty members and graduate students in the field you are pursuing to get an informed view on the variety of graduate programs available. You may choose to look at graduate school rankings to help you assess a program's quality; however, you need to realize that the rankings may be based on criteria that are different from your own and that many scholars, deans, and advisors question the validity of such rankings.
- » **Financial Cost of the Program:**
What are the opportunities for fellowships, assistantships, or scholarships? What other sources of financial aid are available?
- » **The Program Requirements:**
Inform yourself of specific requirements to gain admittance into your programs of choice in terms of GPA test scores, undergraduate coursework, and specific entrance examinations.
- » **Available Course Offerings:**
Are courses you need to fulfill degree requirements frequently offered? Will the course offerings help you meet your professional or educational goals?
- » **Facilities:**
Consider the quality of on-site facilities such as libraries, computer labs, and research facilities.
- » **Employment:**
Where are graduates of the program working, and how much are they earning?
- » **Geographic Location:**
Will studying in a particular location help you meet personal or professional goals?
- » **Student Life:**
Consider the diversity of students, student organizations, housing, and campus support services.

What kinds of admissions tests are there?

Most graduate and professional schools require that you take a standardized admissions test. The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General and Subject tests are required by many academic programs (Masters and Doctoral degrees). MBA programs usually require the GMAT. Other tests are required in other fields, such as the LSAT for law school, the MCAT for medical school, the DAT for dentistry school, the OAT for optometry school, and the TOEFL English proficiency test for international students.

Getting Started - Detailed Checklist

One of the initial steps in applying to a graduate or professional school is to research application deadlines so that you can develop a timeline of when to submit test scores, letters of recommendation, personal essays, etc. Below is a timeline to help you in planning your application process. A freshman - senior year checklist is located on the second to last page of this booklet. It's never too early to begin preparing for your graduate school application!

Junior year

- » Begin researching available programs by talking to faculty/alumni/current students in the program, reviewing grad school guides/directories, requesting promotional materials and visiting schools' websites
- » Start exploring financial aid resources
- » Study, then take practice tests for standardized exams
- » Sign up for required standardized test
- » Attend Career Center Graduate/Professional School Workshops
- » Identify potential letter writers
- » Order an unofficial transcript and check for and correct any discrepancies
- » Take the required standardized test

Senior Year: Fall Semester

- » Write a first draft of your statement of purpose
- » Request your letters of recommendation
- » Order official transcripts
- » Write final draft of statement of purpose
- » Complete and submit your applications
- » Apply for aid available through departmental programs; assistantships, fellowships, scholarships, etc.
- » Complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Senior year: Spring semester

- » Visit prospective campuses if possible, and talk to faculty/students to help you make your final decision
- » Follow-up with schools to make sure your file is complete
- » After receiving acceptance from the school of your choice, send in the required deposit, and contact other schools and decline acceptances
- » Write thank you notes to people who helped you

Strengthening your Application

The following is a list of suggestions that, if followed closely, will strengthen your application in the competitive field of graduate admissions to UC Berkeley and other programs.

1 Plan ahead

Research the colleges and universities where you would like to apply, focusing on the best programs that are the right match pertinent to your academic interests and personal needs. Find out if any of the faculty are doing research in an area that interests you. Go on-line or call the University for application and information materials. Double check the deadlines (most programs will not accept late applications). Some schools have two deadlines; a fellowship deadline, which is earlier, and a later general application deadline. Make sure you apply before the first deadline if you wish to be considered for university fellowships. In general, you should consider applying to a minimum of five schools. Ideally, you want to obtain the right match of the university and faculty you wish to work with.

(which should provide information about any pertinent personal history). This can strengthen the letter they write for you. Make sure to give them all the proper letter of recommendation information, and deadlines.



2 Letter of recommendation

For graduate study, letters of recommendation are extremely important. Letters from faculty are usually preferred by admission committees since they believe only faculty can truly ascertain your intellectual and graduate student potential. You need three letters of recommendation. Try to get all three from faculty with whom you've had an upper-division class, or have done research with. Some graduate programs require related work/internship experience, and you will need one or two letters from these entities in addition to one or two from faculty.

Professors will invariably state your class grade in the letter, so use caution when choosing your evaluators. Approach the faculty member and ask her/him if they are able to write a positive letter of recommendation for you. If they hesitate, or say they can only write a neutral letter, approach someone else.

Provide the evaluators with additional material such as copies of your transcript, C.V., your statement of purpose, and personal statement

3 GRE

The most common test required for entrance into graduate school is the general aptitude (Quantitative, Analytical, and Verbal) component of the GRE. The general GRE exam is offered throughout the year.

- » You can buy GRE study guides and old exams at any bookstore or online.
- » Your GRE score will improve if you take the practice examinations in a timed format mimicking real test conditions.
- » Order the software/practice tests from ETS to better prepare for the computer administered test. **Go to www.ets.org/gre.**
- » Many students suggest taking the practice exam on the computer, as it improves preparation for the actual test.
- » Consider taking a test preparation class to help with test-taking strategies.
- » Don't randomly guess answers. Make calculated guesses that will narrow your choices.

The Analytical portion of the GRE is in essay format. You will be asked to write two essays on certain topics. Focus on an analytical response, backing up what you're "arguing" with logic and analysis. The Quantitative section of the GRE is considered of greatest importance to admission committees in sciences and engineering. It is expected that scientists and engineers should do well on this section. There is no calculus on this test.

The GRE subject test is not required for the majority of those applying to Berkeley, but it is required by some departments, such as Math, English, Biology and Physics. Make sure you check with the department you're applying to as to whether it's required. The subject test is paper based and only offered three times per year. Most graduate programs take the exam results very seriously. Those departments requiring the subject tests will weigh them more heavily than the general exam. Don't let the GRE intimidate you. Studying ahead of time will prepare you well and reduce anxiety.

4 Your College GPA

The college GPA is a critical component of the admissions process. A satisfactory scholastic average, usually a minimum GPA of 3.0 is required by UC Berkeley for admission, though typically, the cut-off for most departments is higher. (Exceptions can occur depending on circumstances.) Many admissions committees will consider upward trends in grades. However, the better your GPA, the better your chances of getting admitted. Careful attention should be made to any courses taken at the undergraduate level which are pertinent to the area you are considering for graduate study. If you are admitted to a non-terminal Master's program you *may* be able to continue toward the Ph.D. pending passage of the preliminary examination and have at least a 3.5 GPA.

5 Research/work experience

During summer, or the academic year, try to gain research experience in an independent study with a professor or a summer research program. This will give you an edge in the admission process, provide you with insight about your own future research interests, and augment your knowledge and skills. Professors in all disciplines often regard students as highly motivated when they partake in research as undergraduates.



6 Statement of purpose

The statement of purpose is one of the most important parts of the application process. It is from this essay that the admissions committee will discern the seriousness of your intentions, your experience, and your motivation for graduate school. Think of the statement of purpose as a composition with three different parts. The first part is a brief paragraph stating the program you want to study and your research focus. The second part should be a summary of your college experiences. Briefly describe what brought about your interest in graduate study.

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Describe any research experience, clarifying your responsibilities, experimental results, and if you presented the findings at a conference or published them in a journal. You may be as specific as possible, as professors in your discipline will read this statement. The third and most important part of the essay should discuss why you want to go to graduate school, what you wish to study (research), and ideally, whom you would like to work with.

Perhaps you wish to research an issue or topic that hasn't been addressed before, or expand an undergraduate research project. Professors are looking for students with scholarly potential, intellectual passion, and serious intentions about graduate study.

7 Personal statement

Indicate any challenges, hardships or obstacles you may have overcome. (We look at this as a sign of perseverance.) Let us know if you've supported yourself through school, if you're a first generation college student, took on a leadership position, tutored or mentored students, or took advantage of unique opportunities.

8 Financial support

Make sure you apply for graduate admission by the university's fellowship deadline. This insures that you will be considered for various university fellowships. Apply for any other private, national, or corporate based fellowships. You should also fill out the FAFSA to receive consideration for loans and other aid. For more information regarding other fellowships, go to grad.berkeley.edu/financial/fellowships/.

9 Suggestions

If you need to submit a writing sample in your application, make sure it's the **best** paper you've written, checked for grammar and content.

Once you are admitted, visit the campus if possible, and speak to current graduate students. Ask them why they chose that particular university.

Be on time, organized, prepared, and thorough. No application to any university will be processed unless all materials are in by the deadline. All application materials are usually available in September. Following these guidelines will strengthen your application to Berkeley and any other graduate school you wish to attend.

10 AB540/Undocumented students

The links below address important questions concerning academic processes, financial resources, and information for undocumented graduate students at UC Berkeley: diversity.berkeley.edu/graduate/undocustudentinfo.

For a list of AB540 resources, please go to: graduate.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/paying-for-uc/ab540/index.html.

11 Divisional Diversity Professionals

For a list of UC Berkeley Divisional Diversity Professionals who can assist you with specific Graduate School questions, please go to bit.ly/UCB_Diversity_Development_Professionals.

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Writing the Statement of Purpose

Things to keep in mind:

1. What the admissions committee will read between the lines: motivation, competence, potential as a graduate student.
2. Emphasize everything from a positive perspective and write in an active voice.
3. Demonstrate everything by example; don't say directly you're a persistent person, show it.
4. If something significant occurred that affected your grades, such as illness, or excessive work, state it. Write it affirmatively, however, showing your perseverance.
5. Make sure your narrative is linked with continuity and focus.
6. The essay should be approximately 1½ to 2 pages, single-space, 12pt. font size.

Writing the statement of purpose

Part 1: Introduction

Give a brief introduction to yourself. State what sparked your interest in pursuing graduate school, and what you wish to study.

Part 2: Summarize what you did as an undergraduate

- a) Important class or classes you took which stimulated your desire for graduate study; or a specific project you completed for a class.
- b) Research you did. Indicate with whom, the title of the project, your responsibilities and the outcome. Write in the manner pertinent to your discipline; professors are the people who read these statements.
- c) Professionally related work experience.

Part 3: If you graduated and worked for a while and are returning to grad school, indicate what you've been doing while working: company, work/design team, responsibilities, what you learned, what you taught, etc. You can also indicate here how this helped you focus your graduate studies.

Part 4: Here you indicate what you wish to study in graduate school in further detail. This is a greater elaboration of your opening paragraph.

- a) State your area of interest, then questions you might have associated with the topic. You should have an area of emphasis selected before you write the statement.
- b) Look on the web for information about the professors and their research. Are there professors whose interests parallel or match yours? If so, indicate this.
- c) End your statement in a positive and confident manner indicating a readiness for the challenges of graduate study.

Personal Statement Guide

The University of California at Berkeley is committed to excellence and equity in every facet of its mission. Teaching, research, professional and public service contributions that promote diversity and equal opportunity are encouraged and given recognition in graduate admissions and fellowships. Guidelines, such as those below, may be considered when composing the personal statement for the UC Berkeley graduate application.

Potential to bring to one's academic career the critical perspective that comes from a non-traditional educational background or one's understanding of the experiences of groups historically underrepresented in higher education;

Communication skills and cross-cultural abilities to maximize effective collaboration with a diverse cross-section of the academic community;

Demonstrated significant academic achievement by overcoming barriers such as economic, social, or educational disadvantage;

Potential to contribute to higher education through understanding the barriers facing women, domestic minorities, students with disabilities, and other members of groups underrepresented in higher education careers, as evidenced by life experiences and educational background. For example,

- » attendance at a minority serving institution;
- » ability to articulate the barriers facing women and minorities in science and engineering fields;
- » participation in higher education pipeline programs such as, UC Leads, Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP), or McNair Scholars;

Academic service advancing equitable access to higher education for women and racial minorities in fields where they are underrepresented;

Leadership experience among students from groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education;

Research interests focusing on underserved populations and understanding issues of racial or gender inequalities. For example,

- » research that addresses issues such as race, gender, diversity, and inclusion;
- » research that addresses health disparities, educational access and achievement, political engagement, economic justice, social mobility, civil and human rights, and other questions of interest to historically underrepresented groups;
- » artistic expression and cultural production that reflects culturally diverse communities or voices not well represented in the arts and humanities.

Creating a Back-Up Plan

Before Graduating:

There are a variety of factors that interplay in the graduate admissions process. Top-ranked graduate programs typically prefer a GPA of 3.5 or better. Exceptions occur, but many students give up their quest to attend graduate school due to what they believe is a non-competitive GPA. While there are no guarantees, following some of the suggestions below might improve your chances.



1. Strive for 'A' grades in your remaining classes, particularly those related to your intended area of study. Repeat classes where you obtained poor grades if possible. Graduate Admissions representatives will pay attention to a definitive turn-around, or an upswing in grades. Mention this in your statement of purpose, noting the higher GPA(s) achieved for each subsequent year/semester. Inform your faculty recommenders about any positive changes.

2. Undergraduate research can enhance admission to graduate school. Get involved in a formal research program (at your home or another institution), or through an independent study. Get to know the professor's research interests before approaching them.

3. Standardized Exams: If possible, take a test preparation course, as it will generally help you perform better. Make sure to study and take practice exams.

4. Seek to improve your writing skills. Take an extra class if possible. Good writing skills will impress graduate admission reviewers and will enable you to boost the quality of your papers, theses, proposals, and dissertations.

5. If you are a re-entry student, or had a break in your education, think about the skills you acquired while not in school. These skills may contribute to your knowledge base and attract the attention of admissions committees.



After Graduating:

1. Those interested in obtaining a Ph.D. may need to complete a Master's degree first.

Recommendations on how to proceed are as follows:

- » Seek admission to a Master's program with a good reputation, preferably with a research/ thesis component. Aim for a 3.5 GPA or higher to get into high-ranking Ph.D. programs.
- » Complete a thesis you'll be proud to write about in your subsequent applications.
- » Get to know your MA/MS professors. You will need letters of recommendation from them.

2. You can also enroll in classes as a non-matriculating student at a university offering course credit.

Suggestions for proceeding are as follows:

- » Ask the Graduate Admissions Chair at your intended graduate program(s) which upper division or graduate level classes might increase your potential for graduate admission. Focus on obtaining "A" grades. Inform the Admissions Chair of your progress.
- » If you can't get advice on specific classes, enroll in foundational/theoretical courses that will give you appropriate background/current knowledge.
- » Get to know the professors from these classes, as they may be able to write strong letters of recommendation for you.
- » Approach a professor about the possibility of conducting research. Acquiring research in this capacity is highly regarded as you will be learning new skills, obtaining advanced knowledge, and showing commitment to future study.

3. Round out your strategy by getting creative.
- » Volunteer to conduct research with a faculty member from your alma mater.
 - » Participate in an internship where you can work on an academically focused project.
 - » Take classes to increase your skills in areas needing improvement.
 - » Seek advice from current graduate students enrolled in your proposed area of study.
 - » Find an academic mentor who might guide you through the application process.



Checklist

{ Follow this checklist to develop yourself as a strong graduate school candidate. Even if you are unsure about applying, follow this plan so you'll be prepared if you decide to continue your studies. }

Freshman year

- Dream big and plan how you'll make it happen.
- Earn good grades.
- Get to know your professors.
- Meet with graduate advisers to lay out courses and experiences you'll need.

Sophomore year

- Apply for undergraduate research scholar programs and/or work with a faculty member on a project. Be persistent!
- Keep up your grades.
- Get to know more professors.

Summer between sophomore and junior years

- Search for potential graduate programs.
- Explore fellowships and grants, both extramural and school-specific.
- Participate in a summer research internship, if possible.

Junior year

- Apply for and participate in a research project.
- Start studying for the GRE in the fall.
- Map out a plan for applying for extramural fellowships.
- Take the GRE in the winter or spring.
- Visit campuses and recruiting events.

Summer between junior and senior years

- Participate in a summer research program.
- Make a list of graduate programs that fit your interests and goals.
- Make a plan for applying for school admission and university funding.
- Take the GRE for the first time or again, if you want to improve your score.
- Draft your statement of purpose and other application essays.
- Start sending out extramural fellowship applications--deadlines are often much earlier than those for admission!

Senior year

- Finish submitting extramural funding applications during fall term, paying close attention to deadlines.
- Request letters of recommendation by early October.
- Ask professors, Diversity Directors, and graduate students for feedback on your statement of purpose.
- Submit your admissions and funding applications early.
- Take the GRE again, if needed. This is your last opportunity if you are applying to graduate school now.
- Stay organized. Stay on schedule. Getting stressed doesn't help!



OUR MISSION

The Graduate Diversity Program provides support services for prospective and continuing students on the Berkeley campus in an effort to maintain a more diverse graduate student community. The Graduate Diversity Program serves as a resource for the admissions process, academic support, financial advice, and professional development. It also provides a forum for ideas and programs designed to enhance the educational experience of underrepresented students, including those who are undocumented, first generation college students, and those who are educationally and financially challenged.



Learn more:
diversity.berkeley.edu/graduate/gdp

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