

Putting Together the Pieces of the Application Puzzle



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Reasons to go to Graduate School

- To conduct focused research and scholarship in particular discipline
- To advance within a particular field of interest
- To pursue professions that require it
- Distinguish yourself from other job applicants
- Needed for long term promotion and advancement



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Typical Application Timeline



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How to decide *where* you apply

- Research & gather information:
 - Search for universities offering your desired program
 - Get **recommendations from current faculty**, alumni, industry & networking contacts on the top schools/researchers in this field
 - Visit those schools' websites, **read everything**, follow relevant links
 - Look at faculty research...match your interests?
 - Contact programs/faculty directly to get detailed information (e.g., financial assistance, and application requirements, deadlines, etc.) **that is not listed on their website**



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Narrow it down & evaluate

- Evaluate programs
 - Talk to professors, current students, alumni
 - Program ranking
 - Admission requirements
 - Facilities
 - Assistantships
 - Required courses
 - External factors (geographic location, campus/student life)
 - Set up a campus visit with the faculty/program and take a tour
 - Can be virtual tours and/or Zoom meetings



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Contacting Prospective Schools

- Graduate Program Officer (GPO) vs. Program Director
- Email: Introduce yourself concisely (~1-2 sentences)
 - Briefly summarize your qualifications and interests
- Set up a phone/Zoom conversation (suggest a few dates/times):
 - Discuss the program & your interests
- Application timeline and requirements
 - Due dates
 - Entrance exam/GRE scores
 - TOEFL or other English proficiency exam/scores
 - Interviews



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Visit Prospective Schools

- Contact schools of interest to arrange appointment
 - Confirm date, time, and location (building & room #)
 - Make arrangements for parking
 - Arrive early!
- Meet with faculty
- Meet with current students
- Sit in on a class
- Does it feel like a good fit for you?



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Prepare for your Applications

- Get organized:
 - Be sure you meet requirements, deadlines of the program
 - Create a timeline for the schools to which you are applying
 - Study & take the GRE with enough time for scores to be received
 - Take the TOEFL or other test of English language proficiency & send scores
 - Create a calendar (paper or digital) or excel worksheet
 - Give yourself enough time – and your references time, too!



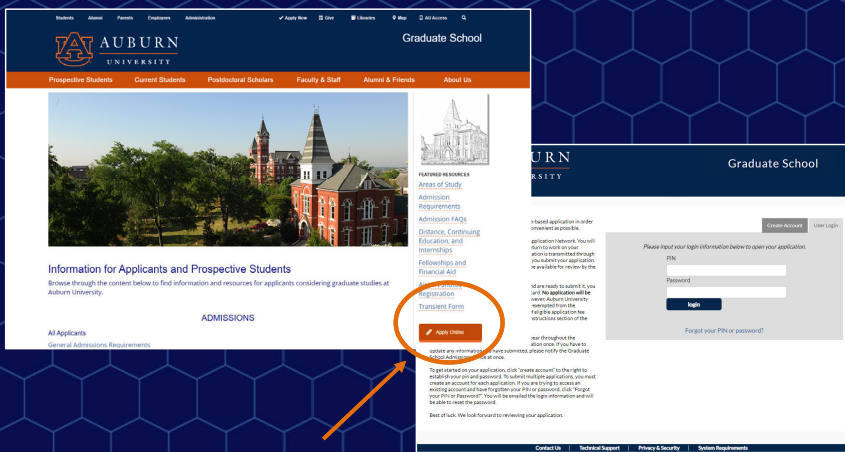
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The Application Package



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Online Application Portal



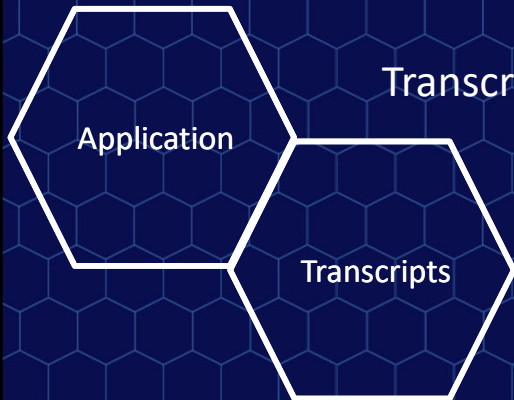
Start your application and write down or let your browser save your login. Then you can work on the app step by step, saving as you go. You can come back to it later to finish, then enter your credit card info to pay the application fee to “submit” the application online.



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The Application & Transcripts

Application – demographic data, schools, degrees, self-reporting of GRE scores, TOEFL (or other) scores, etc.



Transcripts* - unofficial (digital PDF download) to apply through your school's student portal; then official sent directly from your school or national clearing house if admitted

* from all institutions attended



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Test Scores & the Application Fee

GRE & TOEFL scores – self-report your score(s) on the application
AND

have your official scores sent directly from the testing agency to the school's graduate admissions office.

Test scores are just one piece of the puzzle.



Application Fee – usually due via an online payment after you are *finished* and everything you need to upload (unofficial transcripts, statement, etc.) is complete when you are ready to submit the application.



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Statement of Purpose/Intent

- What makes you a good candidate for program:
 - Motivation, intellectual skills, suitability
 - Intentions for graduate study, and fit in department
 - Things that make you particularly desirable
 - Reasons you chose the program

Statement
of Purpose
or Intent



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Statement of Purpose/Intent

Using excellent grammar, punctuation and spelling, this is a genuine and significant impression of YOU as a person.

- Discuss the points in your life when you made certain decisions and what influenced them.
- Discuss the cultural, financial, educational or other experiences leading you to pursue a graduate degree.
- Carefully address any requirements, prompts, or specific info to tailor the essay to the individual program and/or school.
- Avoid cliché and simple biographies.

Statement
of Purpose
or Intent



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Letters of Recommendation

- Most apps require a min. 3. Pro tip – ask 4 in case one is delayed.
- Choose writers who can speak to your goals, motivations, and commitment to graduate study
- Select writers who know you well, who can comment on your potential as a researcher and a scholar, such as a faculty member (preferred)
 - Best in assessing your ability to do advanced academic work, your Initiative, motivation, and curiosity during class.
 - Based on knowing you beyond class
 - Perform research with them
 - Proactive in seeking help, advice on future career goals



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Letters of Recommendation

- Do everything you can for your reference/letter writer:
 - Provide the details on what you're applying for.
 - Provide a resume or other materials so they can see the "big picture" of who you are outside of class and in other areas of your life
 - Let them know to expect an email notification from an online application system, and to check their spam folder just in case.
 - Give them a due-date that is earlier than you actually need it to be submitted.
 - Give letter writers enough time!
- Send friendly reminders and a follow-up thank you.



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Pieces are Part of the Whole



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How to Pay for Graduate School

Types of funding and support

- Tuition waivers
- Assistantships
- Scholarships
- Fellowships & Grants
- Loans



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Types of Funding

Graduate Assistantships

- A job or paid academic appointment
 - Three types:
 - Research Assistant (GRA): Work on research project for a PI
 - Teaching Assistant (GTA): Teach and/or assist with course instruction
 - Graduate Assistant (GA): clerical, administrative, or technical work

Typical Requirements:

- ✓ background check
- ✓ Ability to obtain a Social Security number

Scholarships, Fellowships & Grants

- Internal vs. external
- Visit the school's website, speak with faculty, and online searches



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Examples of Graduate Assistantship Benefits

- **Stipend**
 - Often determined by the hiring department
- **Subsidized health insurance**
- **Tuition**
 - Tuition support provided is specific to each school
 - Nonresident tuition v. Resident tuition
 - Full v. partial tuition waiver depending on your assistantship appointment
 - Student may pay student services fees

Tuition and Fees



\$11,796
IN-STATE

\$31,956
OUT-OF-STATE

AFFORDABILITY: Named one of *Money's* Best Colleges for Your Money, Auburn is also ranked by *Forbes* as the top university in the state of Alabama for delivering a meaningful return on investment.

50%

of graduate students receive financial assistance.



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External Fellowships

- Ask your librarian to help you find funding in your academic area
 - Ask your current professors
 - Ask the schools/programs to which you are applying about opportunities
 - Look up the major professional organizations for your field of study
 - Ask your network of friends, colleagues, and industry professionals
-
- Auburn University opportunities include:
 - [Fellowships & Financial Aid resources](#)
 - [Presidential Graduate Opportunity Program](#)
 - [Presidential Graduate Research Fellowship](#)



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Other Points of Consideration

- Does this program and college/university support my professional development?
- Is there a support network for international students?
- Does the college/university have a culture of inclusion and diversity?



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Evaluate Your Options



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What to Expect in Graduate School



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Questions?

Contact the
Admissions
Department of the
AU Graduate School

gradadm@auburn.edu

Learn more at:
www.graduate.auburn.edu

War Eagle!



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