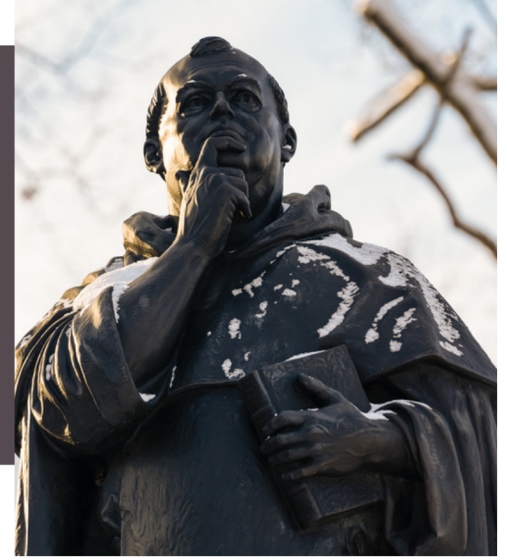


GRADUATE SCHOOL GUIDE

If you're considering continuing your education in a graduate program, the AQ Advantage team is here to help.

Want help preparing? Schedule an appointment with us today at <https://aquinas.joinhandshake.com/login>



IS GRADUATE SCHOOL RIGHT FOR YOU?

Pursuing a graduate degree can be rewarding and improve your job prospects in certain fields. However, it is important to take some time to determine if graduate school is right for you. Before you launch into the application process, reflect on questions such as:

- ◊ Why do you want to attend graduate school?
- ◊ What are your career goals? Do those goals require additional education?
- ◊ What are you hoping to accomplish during your studies?
- ◊ What field of study are you interested in?

As you consider these questions, we would encourage you to talk with your faculty advisor and with a career coach for their insight and input.

***CAUTION:** By pursuing graduate school, are you trying to postpone or delay making a decision about your future career? It's okay to be uncertain - that's what the AQ Advantage Center is for! We would encourage you to make an appointment with one of our career coaches and we can help you make a plan for your next steps after graduation.*

RESEARCHING YOUR OPTIONS

Once you have determined that graduate school is right for you, it's time to do some research! Find programs of interest and evaluate:

- ◊ Curriculum and degree requirements
- ◊ Location and size of institution
- ◊ Research, teaching and internship opportunities
- ◊ Faculty research areas and specializations
- ◊ Financial support
- ◊ Career opportunities post-graduation



There's a lot of information to keep track of! Thankfully, there are many different tools you can use to organize your notes. There's no "one size fits all" method to planning - find out what works best for you! Examples include...

Spreadsheets
ex. MS Excel, Google Sheets



Documents
ex. MS Word, Google Docs



Note-organization software
ex. MS OneNote, Google Keep, Notion, Evernote, etc.









Paper notebook
an old-school classic!



APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Make a list of schools you'd like to apply to based on your research. Note their application requirements, process, and deadlines. The application process typically includes:

-  **Application form**
-  **Application fee**
-  **Official transcripts**
-  **2-3 letters of recommendation**
-  **Personal statement**
-  **On-Campus interview**



IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Select 3-4 individuals who are familiar with your academic work and future goals
- Communicate ahead of time - reach out to request their permission
- Provide important information such as deadlines and program information
- Request letters of recommendation sooner rather than later

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Your personal statement is an autobiographical essay that provides an in-depth introduction to who you are to graduate school admissions committees.

How to get started



Talk with your friends, family, faculty advisor, and a career coach for potential ideas









Make a list of unique experiences that have impacted your academic journey



Review your list of potential schools and determine the types of essays you will need to write

Questions to consider

-  How did I become interested in this field?
-  Why do I want to study it further?
-  What have I learned from my AQ experiences (academics, extracurriculars, work, etc.)?
-  What are my career goals?
-  What obstacles, if any, have I overcome and how?
-  Why should I be admitted into the program?

What to do:

- Focus on depth, not breadth
- Write in first person - tell your story!
- Reflect on experiences that provide insight into your character and motivation
- Proofread carefully and **have others check it for errors**

What do avoid:

- Commonly used clichés such as "I am a people person"
- Re-using the same essay - each one should be tailored to the school and program you are applying to

GRADUATE SCHOOL PREP TIMELINE



FRESHMAN & SOPHOMORE YEAR

Focus on your studies and explore your interests

Participate in undergraduate research

Evaluate your strengths and values



Aquinas College Undergraduate Research

Participating in undergraduate research is a fantastic way to gain experience in your field of interest and foster relationships with faculty members! Check out what opportunities are available to you at:

<https://www.aquinas.edu/offices/advantage-center/undergraduate-student-research.html>

Searching for a grad school?

Here are some tips on how to narrow down your list of potential graduation schools:

- Visit <https://www.gradschools.com/> to browse programs based on academic discipline and location
- Browse the academic literature of the area you are interested in - note who is doing what research, and at what institutions
- Talk with your faculty advisor

JUNIOR YEAR

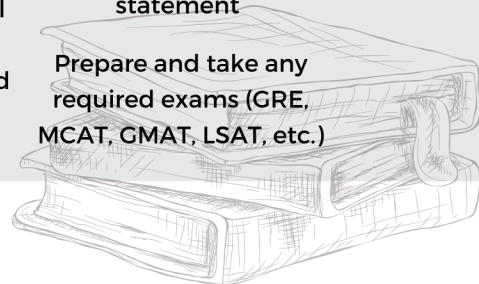
Talk with your advisor and a career coach about your goals

Start researching graduate schools

Create a personal timeline for any required tests and deadlines

Draft a personal statement

Prepare and take any required exams (GRE, MCAT, GMAT, LSAT, etc.)



SENIOR YEAR
Fall semester

Ask faculty members for letters of recommendation

Take or retake any required tests

Order transcripts

Review and finalize your personal statement

Complete applications



Personal Statement Assistance

Want your statement reviewed or need help starting? Make an appointment with the Advantage Center or the Writing Center!

AQ Advantage Center appointments:
<https://aquinas.joinhandshake.com/login>

Writing Center appointments:
<https://aquinas.mywconline.com/>



FAFSA

Each school will have its own application deadlines - and they may require you to submit your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which can be used to determine your aid eligibility.

<https://studentaid.gov/>

SENIOR YEAR
Spring semester

Evaluate acceptance offers and negotiate financial aid packages

Notify schools of your decision

Celebrate!

