

Applying to Graduate Programs

Things to Consider

Normally during the second semester of your junior year, you should begin thinking about where you might want to attend graduate school. Below are some considerations and resources to help you in the process of applying to graduate schools:

IDENTIFY COLLEGE TO ATTEND

Apply to programs accredited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

You will want to research the different programs, their application and deadline information and requirements. A listing of programs accredited by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association can be found on the ASHA website at the page "[Planning Your Education in Communication Sciences and Disorders](#)" at asha.org.

Look at the programs on-line to see if your undergraduate coursework matches. If there are "holes" you may have to take one or two undergraduate courses in addition to the graduate load. For example the program you are applying to may require a course in college physics and will not accept physics in human affairs. They may require statistics

Look to see how many semesters (or quarters) it will take to complete the program, when the program begins and if you have to be on campus for the entire MA/MS or AuD degree. If you are an out-of-state student this can mean additional costs.

You should apply to several programs to ensure your chances of being accepted into at least one. Limit your applications to 4-5 schools. Make one school your "dream" whether that is related to location, faculty or friends. Make one school your "backup," in other words, a school you know you will get into. Other choices are up to you. As long as the program is accredited by ASHA, you will be fine and programs are pretty much equal. ASHA determines the courses and much of the content. That ensures quality in our profession.

The higher the GPA and GRE scores the fewer schools you need to apply to in order to ensure your acceptance.

ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Contact the graduate school and/or graduate program for their admission procedures. Look for a checklist delineating deadlines and required materials you need to submit and where you will send the requested documentation.

GRE (GRADUATE RECORD EXAM)

During the summer after your junior, you should take the GRE. It is a good idea to take the exam early enough so that you will have time to retake it again if necessary. Pay close attention to how long it will take for your scores to be officially sent in order to avoid missing a submission deadline. Students strongly suggest you STUDY for it.

GRE.org will inform you all about the test, when and where it is given and how to register to take it.

Suggested GRE SCORES: Verbal 150 • Quantitative 150 • Writing 4.0

Some master degree programs do not require that you take the GRE. Even though the program does not require the GRE, the graduate school in which the master degree program is a part may require the GRE or a specific cut-off score in order for your application to be considered. Check it out. Call the program when in doubt

GPA (GRADE POINT AVERAGE) and TRANSCRIPTS

Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) is the combined GPA from all coursework that you have taken for college credit. You are required by law to submit all college course transcripts with your graduate school application. CGPA will be calculated and submitted to the program you are applying to.

Major Grade Point Average is the GPA from all courses required for your undergraduate degree major in communication disorders. They total 41 hours.

Both CGPA and GPA in the major are recorded and part of your application. Obviously, the higher they are the better for you. Observation over the past years has shown that GPA's of 3.5 and above usually increases your chances for a graduate program acceptance. GPA's in the range of 3.0 to 3.4 are acceptable but not usually considered in the first or maybe second round of applicant acceptance to a graduate program. In most cases, the major GPA should be higher than or commensurate with the CGPA.

Reporting your GPA's as part of your graduate program application is as easy as contacting the university registrar office and requesting an official transcript be sent. Make your request early before the Holiday Season when offices are closed.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Recommended: "[Craft a Stand-Out Application](#)" in *The Asha Leader*.

Meet all timelines. Miss the date and your application will not be considered. In fact send your application materials early so the school will have ample time to process.

Follow the directions -- to the letter. Do you collect everything and send it in, or do you forward everything in pieces to the school?

You may have to apply to the Graduate School and to the Program/Department. Check it out. You may be required to use a CSD Centralized Application Service. See the ASHA website for details or contact the graduate program directly.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Three letters of recommendation are usually required and these usually come from professors who can judge your academic qualifications. This can include clinical supervisors. In cases where individuals have taken time off between degrees, one letter can come from an employer or someone with whom you have volunteered.

Letters should not come from friends, relatives, etc. who know you socially rather than educationally or professionally.

Request letters of recommendation from persons who will agree to write you a positive letter of recommendation for graduate program acceptance.

Please ask the faculty what information they would like prior to writing a letter of recommendation for you. Help the process along by following these steps:

1. Put all the material in a packet -- such as **a file or large envelope**.
2. Include
 - (a). **your resume**. See [the Resumes section](#) of the UA Career Development Center's career.uark.edu for **important tips**.
 - (b). **list of coursework with grades**.
 - (c). **your personal statement** -- see suggestions at "[Craft a Stand-Out Application](#)" in *The Asha Leader*.
3. Provide **a summary sheet** for all schools you are applying to. For each school give:
 - (a) the name of the person (if there is one), department name, school/university.
 - (b) address and date the letter is needed.
 - (c) If you want the letter mailed to the school directly or want it returned to you, indicate this on the summary sheet.
4. You may be required to supply addressed stamped envelopes for this.

Relate to the recommender how the letter is to be submitted. For example; the graduate school may require an official form filled out to which the recommender can attach a letter of recommendation, a letter of recommendation only or an online link which the recommender will fill out and submit electronically.

Provide the recommender with all materials allowing them sufficient time to complete and mail all recommendations well before their due date.

CLINICAL PRACTICE – OBSERVATION HOURS

Be sure to keep the original observation and any clinical practice hour's form(s). You will need to report them and provide proof of hours to your graduate program. Graduate programs would like you to have 25 clinical observation hours but it is not mandatory.

ORGANIZATIONS AND VOLUNTEERING

On your resume highlight your NSSLHA membership and participation and any other educational and/or professional organization to which you belong.

You will want to highlight your participation in volunteer activities. There is no consensus as to how many are needed or if one long period involvement is better than a number of short term.

CHECKING APPLICATION STATUS

Once you have mailed or made arrangements for others to mail off your application materials, you will need to follow up. Contact that graduate school or program to see if they have received all application material. If they have not, find out what they are missing. Provide the missing materials as soon as possible to comply with their submission deadline.

ACCEPTANCE - WAIT LISTED - REJECTION

There is a graduate program for each of you. Your job is to find the best fit for your life style, learning preferences and career goals.

Each program has a general or specific timeline for reviewing applications and contacting applicants regarding their application's outcome. Be sure to find out that timeline from the programs you have applied to.

If you are wait listed, stay in contact with that program. Let them know that you are sincerely interested in attending and find out if there is anything that you can do to further your inclusion into their graduate class.

ALTERNATE LIFE PLAN

If you get a rejection letter, what will you do? Over the past several years I have conducted a survey of all graduating seniors regarding their acceptance into a graduate program. Those who did not get accepted have done the following...

- Some have been employed as a Speech-Language Pathologist or Audiologist Assistant for one year then apply again to graduate programs.
- Some have been employed in the healthcare field as assistants, aids or staff in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, private practices, etc... prior to reapplying.
- Some continued to take courses to improve their CGPA before reapplying.
- Some pursued other fields of study at the undergraduate and graduate level such as....

Master in Rehab Counseling	Case worker at community centers
Dental Assistant Training	Finished their minor area of study
Nursing Program	Occupational Therapy Training
Child Development Degree	Pre-School Assistant
Aid to an autistic child	Educational Technology Program
Health Promotions Degree	Master in Special Education
Vision Therapist	

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