

# Application Package

Stephen F. Austin State University | Center for Career and Professional Development

You've done your research and now know to what schools you'd like to apply. Now it's time to assemble your application package. Application requirements differ between schools, however below are a few standard items required for submission:

- Application form
- Personal essay or statement of purpose
- Application fee
- Financial aid application
- Transcripts
- Letters of recommendation
- Standardized test scores
- Personal interview

## Application form

Complete the application form clearly and truthfully. Be sure to spell out your full, legal name as it should match your transcript from past institution(s).

## Personal essay or statement of purpose

Confused on how to write your essay? Be sure to address any questions specifically posed in the application. Other talking points may include motivation for graduate study, strengths, weaknesses, greatest achievements, and solutions to hypothetical problems.

Essay requirements vary between institutions. Some schools request only a few paragraphs, while others require several separate, lengthy essays. Whatever the case, your objective should remain constant: **provide a clear, focused essay that illustrates you have a distinct sense of your career goals and enthusiasm for the field of study you have chosen.** Before you write, take a look at these other helpful pointers:

- Sense what the reader might be looking for (refer to application directions for clues)
- Think about the possible criteria admissions committees may use to base their evaluations:
  1. Expectations of you in the program and in your career
  2. Your writing ability and depth of thinking
  3. Your major areas of interest
  4. Your educational background
  5. Your immediate and long term goals
  6. Your reasons for pursuing this particular graduate program at this particular institution
  7. Your maturity level
  8. What you bring to the program in terms of personal uniqueness
- Neatness counts! Your essay should be typed and free of spelling and grammatical errors
- Keep your message positive
- Review and critique. Submit to CCPD for feedback

## Application fee

While fees vary among institutions, most application fees are non-refundable and range from \$25-\$100. Most schools have an application fee waiver for students with financial need. If you would like, call the admissions office and ask how to apply for a waiver.

## Separate financial aid application

Note that an application for financial aid may come with your general application packet or you may have to call and request a separate financial aid application from the institution's financial aid office. Be sure to file all documents on time!

**Transcripts**

Contact the registrar's office at each college/university you attended and request they send your transcript directly to the admissions office of the schools to which you are applying.

**Letters of recommendation**

Most all institutions request three to five letters of recommendation. Select people who are qualified to assess your academic or work performance. Try your best not to ask people who only know you in a social setting (i.e. family and friends); while they may have pleasant things to say about you, admissions committees don't place value on those kinds of recommendations. Be sure to give your recommenders ample time to write and submit these letters.

**Standardized test scores**

Most institutions require you take one of the standardized admissions exams before they decide to accept you into the program. Common standardized tests include GRE (Graduate Record Exam), GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test), MAT (Miller Analogy Test), MCAT (Medical College Admission Test), and LSAT (Law School Admission Test). Typically, each graduate program will specify which test you need to take and the score you need to obtain to be competitive for their program.

**Personal interview**

Some schools require an interview as part of the application process. A face-to-face interview is the perfect opportunity to showcase your qualifications, personal aspirations, and why you think you're an ideal fit for the program. Be prepared to sell yourself! Consider a mock interview with the Center for Career and Professional Development first for practice. Also, be sure to send a thank you note!