Applying to Graduate School

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Why?
When?
Where?
Who?
What?
Applying to Graduate School

Why?

Round out your training
Be much more employable

MS - numerous opportunities with agencies, NGOs, etc

PhD - for research (Feds, some states)
academic positions

Fun – stay in the field and learn something?
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Why?

DNR Fisheries
90% management specialists have MS
Very few technicians (BS) hired
Research - must have Plan A MS
most new researchers have PhDs
The Wildlife Society: Masters has become entry level degree
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When?

Anytime, but:
For entry soon after graduation, plan 1 yr ahead
Most admissions are for Fall start
Primary review of applicants for summer or fall entry is in Winter – most decisions then
Get application materials in by December for fellowships – by late January may be OK
See program deadlines
Most summer/fall decisions by April 15
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Where?

Geography
School Reputation
Advisor
Funding

Good students with proper faculty match should get offer of assistantship/fellowship
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Funding

Good students with proper faculty match should get offer of assistantship/fellowship

Generally:

- Stipend ($15,000-35,000) cover living expense
- Tuition - free or covered by higher stipend
- Health insurance
- Research project costs

Funding is important - beware of acceptance without funding
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Who:

GPA > 3.5 – competitive
GPA > 3.2 – good for many places with right fit
GPA ≥ 3.0 required for most schools, but …
GRE scores each (Many places dropping)
  50th percentile (V 153 or 500; Q 151 or 650)
  adequate
  ≥ 80th percentile competitive
Apply to mix of highly competitive, moderate
and a few lower tier schools for best chance
of getting accepted into suitable program
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What:

Grades – and appropriate coursework
GREs (see below) – must have for most programs
Experience – best is research experience – UROP, Internships, Agencies, volunteer, class projects
Extracurricular activities
Statement of interest – be specific but not too specific
Letters of recommendation – choose wisely
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Specifics:

- Applying and choosing schools/potential advisors
  - Consult current advisor, literature, web sites, graduate students
- Contact potential advisors - interests, funding
  - Advisors often make main acceptance and funding decisions
- Finding an advisor with funding is important

Nail the inquiry email

Acceptance often depends on funding - apply several places
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Specifics:

Letters of recommendation

Very important - need good letters
some from people who are known to the place you are applying

Chose someone who knows you – especially any research experience

At least 1 or 2 letters from faculty – good course experience, any research experience

One letter from agency, NGO, or employer is good (or one from faculty outside U of M – research advisor)
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Specifics:
Statement of interest (and experience)
  Very important
Be specific but not too specific (unless have advisor)
Match interests to school or advisor
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Specifics:
- **GRE scores**
  - Verbal, Quantitative, Analytical Writing
  - Required by most schools
- **Subject tests** - biology - check school

Plan ahead
- Study or take practice exam (computer based)
- 2 testing centers in metro - reservations - in fall can be filled esp weekends
- V & Q scores instantaneously - Writing 2 wks
- Can retake but all scores reported - best shot 1st

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Resources:
CIC Applying to Graduate School
  http://www.ibparticipation.org/pdf/ApplyingToGradSchool.pdf
ESA Bulletin Article
  https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1890/0012-9623%281999%29080[0244%3AC%5D2.0.CO%3B2
AFS Guide to Fisheries Employment
  http://afsbooks.org/x55053xm?filter_name=employment
Career Center Graduate School Planning
  http://www.careerhelp.umn.edu/graduateschool
Texas A&M Job Board (assistantships, etc.)
  https://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/job-board/
Example draft of GRFP Letter of Recommendation
  https://www.cmu.edu/graduate/professional-development/seminars-and-workshops/nsf/documents/2017_grfp_RecomendationExample.pdf
Nail the inquiry letter
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Good Skill!

Questions and Discussion