



Habib University
shaping futures

GRADUATE SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

Office of Career Services

Name: _____

Date: _____

Major: _____

Intended master's program: _____

Class of: _____

Action Plan:

The office of Career Services (OCS) aims to facilitate students who are interested in applying to graduate school by means of using different tools such as workshops/events/seminars, standardized test mock sessions, panel discussions, mentor mapping and one-on-one counseling. The students are encouraged to meet with one of the career counselors on a regular basis to get assistance in the application process. To make the process of applying to graduate school easier, the OCS has developed a detailed step-by-step action plan for students to keep track of their progress. The steps of the actions plan are as follows:

Step 1: Research Graduate School(s)

Step 2: Approaching Mentors/Advisors

Step 3: Prepare and Register for Required Standardized Test

Step 4: Request Letters of Recommendation

Step 5: Start Drafting your Personal Statement or Essay

Step 6: Gather Relevant Documents

Step 7: Start Submitting Applications

Step 8: Decision

Parallel Plan: What is your plan B?

Applying to graduate school can be a daunting and overwhelming experience for many students therefore, in this action plan specific guidelines and tools have been provided with each of the step mentioned above. The aim of this action plan is to help student keep track of their progress in one place. This tool is not only helpful for students but also for their counselors and mentors to map their progress. It is strongly recommended that students meet with their faculty mentors and career counselors on a regular basis to update them about their progress by completing the following action plan:

Step 1: Research Graduate School(s)

The first step in applying to graduate school is by making a list of all potential graduate school(s) you are interested in by different means such as google search, college guides, talking to friends or family etc.

Searching for graduate school can be very intimidating and overwhelming experience. Therefore, it is crucial to use some sort of guide or an organizing tool(s), such as the one provided below, to keep track of all the researched programs and their requirements. This tool will not only help you organize your searches but also to help you shortlist universities based on different factors such as tuitions fees, scholarship availability, location etc.

Graduate School Comparison Chart:

| SCHOOL | University 1 | University 2 | University 3 | University 4 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| City, State and Country | | | | |
| Size Of Community | | | | |
| Public/Private | | | | |
| # Students Attending | | | | |
| ACADEMIC PROGRAM | | | | |
| National Ranking | | | | |
| Degree | | | | |
| Program | | | | |
| Entrance Test Requirement | | | | |
| GPA Requirement | | | | |
| Duration | | | | |
| APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS | | | | |
| Application Deadline | | | | |
| Application fee | | | | |
| Entrance Test & Score | | | | |
| Language requirement | | | | |
| Course Prerequisites | | | | |
| COST | | | | |
| Tuition (In/Out State) | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Others expenses | | | | |
| Living cost estimate (on campus and off campus) | | | | |
| FINANCIAL AID | | | | |
| Financial Aid options | | | | |
| Work Study | | | | |
| Fellowships/Scholarships | | | | |
| Links | | | | |
| | | | | |

Step 2: Approaching Mentors/Advisors

After you have decided which program to enroll in or which graduate school(s) to attend, it is always wise to consult faculty since they have ample amount of knowledge to share with students regarding graduate schools. The faculty are usually well versed and familiar with the application process as well. The faculty cannot only help students guide in choosing a relevant program but they can also help students with the application process.

Some tips for approaching faculty are below:

- Take an appointment by formally sending an email explaining the agenda of the meeting
- Be respectful
- Be punctual and arrive on time
- Make sure to do your homework about different programs and graduate schools before meeting any faculty member
- Have a list of questions ready

Sample questions can be:

- What are your suggestions for me? Which program would be more suited for me?
- How long is the application process?
- What factors should I consider before applying?
- What are some of the career prospects for a particular degree?
- Tips or suggestions?
- Take notes
- Don't hesitate to ask questions
- Be flexible and keep yourself open to new suggestions and ideas
- Write a thank you email after the meeting

Step 3: Prepare and Register for Required Standardized Test

Almost all international graduate schools require students to take standardized test such as IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, GMAT, etc. based on their selected master's program and some local school as well for e.g. LUMS. In order to get your application accepted, it is crucial to get the recommended score or higher in these standardized tests. Some of the tests require extensive preparation such as GRE and GMAT therefore, it is very important to take the test at the right time. You can always retake a test but since these tests can be costly, it is always recommended to take your test when well prepared and well ahead of time. Following are some of the details for the most common standardized test:

English Proficiency Tests:

IELTS (The International English Language Testing System)

- Types: Academic and General Training (IELTS UKVI for schools in Europe)
- Validity: 2 years

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

- Validity: 2 years

Admission Test:

GRE (Graduate Record Examination)

- Validity: 5 years

GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test)

- Validity: 5 years

For more information about these tests, visit their websites. There are numerous resources available online to help students prepare for them. To plan your timeline for taking the tests, use the following tool to help you keep track of deadlines:

Standardized Tests:

| University Name | Test | Deadline to submit scores | Registered to take the test on | Minimum Score Requirement | Scores Achieved |
|-----------------|------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Step 4: Request Letters of Recommendation

Recommendation letters are an important part of the application process. Most students don't realize the importance of a good recommendation or they delay the process therefore they are unable to get a good recommendation letter on time. When requesting for recommendation letters always keep the following points in mind:

- Ask the recommender way ahead of time if they can write a strong recommendation letter for you
- Writing a recommendation letter takes time so make sure you are giving plenty of time and all the relevant information and documents such as:
 - CV/Resume
 - A draft of your personal statement
 - Complete information about your chosen graduate school and program including submission deadlines and instructions (if provided)
 - If submission needs to be mailed provide an address and a stamped envelope
 - If your application will be mailed as one packet then provide an envelope with your name on it so that the recommender can seal and sign it.

To keep a track of recommendation requests status, use the following tool to make sure your deadlines are met:

Recommendation Letters Status Table:

| Letters requested from: | Course | Status of letters |
|-------------------------|--------|---|
| Professor 1: | | <input type="checkbox"/> Requested - Date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Pending <input type="checkbox"/> Completed/Received - Date: _____ |
| Professor 2: | | <input type="checkbox"/> Requested - Date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Pending <input type="checkbox"/> Completed/Received - Date: _____ |
| Professor 3: | | <input type="checkbox"/> Requested - Date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Pending <input type="checkbox"/> Completed/Received - Date: _____ |
| Professor 4: | | <input type="checkbox"/> Requested - Date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Pending <input type="checkbox"/> Completed/Received - Date: _____ |

Step 5: Start Drafting your Personal Statement or Essay

Personal statement or statement of purpose is an important aspect of all graduate school applications. A well-written personal statement can greatly influence your ability to get into a particular graduate school. For that reason, it is crucial that students spend a considerable amount of time drafting their personal statements. Some universities provide a template or a prompt as a guide but if a template is not given, follow the ABC rule provided below:



Once you have written your personal statement, make sure to get it **proof read** by peers or to get help from someone at the HU Writing Center in tailoring your essay.

Step 6: Gather Relevant Documents

Once you have completed the first five steps, it is now time to gather all your documents in one file so that you don't lose anything. You can make multiple files for each school or make separate tabs using one folder. It is up to you to use whatever method as long as you are keeping everything in a secure place. Use the checklist given below to help you organize your documents.

Documents Checklist:

- Academic Transcripts
- Personal Statement
- Resume/CV
- Language Test Results (TOEFL/IELTS/German Language, etc.)
- Other Tests Results (GMAT, GRE, etc.)
- Recommendation/Reference Letters (from Faculty, Employers, Supervisors)
- Evidence of Financial Capability/Tax Statements
- Identity Documents (Passport, NIC, Birth Certificate)
- Portfolios/Research Papers/Articles/Publications
- Other: _____

Step 7: Start Submitting Applications

After you have gathered all your documents, you start applying to schools you have shortlisted. Almost all school require online submission of applications and each website needs its unique user ID and password. Students can easily get overwhelmed remembering the different login ID's and passwords when filling multiple applications therefore, it is critical for students to keep their information secure for future use. Use the table below to help you organize your online access and other information in one place so it's easier for you to fill out multiple applications simultaneously.

Application Submission Table:

| University Name: | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Online Access | Website | | | | |
| | Login | | | | |
| | Password Pin | | | | |
| Application Requirement | Test Scores | | | | |
| | Transcripts Degree | | | | |
| | No. of Recommendation letters Required | | | | |
| | Personal Statement/Essay | | | | |
| | Other | | | | |
| Status | Complete/ Incomplete | | | | |

Step 8: Decision

After submitting applications, the hardest part is wait for the decisions. Whatever the decision is, below are some tips for you to follow in either scenario:

If you have offered an admission:

- Evaluate the offer thoroughly once more on different factors such as, program reputation, tuition fees affordability, etc.
- If you are accepting the offer, return the required documents or write an acceptance email or letter by keeping the deadlines in mind.
- Once you have made up your mind to accept the offer from a particular school, decline other offers immediately so that your seat can be offered to someone else.

If you were declined an admission:

- Always ask for feedback or reason for rejection so that you can improve your application accordingly
- If you still would like to attend the same school, take a gap year and gain work experience in the meantime by volunteering or taking additional courses.

Decision Table:

| University Name | Accepted/Rejected | Submit Acceptance Documents by/Reason for Rejection |
|-----------------|-------------------|---|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |

Parallel Plans: You're Plan B

It is always wise to keep a plan B in mind because the outcome of applying to graduate school can be unpredictable at times. Therefore, it is also important to:

- Start searching for jobs as well in case of rejections from graduate school(s).
- Attend different events like career fairs, recruitment drives to keep your options open.
- Gain relevant experience by interning, volunteering or working part/full time jobs.
- Always have your CV/Resume and cover letter updated for applying to opportunities.
- Few employers are also interesting in sending their employees for higher education so always mention that you are interested in pursuing graduate studies during interviews.