

# Grad School Packet

A resource for psychology majors at Carleton College who are applying to graduate school

Compiled by the Psychology Department DCC members



So you are interested in applying to graduate school? Here's what you need to know.

Specific to Carleton psychology students, this packet is a valuable resource for those interested in learning more about the process of applying about the graduate school. Information on deadlines, GRE resources, and answers to questions on financial aid are included, as well as advice from our very own psychology professors. Finally, discover what alumni with psychology degrees are doing now years upon graduating.

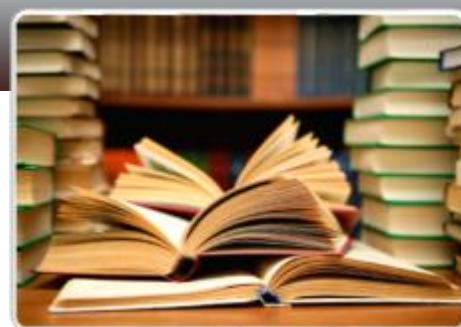
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# Grad School Timeline: How to stay on track during your years at Carleton

## Freshman and Sophomore Year:

- Enjoy Carleton.
- Take Principles of Psych and dabble in 200 level psychology courses. But feel free to take other classes in different departments that interest you!
- Declare psychology as your major spring term of your sophomore year!

## Junior Year:

- Still enjoy Carleton.
- Start researching graduate schools and programs. You should build a list of 5-10 programs, and make sure that there is at least one faculty member in each program that will be accepting graduate students in the upcoming year for research that interests you. Put those lazy days on the Bald Spot to good use!
- Take a practice GRE General Test. This way, you can identify the areas that need work and you can study smarter!

Start setting aside funds for related fees, like the GRE, application fees, and travel to interviews towards the end of your junior year.

## Summer before Senior Year:

- Keep studying for the GRE or take it in August so that you can still take it once more if you aren't satisfied with your first score.
- Create an Excel spreadsheet to keep yourself organized as you choose and apply to schools. List each institution in the first column in the order that their deadlines will be due; the other columns should contain information about the number and type of essays you need, number of recommendations letters, request status from recommenders, which test scores are needed, amount of the application fee, whether an interview is required, and any other special requirements you feel are important to keep track of.

*Example*

Institution	Deadline	# Essays	# Recs	Requests for Recs Sent?	Transcript Requested ?	Test Scores?	\$\$
Oscar U.	12/12/14	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Essay 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Statement	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9/15 2 Yes, 1 Unknown 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 10/3	GRE: Gen. and Psych	\$35

# Senior Year:



## September:

- Register and take the Psychology GRE if it is required by any of your applications. It is only offered in October and November!
- Make an appointment with the Career Center to update (or create) your Curriculum Vitae.

## October:

- Visit your top schools, if you can and talk to as many graduate students in the program you are considering to get a feel for if you would fit in and be happy there.
- Write your Personal Statement, and consult the Writing Center or the Career Center for advice or help refining it. Ask the professors that know you best for letters of recommendation; it usually helps to ask if they would be able to “write you a *strong* letter of recommendation,” which gives them an out if they need it and saves you from having a poor letter of recommendation sent to your dream school.
- Provide each faculty member who agrees to write you a letter with:
  - A packet with a copy of your unofficial college transcript on which you indicate class(s) you took with them, your resume and/or curriculum vitae, your GRE scores and your personal statement
  - A brief letter letting each faculty member know - honestly, without exaggeration -- what you've gotten from working with them as a research assistant or taking their classes.
  - A master list of all schools you are applying to, the name and type of program, and deadlines.

## November:

- Retake the GRE if you so choose, and DOUBLE CHECK that your scores have been sent to your prospective schools.
- Do EVERYTHING outside of actually writing your letters of recommendation for your recommenders.
  - If the program you are applying to requires letters to be sent in the mail: address and stamp a 9"x11" envelope and deliver it to the professor with a note that says something like, “Thank you again! Just a reminder, the deadline is 12/1.”
  - If it is an online submission, lay out everything very clearly in an email: “[...] The submission deadline is 12/1 by 5 p.m. The URL to submit a PDF version of the letter of recommendation can be found at [www.mydreamschool.edu/letterofrec](http://www.mydreamschool.edu/letterofrec).”
  - Send faculty recommenders a friendly reminder a week before the letter is due for each school you are applying to
- Submit all appropriate financial aid forms.

## Winter Break:

- If your school requires an interview, they are usually held in February, March, and April. You can start preparing for them early!
- Don't forget to fill out the FAFSA if you are applying for financial aid.
- Wait to hear back from your programs! Once accepted, politely decline other offers as soon as you have made your decision.

## How do I prepare for the GRE?

The GRE is modeled after the level of thinking that graduate schools expect their students to have. There are many options to study for the GRE. Below are a few of the most common choices.

### GRE prep course

Courses geared toward the GRE prepare the student to think critically and provide students with study tips and practice. Some of the most popular programs include the Kaplan and the Princeton Review GRE prep courses. The biggest problem with these programs is that they are expensive (\$1000), however, if a person can afford it, the individualized help can be a great resource!

### Practice a little a day

This could mean learning a new word a day or brushing up on old math concepts. The GRE is meant to test a student on their quantitative and verbal knowledge gained throughout their college degree, so practicing 15 minutes a day can be extremely useful.

### Take practice tests

Both Princeton and the Kaplan review offer free computer practice tests. Not only will the test expose you to the contents of the GRE, it will also help you familiarize yourself with the structure of the exam, and the types of problems to expect. Additionally, practice tests can help build up your test endurance.

### Enroll in an English course

The great benefit of the liberal arts education is the ability to take classes in various fields. The GRE tests your writing skills with two separate essays. Taking an English class can improve your ability to crank out essays in a time-pressured manner.

### Get a study buddy/group

With Carleton's trimester system, your schedule can get really busy. Having other people to hold you accountable for studying can motivate you to adhere to a plan, and you can play off each other's skills!

Not happy with your score? Don't fret too much! Many students



## What is the GRE?

The GRE is the graduate admissions test for psychology graduate schools. It is comprised of 3 sections:

**Verbal Reasoning:** tests your analytical skills through written materials

**Quantitative Reasoning:** tests your problem solving skills

**Analytical Writing:** tests your ability to write articulately

## When is the GRE offered?

The computer based GRE is offered year round. The paper edition is offered in limited locations with fewer dates. The exam can be taken once every 21 days and up to 5 times in a 12-month period.

## How much does the GRE cost?

The test fee is \$195.

This fee includes the cost of sending your scores to up to 4 graduate schools. Scores are received 10-15 days after the test date.

Create a My GRE Account and register for the exam online at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org)

# Ph.D. or Psy.D.

When pursuing a psychology graduate degree, students may have to choose between programs that offer Ph.D. or Psy.D degrees. Although many people assume that one is better than the other, this decision is a matter of personal and career goals. Here is a breakdown of these two degrees as well as other options that students can consider following their undergraduate career at Carleton.

## Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree:

A Ph.D. in psychology can be obtained from a number of fields. For example, we have many professors with a Ph.D. at Carleton, but not all of them have the same Ph.D. degree. Some have a Ph.D. in social psychology, while some have a degree in cognition. However, all professionals who have a Ph.D. degree take part in psychological research. A Ph.D. psychology program at a university will likely invest in your education, should you be admitted. Tuition is typically covered by the institution, though this is not true at all places so be sure to check before applying, and a stipend is sometimes awarded to students to cover living costs. Ph.D. students typically work for the university as researchers or teachers in exchange for the benefits of the program.

Career opportunities with a Ph.D. in psychology are numerous. The most popular are academic positions, such as a professor or a post-doc researcher. Other career areas include the government, mental health, and even private practice.

If you are interested in a Ph.D. program, know that prior research experience, presentation skills, publications, letters of recommendation, an interview, and academic credentials will be reviewed for admittance.



## Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) Degree:

A Psy.D. is similar in professional level to a Ph.D. degree. Psy.D. programs train individuals into practicing clinicians who will likely work in clinical settings, just like some Ph.D. programs. However, Psy.D. programs typically focus heavily on clinical work, whereas Ph.D. programs have an emphasis on research. Since Psy.D. programs focus on clinical work, a student is prepared to operate in a variety of settings, which range from individual therapy to work in a mental health institution. Financial aid resources are limited for a Psy.D. program because students may not work as researchers or instructors at the institution. On the same note, the university does not always cover tuition because students do not provide a service to the school in exchange.

Career opportunities in the academic field are more difficult to obtain for someone with a Psy.D. because of competition with individuals with Ph.D. degrees. Students with a Psy.D. typically work as practitioners in a clinic or as consultants.

# Graduate Programs

Spring 2017

## Master's programs for psychology students:

If you don't want to spend your 20's going to school, then a master's program might be a good fit. Social work, counseling and academic advising, and education are all areas where a psychology major can obtain a master's degree that pairs well with their undergraduate major.

Social workers are professionals that help individual that are struggling with psychological, financial, relationship, and substance problems. The most abundant jobs in social work occur in the healthcare and private practice industries.



Counseling is a great way for psychology students to help other people. Counselors may be employed as relationship or family therapists, school counselors, or mental health counselors. To become a counselor, an individual needs two years of supervised experience after a master's program.

## Alternative options:

Psychology undergraduates may also pursue careers in law or medicine. An understanding of human behavior is beneficial for work in the criminal justice or law environment. Students may choose to apply to law school or graduate programs in criminology or forensics. The communications skills acquired during your



undergraduate years may also prove helpful in the medical world. Though it is important to have a strong background in science and math before applying to medical school, students with psychology degrees are just as successful as those with chemistry or biology degrees. Make sure to contact Carleton's pre-health advisor, Pam Middleton, if you are interested in medical school.



Graduate school is expensive. Fortunately, most schools offer some form of scholarship program, so always check with the financial aid office at the university you are applying to in order to learn more about what is available.



Scholarships are generally awarded at the start of the academic year and are made based on a variety of criteria, including academic merit (fellowships or assistantships), financial need, and for specific academic programs. However, these are not always available to everyone and do not always cover a graduate student's living expenses. Consider all your

## APA Scholarships, Grants, & Awards (<http://www.apa.org/about/awards/>)

American Psychological Association and its affiliate organizations provide a wide range of grants and scholarships.

## APF Scholarships and Grants (<http://www.apa.org/apf/funding/scholarships/>)

American Psychological Foundation supports multiple programs to help graduate students further their education in psychology.

## Psi Chi Grants (<http://www.psichi.org>)

Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology, offers research grants for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Tip: The Internet is a great resource when looking for scholarships from a wide range of sources.

## Scholarship search websites:

(<http://www.finaid.org>) A comprehensive guide to financial aid including loan and scholarship information as well as calculators.

(<http://www.fastweb.com>) A large, free, personalized scholarship search that matches you with scholarships.

(<http://www.studentscholarshipsearch.com>) A free scholarship and grant search database that does not require registering.

(<https://www.scholarships.com>) Another personalized scholarship search website.

## You can also consider the Fulbright Program (<http://www.iie.org/fulbright>).

The Fulbright Program looks to strengthen relations between Americans and other countries, and receives funding from an annual appropriation from Congress. There are about 1,500 available student awards, and those awarded the State Department-sponsored fellowships are able to study, conduct research, or teach English in 140 countries. Grants are awarded in all fields and disciplines through the Institute for International Education.

# From a Professor's Perspective: Spring 2017

## Advice for Carleton Students

How does graduate school differ from undergraduate school?



Larry Wichlinski

Graduate school courses were all over the place in terms of difficulty, some being relatively easy and others quite challenging. The most difficult parts of graduate school for me were psychological and social. On the social front, it was much more difficult to meet people, although the people you do meet become very close to you.

It's a much more lonely existence. You don't have the constant interactions (dining hall, snack bar, etc.) that you do in college. I went to a college smaller than Carleton, so the big university was an adjustment for me. Also, graduate school is more ambiguous in terms of research deadlines and the like. You're still on an academic calendar, but the non-coursework (research, studying for comprehensive exams) doesn't have the kind of clear endings that regular coursework does.

Applying to grad school is different from applying to undergraduate school. Rather than trying to figure out what you can get out of a school, you have to reevaluate your thinking to "What can you do for the school?" When attending grad school, the program is investing a lot of time and money into you so you have to try to sell yourself in such a way that benefits the school. And you will basically be devoting your entire life to grad school and researching "so don't think of applying to the GAP."



Sharon Akimoto

Would you recommend waiting a year before enrolling in grad school or jumping right in? Why?



Adam Putnam

I think either way works just fine. In my graduate program about half of my cohort came straight from undergrad and then other half took a year or two off to do something else. If you're not 100% sure that you want to do graduate school (or sure about what area you would like to focus in) then taking time off is probably better. Ideally, go work in a lab somewhere as a research assistant; this will provide a first hand look at what you'll be doing in graduate school, and you can figure out whether it is something that you want to pursue. You'll also have a more competitive application with the additional research experience.



# From a Professor's Perspective: Spring 2017

## What is the most important thing to look for when applying to graduate schools?

The most important thing to look for when applying to grad schools is whether the school is a good fit and determining if you feel comfortable when you are visiting and interviewing. Rather than focusing on rankings, it's better to focus on the research and clinical interests of the faculty at the schools you are applying. Also it would be very wise to figure out if you are interested in a traditional PhD route, which emphasizes research, or if you are more interested in a Psy.D, which has a practitioner emphasis.



Steven Kozberg

Another thing that most students don't realize when pursuing a focus on clinical and counseling is that they are going to spend much more time in grad school than they are at Carleton, typically between 5-6 years. In other words, finding a school that is a good fit for your personal interests will make your life easier and overall much more enjoyable.

## What do you wish someone had told you about the grad school experience before you first applied?



Julia Strand

Don't think of it as applying to a school. Think of it as applying to a professor. Try to think of what you would like to work on and find a professor who is doing that work. You can apply to Harvard but if there are no professors interested in what you are interested in, it's a bad fit. So don't just apply to 10 schools that you heard were good for psychology. Find a specific professor.

## What would you say is the right number of schools to apply for?

### Larry Wichlinski

That's tough to say. For clinical programs I think you need to consider applying to a lot more schools than other kinds of grad programs. I think I applied to 10 when I went to graduate school. It seems like 5-10 is a reasonable number overall.

### Julia Strand

10. Anymore is overkill. If you do it properly, contact the professor and make sure they are accepting students for that year. If you don't do it properly...eh just do it properly.

# Alternative Career



## Advice from Carleton psychology alumni: What are they doing now?

So what exactly can you do with a psychology degree upon graduating? Although students may initially think their career options are limited, having a psychology degree is quite flexible and adaptable. A bachelor's degree in psychology helps students develop a wide range of applicable skills, such as interpersonal and creative thinking skills through the understanding of the human mind and individual and group behavior. Skills like these can make psychology majors good candidates for jobs that require strong communication skills, such as those in management, marketing, and social work. Students with a psychology background can also choose to pursue other interests beyond their undergraduate education. Many Carleton alumni with a psychology degree have done so by pursuing graduate degrees ranging from criminal justice to MBAs.

### Melia Garza '05

Criminal Justice at Metropolitan State University

Currently a Collaboration Specialist and Project Coordinator at MN Coalition Against Sexual Assault

"A psych background was a good match for my initial work after Carleton as an advocate because it involved working with people who were in trauma and were trying to make sense out of what took place. Knowledge about group dynamics and social interaction can be very beneficial in organizing these individuals and helping them see the need to build capacity around response to sexual violence."

### Katherine S. Drake '92

Education Psychology at University of Minnesota

Currently an Education Specialist at Saint Paul Public Schools

"I feel that the stats and research methods courses that I took as a psych major really prepared me for graduate school, and, while many students complain about them, I have to say that they were the most practical and important courses of my psych undergrad."

# Alternative Career Spring 2017

## Lisa M. Nordeen '90

Ph.D. in Kinesiology and concentration in Sport Sociology at University of Minnesota

Currently a Director of Academic Success at Hamline University

"In my job I work with students on metacognition and thinking about learning. More specifically, how to be academically successful by tapping into the thought process."

## Anne Sweet '89

MBA at DePaul University

Currently the Director of Business and Finance at All Saints Church

When working with human resources, Anne is able to identify personality traits and motivation, as well as recognize problems or signs of mental illness. Furthermore, having a psychology background allows her to see where people are coming from and to put herself

## Lucy Franklin '86

Masters in Counseling

Currently an Ortho-Bionomy Practitioner and Lifestyle Trainer

(After some injuries, Franklin got involved with holistic nutrition and Ortho-Bionomy for her own healing)

"I am passionate on giving people's solutions for their health and finding answers for the community to prevent many of the health crises that we are having."

## Mary C. Wiley '70

Currently retired as Administrative Services Manager at Twin City Wire – MFI, Inc.

(Was in charge of accounting and human resources for 6 locations)

"In truth, I never ended up actually using my Psychology degree professionally, though I will say having a Carleton diploma opened doors for me."

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