Best Practices in Applying to Graduate School
Why Graduate School?

✓ Changes in Salary
✓ ‘Mastering' a Subject
✓ Career Advancement
✓ Professional Focus
International Affairs is an interdisciplinary field that can prepare you for a variety of career paths.

Career Options

- Communications & Public Relations
- Business
- Development & Conflict Resolution
- Energy & Environment
- Education
- Human Rights & Law
- Science & Technology
- Security & Intelligence
Preparing to Apply: 12+ Months

✓ Determine which program you wish to pursue
✓ Research graduate schools
✓ Create a spreadsheet to track deadlines
✓ Understand your financial situation
✓ Investigate financial aid options
Finding the Right Program

What Will You Study? → Academic Structure

Are You Qualified? → Admissions Criteria

Do You Like Being There? → Living Environment

Can You Afford It? → Financial Situation

What’s Next? → Professional Fit
Preparing to Apply

✓ Seek out schools’ admissions counselors
  • Understand the priorities of the Admissions Committee

✓ Finalize your list of desired programs

✓ Identify weaknesses in your application

✓ Take any standardized tests

✓ Begin to gather materials / school

✓ Apply to outside scholarships

✓ Reach out to potential recommenders

University of Michigan, Ford School of Public Policy
Preparing to Apply

All schools vary, but be prepared to provide:

- Application form
- Application fee
- C.V. or Resume
- Official transcripts from each institution
- Standardized test scores (ex: GRE, GMAT)
- Personal statement and/or topical essays
- 2-3 letters of recommendation
- Bank Statements (for financial aid)
## Preparing to Apply

### Essays and Personal Statements

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Outline Your Qualifications</th>
<th>Convey Your Passion</th>
<th>Explain Your Goals</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Work and Volunteer Experiences</td>
<td>• What do you want to study? Why does that topic excite you?</td>
<td>• Why This School?</td>
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<td>• Life Experiences</td>
<td>• What motivates you to go to Grad School now?</td>
<td>• Why This Program?</td>
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<td>• Coursework</td>
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<td>• What will you do with the degree once you have it?</td>
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<td>• Projects</td>
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<td>• Languages</td>
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Apply: 1 Month

✓ Finalize all applications for admission
✓ Finalize all applications for scholarships/financial aid
✓ Check in with recommenders
✓ Update financial plan
✓ Submit all requested materials
Application Mistakes

Failing to follow instructions
Submit the requested information – no more or less. Ask for extra copies of external documents. Request transcripts and recommendations early.

Making foolish mistakes
Read your essays and statement several times. Ask a second party to review them, as well.

Not conducting an honest self-assessment of your skills, experiences, and interests.
Discern what you want to master and why. Disclose issues straightforwardly. Contact schools to determine how best to discuss issue(s) or gap(s). Avoid overshaing or apologizing. Share how you’ve grown.
What do Schools Look For?

- Experiences and perspectives that will help others succeed
- A clear sense of professional direction
- Aptitude for study
- Chance of success in the program
- Experiences and perspectives that will help others succeed
Paying for School

• Merit and Need-based aid
• Research / teaching assistant positions
• Assistance provide by central university of programs within the School
• External Sources of funding
  • Grants
  • Loans
  • Scholarships
Paying for School: Examples

- **Pickering, Rangel, and Payne Fellowships**
  - Specific to careers with State Department or US Agency for International Development

- **Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program**
  - For Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

- **Organization of American States (OAS) Scholarships**
  - For citizens of OAS member states to pursue graduate or doctoral degrees

- **Baltic-American Foundation Scholarships**
  - For Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians who wish to pursue postgraduate studies

- **Public Policy and International Affairs Program**
  - To promote the inclusion of underrepresented groups in public service
Being Competitive

- (International) Professional Experience
- Write Well
- Speak Comfortably
- Understand Project Management
- Build a Network

- Supervisors
- Peers
- Professors
- Alumni
Stay engaged!

External Links:

- [apsia.org/events](https://apsia.org/events)
- [apsia.org/fellowships-scholarships](https://apsia.org/fellowships-scholarships)
- [apsia.org/graduate-schools-programs](https://apsia.org/graduate-schools-programs)
- [apsia.org/careers/international-career-guide](https://apsia.org/careers/international-career-guide)
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