

Career Roadmap - Graduate

Many graduate programs expect you to have certain skills by the end of your undergraduate career – perhaps the ability to read in one or more foreign languages, proficiency in statistics, or competence in some particular substantive courses. Make sure you know what’s needed for your field and that you’ve taken the courses – even if not required for the undergraduate major – that furnish the relevant skills. Otherwise, you might have trouble getting into grad school in the first place or have to play catch-up once you get there.

Focus on the harder courses, and be sure not to skip the junior seminar, senior colloquium, senior thesis, or any course specially tailored to the needs of majors. This is where you can distinguish yourself as a serious player in the field, at least among the undergrads. And that’s just what you need to do to position yourself for grad school.

[Criminal Justice Graduate Program Information](#)

NOTE: It is highly recommended that students take CJE 3001 Careers in Criminal Justice as soon they begin taking Criminal Justice courses.

Fall of Junior Year

- Seek input from department and faculty advisor
- Begin researching graduate schools if planning to continue education
- Seek out a faculty Mentor (Department provide a list of faculty who is willing to work with students as their mentors)
- Attend faculty research workshops to get to know faculty and their areas of interest
- Identify Criminal Justice and Criminology Organizations and their conferences (i.e., American Society of Criminology, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Southern Criminal Justice Association, etc.)
- [Research & Mentoring Program](#) (RAMP)
- Attend [Workshop on Undergraduate Research](#)
- Apply for a [UCF Student Research Grant](#) (March, July, October)
- [Summer Research Academy Application](#)

Spring of Junior Year

May – July:

Begin researching potential schools. Take a free GRE practice test. Your score will help you determine how much preparation you’ll need for the real deal. Sign up for a GRE test prep course (we recommend the in-person or online options). Register for the GRE general test if necessary. Request information from schools that interest you. Consider paying a visit to your alma mater to meet up with a few former professors. They can recommend good programs and may even help you make some connections.

Fall of Senior Year

- Seek input from department and faculty advisor
- Begin researching graduate schools if planning to continue education

- Seek out a faculty Mentor (Department provide a list of faculty who is willing to work with students as their mentors)
- Attend faculty research workshops to get to know faculty and their areas of interest
- Submit abstracts to Criminal Justice and Criminology conferences (i.e., American Society of Criminology, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Southern Criminal Justice Association, etc.)
- [Research & Mentoring Program](#) (RAMP)
- Attend [Workshop on Undergraduate Research](#)
- Apply for a [UCF Student Research Grant](#) (March, July, October)
- [Summer Research Academy Application](#)

August – December

Take the GRE general test. If you're not happy with your scores, sign up to take it again. Begin drafting your statement of purpose. Register for the November GRE subject test (if necessary). Finalize your list of prospective schools, and familiarize yourself with the professors who share your research interests at each school. Contact your recommenders. Keep polishing your statement of purpose. Request official transcripts from your undergraduate institution. Send your recommenders supplemental materials (like your resume, personal statement, etc.) that they can use as a reference. Make contact with students and professors at your prospective schools. Arrange a campus visit if you can. Have someone in the field and a few smart (and honest) friends read over your personal statement. Take the GRE subject test; make sure that your scores will be sent directly to schools. Complete and submit all applications, keeping copies of every section for your records. Verify that your recommendations have been sent.

Important Elements

Grad schools pay lots of attention to both what the letters of recommendation say and whom they are from. Good letters come from tenured faculty in the field who have a national reputation in the field, have given you an A, and can talk about you and your work in detail. Less good letters are ones written by someone whom no one in the field has ever heard of; from faculty in fields other than your major (unless you're going into a joint graduate program).

The personal statement you send in should focus on the one or two projects you'd like to pursue once you get into graduate school. Be sure to include evidence that you actually have the intellectual tools and the background to do what you're proposing. Your personal statement is meant to be an intellectual plan, not a general autobiography or your musings about the state of the field or a testimony about how much you love the field – at least if you hope to get into graduate school.

Many graduate schools ask you to provide a writing sample, and the sample can be critical after the first cut in the admissions process. Be sure to submit a strong sample – one that has a topic, methodology, and quality of argumentation and writing that demonstrates your readiness for graduate-level work. Pay special attention to the suggested length; a school that expects a 20-page journal paper will not be happy to receive your 100-page senior thesis. (Conversely, a school that's looking for a journal-article size paper won't be bowled over by your four- to six-page short paper.) If you're not sure what's expected, ask the undergraduate adviser or a faculty member you trust for guidance on this all-important but often underworked component of your application.

Reference

- [10 Steps for Thinking About Graduate School](#)
- [Graduate School Application Timeline](#)