



So you want to
go to Grad
School...

Congrats for making the decision to apply to grad school – aspire higher

- ▶ Only 25% of Black students compared to 47% of White students and 60% of non-Black, racialized students were accepted to Ontario Universities in 2015 (James & Turner, 2017).
- ▶ Only 25% of Black people in Canada have completed a university degree (Abada, Hou & Ram, 2009).
- ▶ Contrary to the trends of most other ethno-racial groups which exhibit improved socio-economic and educational wellbeing with each successive generation in Canada post-migration, African diasporic communities do not exceed the level of education or socio-economic welfare of their fore-parents (Abada, Hou & Ram, 2009) due in large part to systemic anti-Black racism.
- ▶ In considering a graduate school education, you are bucking a trend, confronting stereotypes, and forging your future.

Get ready...

- ▶ Grad school is really white. Academia is really white.
- ▶ white curriculum, white scholars, white research. Very little will reflect your reality or the world you live in.
- ▶ The higher-up you go in the academy (undergrad → Masters → PhD → Professor) the fewer Black, Indigenous and racialized people you will see.
- ▶ You will have to carve out space for yourself and the scholarship you wish to do for the communities you wish to work with.
- ▶ You are your own biggest advocate for the education you receive.
- ▶ Universities across this country are under pressure to encourage diversity, and make room for Black, Indigenous and racialized people.

Why consider grad school?

- ▶ If an advanced degree is required in your profession or field or for your career trajectory.
- ▶ If you'd like to gain particular skills such as research and analysis skills that will make you more marketable in a competitive job market.
- ▶ If you'd like to pursue a research-related or academic career.
- ▶ If you have a plan for what you'd like to do with an advanced degree.

Considerations in Building your Application

Do your homework!

- ▶ What are your reasons for applying to this program?
- ▶ What academic benefits do they offer?
- ▶ What are they training their students for, and does it fit your career goals?
- ▶ Who are the faculty members you are interested in, and does their research interest match yours?
- ▶ Does your research interests align with the program?

Do your homework!

Speak with students in the program, faculty, program coordinators, and/or the faculty of graduate and professional development offices at universities about...

1. Tuition fees
2. Scholarship opportunities and deadlines
3. Program curriculum and timeline

Connecting with Faculty

- ▶ Identify faculty members who share similar research interests to yours.
- ▶ Connect with them (email, phone, or in person)
- ▶ Discuss your research interests and passions
- ▶ Why you are interested in the program and ask any clarifying questions you may have about the program.
- ▶ You should connect their work with yours, which suggests why you want to work with them
- ▶ Give the faculty member a reason to vouch for you amongst their colleagues!
- ▶ You should mention 1 – 3 faculty members you'd like to work with from a given program in your application.

Preparing your application

Your Application is a Reflection of who you are: Academically and Professionally

- ▶ Sets the tone of your scholarly work
- ▶ Gives others a glimpse into the experience you have

Preparing your application

Follow the instructions

- ▶ **What are the criteria's for admission?** – Do you meet them ?
 - ▶ *Contact the graduate secretary at the department to “seek to understand” if you align with what the program is asking.*
- ▶ **Length of statements** – Understand and commit to the word count of the statement of interest.
 - ▶ Applications may be disqualified for inability to follow directions

Preparing your application

- ▶ Demonstrate your knowledge of the program and the department
 - ▶ Connect your research interest with the proposed faculty member's area of research
 - ▶ Know and understand mission statements
- ▶ How/Why has your academic and professional experience led you to their program?
- ▶ Highlight your strengths, do not over embellish.
- ▶ Explain why you are a good fit for the program and why the program is a good fit for you
- ▶ What career path will the program prepare you for?

References / Reference Letters

- ▶ **Stay in contact with previous professors**
 - ▶ Include them in your academic/professional network.
- ▶ **Keep professors up to date on your academic and professional development (Linkedin, facebook, etc...)**
 - ▶ Pay attention to the required amount of references needed for your application
 - ▶ Do you also need a professional reference?

References / Reference Letters

- ▶ All reference letters are not created equally!
 - ▶ Consider whom you approach for a reference letter
- ▶ Remember that your professors are not required to write you a reference

References / Reference Letters

- ▶ When you ask for a reference, provide **everything** the person needs to complete your reference letter
 - ▶ Your resume/CV
 - ▶ A summary of the courses you did well in (include grades achieved)
 - ▶ Volunteer opportunities
 - ▶ Due date of the application and any relevant submission instructions.
 - ▶ Send a reminder 3 days before the deadline for the reference!



Statement of Interest

- ▶ This is your chance! Share your story:
 - ▶ Who you are
 - ▶ What you are interested in
 - ▶ 'Highlight reel'
 - ▶ Why you are applying to this program
 - ▶ Where your experience comes from
 - ▶ How being a part of this program will benefit you and the faculty you are applying to

Statement of Interest

- ▶ Tips:
 - ▶ Keep your writing professional
 - ▶ Ask successful colleagues for help
 - ▶ People in academics have done this before!
 - ▶ Spell check, grammar, repeat!
 - ▶ Have someone proofread

Gaining experience

- ▶ It starts with you!
- ▶ Get out there and ask a lot of questions
- ▶ Do a little more today than you did yesterday
- ▶ Remember:
 - ▶ We all have to start from somewhere