Knowing the difference between a research and teaching university can greatly influence your graduate experience. (Research programs are less likely to have terminal masters degrees).

Rather than thinking about the reputation of the university, it’s more relevant to find out about the reputation of a department.

Don’t hesitate to ask hard questions about how to obtain funding.

Teaching and research assistantships are an important part of the educational experience.

Read the fine print about how funding is allocated.

**GRE:** some competitive programs have cut-offs- most are more flexible-it is best to call the department and find out.

- General Test (after August 1st, 2011) (Computer-based test)
  - The Verbal Reasoning section consists of two 30-minute sections with approximately 20 questions per section, and measures your ability to understand what you've read and how you apply your reasoning skills — with many new questions that focus on your ability to analyze and evaluate written material. Good news — antonyms and analogies are no longer part of the test. Vocabulary is still important, but it's used in the context of a reading passage.
  - The Quantitative Reasoning section consists of two 35-minute sections with approximately 20 questions in each section, and measures how well you interpret and analyze quantitative information. You’ll need to have an understanding of basic math concepts (arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data analysis). There is an increased emphasis on data interpretation and real-life scenarios. In this section, you may use the on-screen calculator.
  - The Analytical Writing section is one section with two separately timed 30-minute essays, and measures your critical thinking and analytical writing skills, specifically the ability to articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively. You will be asked to provide focused responses to the tasks presented to effectively demonstrate your skill in directly responding to that task.
  - For the paper-based version of the general test, the content is similar to the computer-based test, but the number of questions per section vary, as well as time allotted per section. For more details, visit [http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/content/pbt/](http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/content/pbt/).
  - **Plan on taking the GRE about a year before you hope to enroll** – earlier if you are taking the MCAT.

- Subject Tests
  - Subject tests are available in Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology as well as Biology, Chemistry, Literature in English, Mathematics, Physics, and Psychology.
  - Subject Tests are offered three times a year (Sept, Oct, April)- they are paper based and it can take up to 6 weeks to receive scores- plan ahead.
  - For additional information regarding test dates, score report mailing time frame, registration, ID requirements, and available accommodations for tests contact CU Career Services Testing Services at 303-492-5854 or go to the official GRE website: [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)

**MAT- Millers Analogy Test:** tests ability to solve problems stated as analogies. More information is available through CU’s Career Services Testing Services or online at [MillerAnalogies.com](http://MillerAnalogies.com)
• Preparing for various tests: check test websites for practice tests, sample problems, and examples of strong answers; use a test prep book found at a bookstore or library, take a prep course- for more information about how to find a course or prepare for a test, contact CU Career Services Testing Services at 303-492-5854.

• Deadlines are really important if you want to get funding.

• Applying early indicates your interest.

• Essays that indicate applicants know what the strengths of a department are and how that department matches their goals carry a lot of clout.

• Letters of recommendation tell admission committees about your research experience and relevant summer internships.

• Conduct research on faculty member interests. In some programs, if no faculty member shares your focus, you won’t be accepted.

• You will be competing against people whose applications are complete, legible, and error free.

• Allow enough time (2-3 months) for your transcripts to be processed.

• Look for weaknesses in your application that may need explaining.

• Good letters of recommendation can tremendously increase your chances of admission and funding. Lukewarm letters can harm your application.

• Start asking recommenders at least six months before your application deadline.

• It won’t do you much good to have a glowing recommendation letter from your manager at the insurance company if you are applying to a program in history or social work.

• A confidential letter usually has more validity in the eyes of the admission committee.

• Provide letter writers with information about yourself as well as a picture.

• Do everything you can to make it easy for the letter writer, including providing stamps and preaddressed envelopes or make use of the CU credentials filing service housed in Career Services in the Center for Community building.

• Submit all your materials at once. This simplifies the task of compiling and tracking your application at the admissions- some schools will not look at your application unless it is complete.

• Graduate program interviewers are interested more in how you think than in what you think.

• Proactively check on the status of your application- do not assume everything is okay.

Excerpts from Peterson’s Graduate Programs in Social Sciences 2002

(Revised September 19, 2013)