

Graduate School Application Checklist

Everything you need for your application, in one place.

Brought to you by the Seyi Odewale Foundation

☐ 1. CV / Resume

A one-to-two page summary of your education, research, work experience, and achievements.

Why it matters: Often the first thing a reviewer reads. Make every line earn its place.

☐ 2. Statement of Purpose

A 500-1,000 word essay on why this program, why now, and why you.

Why it matters: Your single biggest differentiator. Generic essays get rejected.

☐ 3. Letters of Recommendation (2-3)

Written by professors or supervisors who know your work well.

Why it matters: Third-party proof of your potential. Ask 6-8 weeks before deadlines.

☐ 4. Degree Certificate

Proof that you completed your bachelor's degree.

Why it matters: Required before you can enroll. Get a certified copy early.

☐ 5. Official Transcripts

Your full academic record, sent directly by your school.

Why it matters: Confirms your GPA and coursework rigor. Processing can take weeks.

☐ 6. Passport Bio Page

Identity verification for international applicants.

Why it matters: Make sure your passport is valid well past your program start date.

☐ 7. English Proficiency (TOEFL / IELTS)

Required by most US schools unless you qualify for a waiver.

Why it matters: Check each school's minimum score before you book the test.

☐ 8. GRE / GMAT (if required)

Standardized test scores for programs that still ask for them.

Why it matters: Many programs now waive it. Check before you pay to take it.

☐ 9. Application Fee or Fee Waiver

Fees are charged per school, per application.

Why it matters: Many schools waive fees for financial need. Always ask.

☐ 10. Writing Sample / Portfolio (if required)

For research, humanities, and arts programs.

Why it matters: Submit your strongest, most relevant work only.

Pro tip: start early

Recommendation letters and transcripts are the slowest pieces, so request them 6-8 weeks before your first deadline. Track every school, deadline, and requirement in one spreadsheet so nothing slips through the cracks.