

## 10 ways to strengthen your graduate school application

1. **Choose a supervisor:** If you are applying to the MSc (thesis) or PhD programs, review the School of Nursing website (<http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/gradnursing/faculty.html>) to identify potential faculty members who share similar research or clinical interests as yourself. At least two months prior to the application deadline, contact potential supervisors to arrange a meeting to discuss your research interests
2. **Publications:** It is recommended that prior to applying to the PhD program prospective students have at least one to two publications (preferably in peer reviewed journals).
3. **Previous research experience and or training:** Outline your previous research experiences (e.g. grant preparation, data collection, data analysis, dissemination) and any relevant methodological training you have received.
4. **Clearly describe proposed area of research:** MSc (thesis) and PhD applications should succinctly describe your area of research interest and clearly outline your preliminary research question and the design that is proposed to answer the question.
5. **References:** The academic reference must be completed by someone teaching at a university or college who can comment on your ability to complete a graduate program.
6. **Academic standing or readiness to complete a graduate program:** If you have not completed a university course in the past 5 years – consider registering and completing a course (e.g. an undergraduate course or graduate level course as a post-degree student). Successfully completing a course provides you with an opportunity to raise your GPA and to make a connection with a potential academic referee.
7. **Self-directed learning:** In your application letter, clearly outline the qualities and experiences you have that demonstrate your ability to be a self-directed learner and to successfully complete a graduate degree in the time allotted.
8. **Commitment to full-time learning:** The completion of a MSc or PhD degree is a full-time commitment. In your application letter, outline how you will accommodate the challenges of balancing full-time study with potential work and family commitments.
9. **Curriculum Vitae (CV):** A CV is a required component of your application package. We recommend that you review the McMaster University guidelines for formatting a CV (<http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/facultyrelations/documents/2013CVGuidelinesLunchnLearn.pdf>).
10. **Suitability for the program.** Take the time to review our website, talk to current students, or read faculty's published research to ensure this program will suit your learning or research focus.