

Laureates & Leaders

ASSIGNMENTS OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE

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Cohort	Assignment Title	Objective	Deadline
Sophomores	Ready, Set, Research!	Explore research opportunities for the Spring semester and summer	Fall - January Summer: Application deadlines ~Dec-Feb
	Find a faculty mentor	Begin the process of finding a faculty mentor	Ongoing through Spring & Summer
Juniors	Find a faculty mentor	Secure a faculty mentor	Second week of October
	Am I on Track?	Meet with your OME advisor and faculty mentor and discuss your graduate school preparation plans	September & February
	Ready, Set, Research!	New or continued research experience during semester and/or summer	Fall & Spring semester Summer: Application deadlines ~Dec-February
	Where Should I Go?	Generate a preliminary list of graduate schools to consider & look into their requirements	Ongoing through Junior year
	Test, Test, 1,2,3	Prepare and complete required graduate entry exam(s)	Take it (varies): -over IAP -late Spring -Summer -if needed: early Fall (Senior year)
	Who Am I?	Look at essay prompts and begin brainstorming ideas for the personal statement	May - August
Seniors	Who Am I?	Complete a rough draft of your personal statement & make an appointment with the Communication Lab to review it	Third week of September

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	Am I on Track?	Meet with your OME advisor and faculty mentor and discuss your graduate school application plans	Within 3 weeks after the Fall semester begins
	Test, Test, 1,2,3	Complete required graduate entry exam	September
	My Team	Request recommendation letters. NOTE: Fellowships recommendations are due earlier	September – October (at least five weeks before due date)
	Where's The Money?	Submit Fellowship applications (if applicable)	October - November
	Time to Apply	Complete the graduate schools application	Ongoing through Fall

All students have to attend a one-on-one check-in with L&L staff at least twice a semester. An email will be sent out to schedule these meetings.

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

SOPHOMORE YEAR

What I should be doing to prepare:

- Maintain a GPA of 4.25 or higher.
- Learn about your field/topic of interest
- Explore and define your research interests.
- Explore and obtain a research opportunity (UROP).
- Explore and if possible apply to summer research opportunities.
- Connect with faculty, graduate students, and upper class students.
- Begin/Continue to establish meaningful relationships with faculty and lab members.
- Begin to think when to take standardized test(s).

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Assignment Details:

Ready, Set, Research!	Explore research opportunities for Spring semester and/or summer	Fall - January Summer: Application deadlines ~Jan-Feb
Find a Mentor	Begin the process of finding a Mentor	Ongoing through Spring & Summer

Ready, Set, Research!

Research experience is essential for a strong graduate school application. That is why it is advisable to have a UROP and/or summer research experiences early on. Explore what research field interests you and narrow down laboratories in which you would like to do research. Contact the professor and set up an appointment to talk about research opportunities for the semester. Summer research opportunities are great to get more research experience, discover new institutions, and broaden your network. Deadlines for summer programs are usually during December to February, so plan ahead!

Pro tip: L&L has a list of summer research programs on our website. Log into your OME account and navigate to the L&L page, you will find it in the column to the left.

Find a Mentor

One of the key aspects of the program is finding a faculty mentor that can help you navigate the process of applying to graduate school and answer questions you might have about your field of study. Mentors hold PhD or MD/PhD degrees and are usually, but not necessarily, MIT faculty. You have until the second week in October of your junior year to secure a mentor.

Strategies to secure a mentor:

- What & Who to consider:
 - Spend some time thinking about what you are interested in research-wise.
 - Create a list of faculty who are doing work in your field of interest. Keep your options open as this person may not be in your major. If you have a UROP consider asking the PI (professor) of the lab.

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- Do a bit of research on the people on your list. *Do/would you feel comfortable asking them questions about graduate school?*
- Reach out to them:
 - If they are your professor, consider going during office hours to talk to them about your interest in graduate school and your participation in the Laureates and Leaders program.
 - Send an introductory email and try to schedule an appointment to meet. Be sure to have done some research on the person and mention that you are interested in their work. If you don't get a response:
 - Try to schedule an appointment through their assistant (typically you can find their name/contact on the lab website)
 - Send a follow-up email.
- Ask them to be your mentor:
 - Describe what the mentor commitment would involve:
 - Meet at least once a semester to discuss graduate school plans
 - Answer questions and offer advice on graduate schools and the application process
 - Remember: This is an informal mentoring commitment. Laureates and Leaders staff will not contact your mentor and/or require them to sign any paperwork. Also, keep in mind that the faculty mentor can change during your time in the program. It's ok to have more than one mentor!
 - If they are unable to mentor you, ask for suggestions of other people to contact.
- Keep in touch:
 - Once you have identified a potential mentor, you will need to continue building that relationship. Make sure to stay in touch every semester.
 - Determine the best form of communication (email, in person, etc.)
 - Make a point to set up meetings (or send emails if that is the best way to communicate) once every term and schedule them with plenty of time in advance.

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JUNIOR YEAR

What I should be doing to prepare:

- Maintain a GPA of 4.25 or higher.
- Continue to establish meaningful relationships with faculty. Ask for advice on how to identify good graduate programs in your field.
- Research potential graduate schools and look into their application requirements.
- Develop personal selection criteria for graduate schools. *What is important to you? What do you need from a graduate program/university?*
- Refine your research interests.
- Continue to participate in research in your field.
- Prepare for standardize test (GRE and subject GRE if needed). **Pro tip:** Take advantage of the online GRE prep course L&L offers.
- Register and take standardized test(s) (timelines varies).
- Brainstorm who your recommenders would be. You will need at least three.
- Begin to develop your essay/personal statement.

Find a Mentor	Secure a faculty mentor	Second week in October
Am I on Track?	Meet with your OME advisor and faculty mentor and discuss your graduate school application plans	September & February
Ready, Set, Research!	New or continued research experience during semester and/or summer	Fall & Spring semester Summer: Application deadlines ~Dec-February
Where Should I Go?	Generate a preliminary list of graduate schools to consider & look into their requirements	Ongoing through Junior year
Test, Test, 1,2,3	Prepare and complete required graduate entry exam	Take it (varies): -over IAP -late Spring -Summer -if needed: early Fall (Senior year)
Who Am I?	Begin brainstorming ideas and/or drafting the essay/personal statement	May - August

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Assignment Details:

Secure a Mentor

By now the search for your mentor should be well underway and hopefully you have kept in touch with those on your list. You have until the second week in October to secure a mentor. For strategies on how to secure one, go back to page 4 of this guide.

Am I on Track?

Before each meeting with your faculty mentor be sure to prepare ahead a list of questions you want to ask and outline your plans for the semester -what are you doing to prepare for graduate school application? Remember, you will also share with Laureates and Leaders staff your plan each semester during one-on-one check-ins!

Ready, Set, Research!

By now you should have secured a research experience for the academic year or semester. Be intentional about your work in the lab. Set up a time to meet with your direct supervisor and discuss what are the experimental plans for the term and your schedule for coming in to lab. Remember, your direct supervisor will help/write your letter of recommendation so it's important to demonstrate your proactiveness and commitment to the lab and work. Feel free to discuss your graduate school plans with your direct supervisor and plans to present your research in a conference. If you are having difficulties with your research experience, contact your OME advisor right away.

Where Should I Go?

Begin generating a preliminary list of schools that you may be interested in applying to. Research programs and universities online and note down application requirements and deadlines. Things to consider when research potential graduate programs:

- Do you have a geographic preference of where you want to be?
- How large of an institution?

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- Who is doing work in your field at the institution?
- What is the quality of the program department and faculty?
- Are there at least 2-3 faculty members which research interests you? (see below)
- Quality of research facilities, laboratories, etc.?
- What is the average time for completion?
- What type of financial support is available?
- Are there any teaching requirements?
- Can you schedule a visit?

Consider these questions when looking for a prospective graduate school advisor:

- What are their current projects? Does any interest you?
- Where have their former students gone after? (Industry, academia, government, etc.)
- How long does it take for their students to graduate?
- How are they as mentors? Do they foster a positive growth environment in their lab?
- Do they have tenure?
- Educational background
- Academic Experience
- Recent publications
- Honors and awards

Test, Test, 1,2,3

Think about when you will take the GRE and if applicable the subject GRE. These tests do require familiarizing with them in advance and we highly encourage you to take several practice test in advance and prepare using the online prep test we offer through L&L. Aim to take this test on your junior year, anytime from IAP to your junior summer. Typically, students take the GRE during the end of their junior summer. We do not advice to take this test your senior fall as you will have classes plus the graduate school applications to focus on. If you need to take the subject GRE (typically for Math and Physics programs) make sure to know when these tests are taking place. Subject GREs are NOT offered year-long and thus need to be scheduled in advance. Subject GREs are administered in three dates on September, October and April.

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Who Am I?

It is time to begin thinking about your personal statement. Make sure to read the instructions on each essay and brainstorm how to answer each prompt. Use the following questions and activities to help you get started brainstorming:

- List the personality traits and skills and academic training that you think graduate schools are looking for in your field.
- List 3 (or more) events in your life that you think might illustrate some of your key skills or personality traits.
- When did you become interested in your field?
- What excited you the most?
- Who are you? I am driven to... I have learned to... I believe...
- What are your most passionate interests or concerns? What problem(s) most occupy your thinking and your efforts?
- How did you develop those interests? (Not just the story, but what drives you.)
- What errors or regrets have taught you something important about yourself?
- To what extent do your current commitments reflect your most strongly held values?
- How do your interests and who you are relate to your goals in graduate school?

SENIOR YEAR

What I should be doing to prepare BEFORE THE SENIOR YEAR:

- Narrow down your list of schools/programs.
- Create a master checklist of all deadlines, documents and supporting materials that you will be required to provide.
- Verify that your official transcript is correct.
- Write a draft of your essay/personal statement(s).
- Study and register for any relevant Graduate School Entry Exams.
- If possible, begin visiting potential graduate schools.
- Begin contacting faculty in departments that you are interested in.
- Generate a list of potential recommenders. Remember you will need at least three.

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Assignment Due Dates:

Who Am I?	Complete a rough draft of your personal statement & make an appointment with the Communication Lab to review it	September 30 th
Am I on Track?	Meet with your Mentor and discuss your graduate school preparation plans	Within 2 weeks after the Fall semester begins
Test, Test, 1,2,3	Complete required graduate entry exam	September
My Team	Request recommendation letters	September – October (at least three weeks before due date)
Where's The Money?	Submit Fellowship applications (if applicable)	October - November
Time to Apply	Complete the graduate schools application	Ongoing through Fall

Assignment Details:

Who Am I?

It is time to get your personal statement reviewed, finalized and ready to send off. Contact the MIT Communication Lab to schedule an appointment for a counselor to review your statement. Make sure you leave enough time to revise the feedback given. If possible ask other people to review it (peers, graduate students, postdocs, advisors, faculty mentor, etc).

Am I on Track?

Meet (or exchange emails) with your mentor about your plans for graduate school. Share with him/her which schools and departments you are looking into applying, who you are asking for letters of recommendation, and the area of research you intend to do your graduate work on. Ask for his/her advice on these topics, but remember that ultimately it is your decision to make!

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Be sure to prepare ahead a list of questions you want to ask during your meeting. Remember to share with Laureates and Leaders staff your plan each semester during one-on-one check-ins.

Test, Test, 1,2,3

If you have not already done so, register and take the required graduate school entry examination You should do this by early September at the absolute latest.

My Team - Request Recommendations

The strongest letters of recommendation come from professors that can speak of your research abilities and critical thinking. Ask your recommender if they will be willing and able to write you a recommendation before the schools send them requests. **Be sure to ask for the letters at least six weeks before they are due.** Remember that professors are extremely busy and they need time to craft a good letter. Some recommenders may need you to remind them of submission deadlines.

Where's The Money?

Most STEM PhD programs do not require you to pay or find your own funding for your graduate degree. However, for those that do, remember to apply for financial assistance early on. Be sure to stay informed about opportunities provided through the schools, programs, nationally, and internationally, as well as their deadlines. Begin submitting fellowship applications as early as September.

Time to Apply

The time has come to apply and you will want to keep track of all deadlines and requirements. Below is a month-by-month timeline of events not accounted for through the assignments given through the L&L program:

September/October

- Finalize essays/statements of purpose
- Review application material.
- Seek out sources of financial aid and apply for fellowships.
- Update checklist of application dates and deadlines.
- Maintain open communication with professors and graduate students.

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- Attend school visits (if needed).
- Request letters of recommendation

November/December

- Review, Review, Review your application material, including typos on your essay(s).
- Finalize essays.
- Submit transcripts and GRE scores.
- Complete application forms.

December/January

- Submit online your completed applications before the deadline.
- Contact schools to confirm that your applications have been received.
- Prepare for admissions interviews (field specific).

February - March

- Interviews (if required)

March/April

- Visit schools to which you've been accepted.
- Accept/decline offers.

You did it! Congrats!

Questions? Email your OME advisor directly or reach L&L staff at laureatesleaders@mit.edu

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