# 2024 National Order of the Arrow Conference

**Session:** POST GRADUATE STUDIES: Your Path Forward

**Session Length:** 45 minutes

## Session Description

This session is designed for students and professionals considering further education beyond their undergraduate degrees. This session will share insights on selecting the right program, the application process, securing funding, and balancing academic commitments with personal and professional life. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the benefits and challenges of postgraduate studies, from master's degrees to doctoral research, across various disciplines.

## Learning Outcomes

**Outcome 1:** Understand the landscape of post-undergraduate education

**Outcome 2:** Be Prepared to select appropriate educational paths and apply for admission

**Outcome 3:** Network with peers and advisers to refine your path forward

## Theme Connection: Seek New Heights

Post-graduate education provides an opportunity for people to gain advanced skills, knowledge, and opportunities unavailable during an undergraduate education. Undergraduates wishing to seek new heights as doctors, lawyers, professors, scientists, or in a wide range of other careers will gain an understanding of how to prepare for the application process for post-graduate education, the next step in their journey.

## Facility and Material Needs

### Facility Needs

| | |
|---|---|
| Is this session remote delegate-compatible?<br>(i.e., can the material be engagingly taught via live stream?) | Yes |
| Does this session need audio/video (AV) capabilities?<br>(e.g., projector) | Yes |
| Are there any other specific facility needs for this session?<br>(e.g., movable chairs, panel-style seating, etc.) | No |

**Material Needs**

| Material | Quantity | Source |
|---|---|---|
| computer/projector for PowerPoint | | |

## Session Preparation Steps

**Step 1:** Read the entire lesson plan and PowerPoints carefully and update as appropriate. Consider bringing examples of books on preparing for graduate admissions tests (LSAT, MCAT, GRE, etc.) as a visual aid to hold up (available at many public libraries).

**Step 2:** Prepare to introduce yourself with a brief personal story relevant to graduate school, e.g., why you went to grad school, how it fits into your career path, or what advantage it gave you. The goal here is not to spend time on your life history, but to give a quick point of connection so the learners can begin thinking about what motivates them.

**Step 3:** Visit the training room the day before your session to inspect the layout, seating, and availability of blackboard, computer, projection, and sound if necessary.

| Trainer Name | Email | Phone # |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

| Resource | Link |
|---|---|
| Order of the Arrow, Mission & Purpose | https://oa-bsa.org/about/mission-purpose |
| | |

# Lesson Plan

**Introduction** **2 minutes**

- Welcome and Introduce the Facilitators
- Briefly cover Scout role and professional role.
- Give a two sentence personal explanation about your connection to the grad school topic, with a question or puzzle to set up the session.

## Trainer Action: Poll the Crowd

Ask the room for a show of hands on the following questions to engage them and help them see connections in the room:

- HOW MANY OF YOU ARE IN HIGH SCHOOL NOW?
- COLLEGE?
- ALREADY IN A CAREER?
- OF THOSE ALREADY WORKING, ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT GOING BACK TO SCHOOL?
- EVERYONE: WHAT KIND OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT? (law, business, engineering? medicine, future in academia, research, etc?
- WHAT ELSE THAT I HAVEN'T NAMED?

**Topic 1** **10 minutes**

A. Selecting a Destination

a. Post-Graduate Education is a really broad category; there are different broad categories, and the purposes of the graduate program differs depending upon the discipline. At a minimum it encompasses. Some career paths are defined by graduate studies. For example, if you want to be a physician, a lawyer, a speech-language pathologist, or a professor, you're looking at years of study beyond the bachelor's degree. In other fields, graduate education is an opportunity to dive deeper into a subject, gain new experiences or skills, or develop a facility with research that is uncommon in undergraduate programs. But committing to a graduate program is not like a short hike to a week-long coding conference to pick up some new skills you can employ the next week. Grad school is like a major high adventure trek that goes on for a year or more. And the same kinds of skills that you need to prepare for a high adventure trek are needed to prepare for grad school. Budgeting, developing a team, selecting gear and preparing yourself physically and mentally for the trek, working out the menu and how to navigate the terrain — all of this is necessary before you commit to this adventure.

b. If you want to dive into OA High Adventure, the preparation for the Philmont Trail Crew might be different than the preparation for Northern Tier or Sea Base. Similarly, the preparation to undergo a Ph.D. in the Liberal Arts is different from preparing and applying to go to law school or med school. There are sort of three:

i. Academic disciplines (e.g., going the Ph.D. route toward research and/or teaching)
ii. Pre-professional route, (e.g., law school, med school, MBA, masters degrees in tech fields to deepen understanding of a particular field).
iii. Since some of the pre-professional fields like medicine or law may have their own sessions, mention those paths and then refer people to those sessions.

B. Weighing the Costs
   a. Deciding whether it's a step you want to take depends upon personal interests and career plans. Every year, climbing teams prepare to climb Mount Everest. They train hard physically. They typically spend tens of thousands of dollars buying gear, hiring guides, working with expedition planners, and traveling to Nepal. Many are unable to summit due to the weather, or altitude sickness, or overcrowding, and some die on the mountain. Spending $20,000 to get a shot at Everest doesn't guarantee that you will succeed, or even that you will come home alive. This sounds like a tremendously negative thing to discuss, but in any adventure there are risks. And you have to know what they are, not only so you can prepare to minimize them, but so you can make an informed call of whether that's a trek you want to take at all.
      i. Graduate school can be extremely expensive, so a healthy dose of reality is required given the price tag and the burden of student loans if you don't get funded through scholarships or fellowships. Some universities provide a significant amount of grant money to graduate students in some fields, but others are much less forthcoming.
      ii. Demand and career opportunities vary widely. The advice to "be prepared" applies here: talk to your professors early about what the career paths you are considering really look like.
      iii. If you are thinking about taking on $200,000 in debt for a degree in a career with limited employment opportunities and a low income, you really need to think very carefully about what you're doing. Universities admit students who want to learn. But just because they are willing to teach you something if you pay them tuition doesn't mean that there are high paying jobs waiting for you when you are done.

**Topic 2** **10 minutes**

A. Recruiting Crew Positions
   a. Preparing for Grad School isn't something to tackle alone. You'll need to build a support team to help you train. This involves Networking People and Experiences: using your contacts and resources to understand and focus the options:
      i. Programs - reputation, experience, environment, undergraduate research
      ii. Faculty - build relationships so they can offer meaningful recommendations for you (necessary for the application process)
      iii. Network with professionals, professors, internship supervisors, other people in the field, to get their feedback on your suitability for graduate work, on your application

materials as you compile them, and on how to best present yourself in the application process.

B. Gear Selection and Physical Preparedness
   a. Preparation for graduate school starts with your major in college. Some types of graduate study can be pursued by people from a wide range of majors, while others are tightly tied to a specific undergraduate course of study. Examples
      i. It would be unusual to get admitted to a chemistry PhD program without an undergraduate chemistry major
      ii. Applicants for med school are not necessarily going to be biology majors, but there is a constellation of biology-related majors (bio, biochem, some universities have a pre-med major)
      iii. Other types of programs, like law-school don't require any particular type of major. It's much less important whether you're a political science major or English major or Philosophy major than whether you were in a major that required you to read challenging texts, analyze their meanings, and practice writing thoughtful and critical papers.
   b. Admissions tests are common (MCAT, LSAT, GRE, etc), and you should prepare for those in advance. For example, the American Association of Medical Colleges sponsors the MCAT exam – Medical College Admission Test. You should actively prepare to take these, starting with an understanding of the exam to maximize your score. While this involves preparing for the exam itself (as we noted before, preparation also means pursuing a course of study that will lead to the kinds of knowledge necessary to succeed.
   c. Identifying people, prep courses, online resources, books, sample applications
   d. The value of prep programs, courses, or on-your-own books (Testing companies and associations often provide examples that were actually used on recent tests. Each type of admission test has its own unique types of questions to prepare for.
      i. MCAT examples of materials covered: https://students-residents.aamc.org/prepare-mcat-exam/whats-mcat-exam
      ii. Many tests involve logic puzzles, which go a step beyond the reading comprehension questions that many of you are familiar with. See for example, the sample logic questions provided by the Law School Admission Council: https://www.lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/test-format/logical-reasoning/logical-reasoning-sample-questions )
   e. Getting the most out of your training team (links, examples).
      i. Focus on relationship building and growth
      ii. Just as you would ask experienced hikers about how to prepare before your first Philmont Trek, ask your network for advice on how to prepare for grad school in your field. There may be specific courses that will be very helpful to complete before leaving college. "What do I need to know? What do you wish you knew?"

**Topic 3** **10 minutes**

A. Competing for the Permit: There are a number of high adventure trips where only a limited number of individuals are allowed per crew. Access to Mt. Everest is highly regulated, but there are even caps on the number of crews that can attend Sea Base. Admission is capped. Application to many graduate programs is limited as well, and admission is competitive. We've already discussed admission tests, but there are other factors that matter as well.
   a. The importance of relevant letters of recommendations that speak to the admissions requirements
   b. Articulating a clear vision / purpose in a statement
   c. Scholarships, Fellowships, and grant opportunities. Funding matters and should be part of your consideration.

**Topic 4** **10 minutes**

A. Grad School is Challenging. Some slopes are easy. Some are steep. If you're climbing at a high adventure base, you're going to face some tough inclines. Graduate School is typically harder than people imagine. It's generally not like four more years of undergrad. Some people might have questions about online degrees, which are really a mixed bag, depending upon what you're trying to achieve. You will work much harder academically than you've ever worked as an undergraduate. It's easy to be lonelier in grad school than you were as an undergraduate.
   a. Find hiking buddies. Join or organize study groups. Share notes.
   b. Don't miss the view along the way. It's easy to miss the scenery when you are focused on your footing on a hard trail. You need to take water breaks, get off your feet, and look at the scenery around you. Get involved in something outside the classroom. Clubs. A religious fellowship group. An ultimate frisbee team. An a capella singing group. Something. You'll be healthier physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually if you do.

B. Preparing for Stormy Weather: Job prospects and other Hazards.
   a. Some fields are saturated
      i. e.g., law -- the AVERAGE law school graduate earns far less than many people imagine, though there is always room for exceptional, genuinely top-tier attorneys to make bank in major firms. But, by definition, most people are not exceptional. Most graduates from law school are smart, insightful, and hard-working, so to stand out from the crowd as an exceptional law school graduate rather than being a typical law school graduate is a challenge all to itself.
         1. Example if asked and time allows: According to the American Bar Association, in 2022 it was reported that median income for first year associates at large law firms in major cities was over $200,000. Sounds like a lot. But the average salary for *all* lawyers in the United States, including those who had been working for

many years, was under $150,000. MOST attorneys are not starting out as associates at large law firms in major cities, so statistics like that can be misleading! The median income for attorneys in public service, e.g. public defenders, was around $60,000. https://www.abalegalprofile.com/wages.html

ii. In higher ed, universities are changing, and tenure is losing ground at many institutions compared to contract and adjunct instructors.

iii. Particularly in the humanities and social sciences, many people find themselves forced to work as part time instructors at many institutions simultaneously.

**Conclusion & Takeaway Challenge** **3 minutes**

Please take out your notebook and pen. For the final three minutes, think about your current and future roles in the OA, in Scouting, and in life. Write down three key takeaways from this session that will enable you to Seek New Heights in those current and/or future roles. You're all starting on different trailheads and have different interests, so start laying out the path forward for yourself, even if it is to continue exploring the type of destination that is most important to you. Later today, feel free to share these key ideas with others in your chapter or lodge.