

## Episode 1: We Welcome Your Response by April 15

Welcome to Grad-Post! I'm your host, Brian S. Mitchell, and we're here to talk about life before, during, and after graduate school, and whether an advanced degree is right for you.

Today I'm going to lay out the facts surrounding the much ballyhooed "[April 15 Resolution](#)." Sounds foreboding, doesn't it? You may have heard of this topic if you applied to a graduate program in the US for the upcoming Fall admissions cycle. It may have even been the date specified in your offer letter. The April 15 Resolution is a policy statement that was developed by the [Council of Graduate Schools](#) (CGS for short) many years ago to protect prospective graduate students from being pressured by admissions officers and programs to make premature decisions regarding offers of admissions with financial aid. It also protects graduate programs from unnecessary and counter-productive competition for top students.

In a nutshell, here's the important part of the resolution:

*"Students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution."*

So, you have until April 15 to respond to an offer of financial aid to enroll or continue in a graduate degree program. Sounds simple enough, but there are some important clarifications that sometimes get overlooked. That can lead to confusion.

First, the Resolution applies to the offer of financial aid only, not the offer of admission. Though these two things often go hand-in-hand – for example, you wouldn't accept the financial aid for a program you are not attending – it is possible for programs to require an earlier decision for admission to a program without financial aid; that is, you intend to pay for it. If you receive an offer of admission without financial aid, the program is under no obligation to give you until April 15 to reply.

What constitutes financial aid for a graduate degree program? Most commonly it is some kind of assistantship: a teaching, research, or more general graduate assistantship. But it could also be a scholarship towards tuition, reduced or waived tuition, or a more generous fellowship. These offers should always be in writing and should clearly specify the amount, duration, and conditions (such as academic standing) for the award.

Second, the Resolution may not apply to all advanced degree programs at an institution. It does not apply to law or medical school admissions, and often does not apply to MBA programs in the business school. Why? Because these programs are often outside the jurisdiction of the graduate school. But it should apply to the so-called "non-professional" degree programs like most MA, MS and PhD programs. Each university is different. You can find out if the university you applied to is a signatory to the Resolution [on the CGS website](#). Unfortunately, there is no official list of programs that adhere to the Resolution, but if the university has signed on then their programs should adhere to it. If you have a question about your offer of financial aid, contact the office of graduate admissions for further information. The Resolution's [FAQ](#) addresses some of these finer points about appropriateness and applicability.

Third, the Resolution is an agreement among participating institutions. While most US graduate schools participate in the Resolution, some do not. You should not avoid an institution that is not a signatory to the Resolution, but you should also not feel pressured to respond to their financial aid offers if they give you a deadline earlier than April 15. They have every right to do so – but you have every right to refuse. It may be difficult to turn down a request for an early decision from a program you really want to go to, but if they really want YOU, then they will wait. Graduate school is currently a buyer's market, and though some will give you the take-it-or-leave-it sales pitch, they are investing in you with their offer of financial aid and ultimately want to see you succeed.

Finally – and perhaps most importantly – the April 15 Resolution outlines your rights and procedures if you should change your mind. Say you get a little anxious and accept a reasonable offer of admission with financial aid to your second-choice program on April 10, but then receive an even better offer from another institution on April 11, or from a school

that better aligns with your career goals. You have the right to withdraw your offer of acceptance from the earlier institution and accept the offer from your preferred institution. There are right and wrong ways to do this – check the CGS website – but it is totally within your right to do so. Things get a little stickier after April 15, but you still have the right to attend the program you wish with appropriate notification.

I hope I have de-mystified the April 15 Resolution a bit. In the end, it is there for you, so it is in your best interests to understand when it does or does not apply. If you have any doubts, simply ask someone in the admissions office and don't be afraid to work your way up the administrative chain if you feel you are getting the runaround. But always start with the program first. That's where you are applying to, and that's where you will spend your time.

Thank you for joining me today. All of the links referred to in this podcast are available on my website at [grad-post.com](https://grad-post.com). There you'll find additional podcasts and resources to help you plan your adventure for an advanced degree.

After all, in a 360° world, every degree counts.

#### Links

1. <https://cgsnet.org/resources/for-current-prospective-graduate-students/april-15-resolution>
2. [https://cgsnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CGS\\_April15\\_Resolution\\_Jan312024.pdf](https://cgsnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CGS_April15_Resolution_Jan312024.pdf)
3. <https://cgsnet.org/april-15-resolution-faq>