

How to Decide if Graduate School is Right for You

What type of degree (e.g., Master's, Doctorate) might you pursue and how will you use it (industry or academics)? Use this guide to assist you in determining if graduate school is the right choice for you, and the next appropriate choices if you decide to apply.

1. Be clear about **why** you want to go to graduate school

- Does the work you want to do require a graduate degree?
- Does the graduate degree complement your future (short- and long-term) goals?
- Are you simply attempting to delay the job search by staying in college or will you have the opportunity to develop skills to specialize in a particular field?
- *If an advanced degree is required for your profession of choice, then pursuing graduate school may be your only option.*

2. Determine **when** you would go to graduate school

- Do you plan to go to graduate school immediately upon graduating or after receiving some work experience?
- What other types of opportunities (e.g., full-time work, travel, volunteer, or postbaccalaureate internships) might you consider before going to graduate school?
- *If delaying graduate school, be sure you engage in an experience that will continue to prepare you for graduate school and obtain faculty recommendations before leaving college.*

3. Take **financial considerations** for graduate school seriously

- In addition to your undergraduate loans, will you have to make additional monthly payments upon completing graduate school?
- Can you take a loan or receive financial aid?
- Will you be able to work part-time while enrolled in your program?
- *Some companies offer education benefits such as tuition assistance. Weigh the option of beginning graduate school immediately or working for a company that might offer such a benefit down the road.*

4. Talk to **professionals** in your career of interest

- Who can you speak to in your area of career interest about their graduate school experience?
- Can you schedule meetings with professionals who can clarify how graduate study prepared them for the work they do?
- *Connect with UConn alumni to find out how those with similar career interests reached their goals.*

If you decide that Graduate School is in your future, your next step will be to research schools and programs and to prepare for admission.

Do your **research** on schools & graduate programs

- Find a program of study using graduate program locator sites and books.
- Thoroughly check the program's reputation among employers, its rankings and accreditations, and its employment rates for graduates.

- Discuss graduate programs with faculty members, career advisors, professionals, or other mentors for invaluable experiences and lessons.
- Review the requirements for applying to each school (e.g., required interviews, course prerequisites, minimum GPA, and test scores).
- Create a checklist for each program of interest to which you will be applying – list of required materials (e.g., application form, personal statement, transcripts, letters of recommendation, writing samples, graduate test scores, résumé) and deadlines will vary.
- Develop a list of questions that will help you decide if the program is right for you; connect with enrolled students, visit the campus and surrounding areas, and ask many questions.
- Compare cost of attending each program, taking into account stipends, assistantships, or scholarships.

Prepare for graduate school admissions testing

- Find out the test score range or requirements for admission to the schools you are interested in applying to.
- Incorporate time into your schedule to prepare and study for the appropriate test(s) well in advance.
- *Tests might include: Dental Admission Test (DAT), Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), Graduate Record Exam (GRE), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), Miller Analogies Test (MAT), Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), Optometry Admission Test (OAT), Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).*

Resources

“How to Navigate the Application Timeline for Graduate School”	A resource/handout provided by the University of Connecticut’s Center for Career Development department that provides a timeline for students who wish to apply to graduate schools upon completion of their undergraduate studies.
ONETonline.org	A website resource that provides readers with samples of job titles. Click or visit to review job titles online.
Studentaid.ed.gov	A website resource that provides information on government-funded loans for students wishing to attend school. Read information provided to understand the different types of loans available.
UConn Alumni	The UConn Alumni networking page for students and alumni alike to connect with past and current Huskies. Visit http://uconnalumni.com/index.php/students/work/networking/career-networking to connect with alumni in the career area of interest.
Petersons.com , gradschools.com	Website resources that provide listing and information about graduate programs in the nation. Visit the website(s) to browse and search for programs of interest.
U.S. News & World Report; Bloomberg Businessweek	These resources provide ranking and reputable information on school programs and companies, as well as current global news. Visit the appropriate websites to learn more.
Ets.org	Visit ETS for information on placement examinations.
Kaplan or Princeton Review	Kaplan (http://www.kaplan.com/our-programs/test-preparation) and Princeton Review (http://www.princetonreview.com/graduate-school.aspx) both offer practice and test preparation. Click on the links provided or visit the websites for more information.