

IS GRAD SCHOOL RIGHT FOR YOU?

Completing a graduate degree requires a significant investment of time and financial resources. Here are a few things to consider to help you determine if grad school is right for you.

- **Why are interested in attending graduate school?** Is this the right time to pursue additional education, or would you potentially benefit from working for awhile before attending a program?
- **What are your career goals?** Is an advanced degree required for the career you're interested in?
- **What do you want to study?** Are you considering graduate school for the purpose of furthering your career, or because you enjoy academia?
- **Will an advanced degree allow you to earn a higher salary?** Is the difference enough to offset the cost of attending?

SELECTING A PROGRAM

Keep Career in Mind

- Look for programs taught by faculty with expertise in your field of interest that you can also see yourself working closely with for the duration of your program.
- Review career outcomes and job placement for program's alumni.

Cost of Tuition

- Scholarships for graduate students are awarded by schools, nonprofit organizations and private companies. They're usually based on academic and professional achievements.
- Fellowships are often awarded based on your future potential, rather than your past achievements. Issued by government agencies, companies, and nonprofit organizations, fellowships are designed to give you the funding you need to advance your career or complete your research.

Gather Information

- Program accreditation can affect your ability to obtain state licensure or certification, and your degree may not be recognized by employers.
 - You can usually find accreditation status on the program's website or verify it through the Dept. of Education's Database of Postsecondary Institutions & Programs.
- Attend info sessions for programs you're interested in to learn about the application process, how competitive admission is, advice for responding to essay prompts, and ask questions about the program to determine if it's a good fit for you.
- Review the admission requirements for the programs you're interested in to ensure you've completed the necessary coursework before you apply.
- Connect with current students or alumni through LinkedIn for additional insights about the program and the dynamics of the department.



APPLICATION MATERIALS

Letters of Recommendation

Most graduate programs require 2-3 letters of recommendation. Build strong relationships with faculty and supervisors for credible references on your academic and professional skills. If possible, request letters of recommendation 30-60 days in advance, and provide recommenders with your personal statement/statement of purpose, instructions for how to submit their letter, and the submission deadline.

Essays

Graduate applications require essays, such as a personal statement for academia and professional fields like medicine and law, or a statement of purpose for science-oriented disciplines. Be sure to have a few people review your statement to ensure that your response thoroughly answers every aspect of the prompts you're given, and that it is free of spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors.

Personal Statement

In general, your personal statement should focus on highlighting information about your competence, motivation, and commitment. A strong personal statement may include:

- Your personal story, including specific examples of why you're a good fit for the program
- Experiences, challenges, and/or accomplishments that have shaped your interest in the field you intend to study
- Personal strengths that will help you succeed in the program

Statement of Purpose

A statement of purpose focuses on communicating information about your academic, research, and professional interests to the admissions committee. A statement of purpose typically includes:

- The specific reasons you're applying to a particular program
- Your academic and research interests, and how they relate to the research interests of the faculty in the program
- How the program will prepare you to achieve your career goals
- Your academic, research, and professional experience

GRADUATE SCHOOL EXAMS

Although they are becoming less common, some graduate programs require applicants to submit entrance exams. The most common exams are:

Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) - General knowledge exam

Law School Admissions Services (LSAT) - Law School

Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) - Business School

Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) - Medical School

Test Preparation

Check local libraries for free test prep and practice exams, these free resources can be as beneficial as paying for an exam prep course! The Parkland Library has test prep textbooks for the GRE & LSAT, and PLU's library offers physical and online test prep books. Kaplan and Princeton Review offer practice exams, strategy sessions, prep courses, and FAQ guides for the GRE, MCAT, LSAT, & GMAT.