

## Overview

- Do you have a clear idea of the career you want to pursue? Is graduate degree a requirement for your career goals?
- Are you motivated to attend or is someone else influencing your decision?
- Will the time and money you spend on graduate school repay you in the long term?
- Is there another avenue for continued learning?
- If you put off graduate school for a few years, are there skills or experiences you will gain in the meantime?

## Choosing the Right Program

Some graduate degrees are academic and others are professional in scope. Academic degrees focus on original research, whereas professional degrees stress the practical application of knowledge and skills. Master's degrees may take between one and three years to earn and Doctorates generally take four or more.

## Evaluating Your Options

Once you've decided to pursue graduate study, begin to explore schools offering the type of program you want. You'll find directories online (listed below) that briefly outline the academic programs, financial aid resources, cost of study, application requirements and more.

As you evaluate each program consider the following:

- Special concentrations and courses related to your interests
- Quality of the faculty and their research interests
- Overall cost of attendance
- Prestige of the institution and program accreditation
- Alumni career opportunities during and after graduation

You can view [U.S. News & World Report](#) for college ratings. It is also a good idea to contact each school and speak with current faculty and students to see if their program is a good fit for you.

## Application Requirements

Application requirements differ substantially among institutions and programs, so read each school's material carefully to make sure you file a complete and timely application. Application deadlines vary by type of program and school requirement.

Schools generally require:

- Graduate admission test scores (GRE, LSAT, GMAT, MCAT)
- Official transcripts of your undergraduate work
- Two or three letters of recommendation from professors and/or employers
- An essay or personal statement on your background and interests in the field

## Resources to Support Your Grad School Research

- [gradschools.com](http://gradschools.com)
- [gradschooltips.com](http://gradschooltips.com)
- [graduateguide.com](http://graduateguide.com)
- [gradschool.about.com](http://gradschool.about.com)