

## Applying to Graduate School FAQs

What is graduate school?

A graduate school is an advanced degree program that allows students to specialize in a particular subject area. At the end of the program, students graduate with a Master's or doctoral degree, depending on the program selected.

Why should I attend graduate school?

There are a variety of reasons to attend graduate school. For example, graduate school provides students with the opportunity to gain expertise in a particular field, make lasting friendships and connections with classmates and professors, earn a higher salary, gain eligibility for different career opportunities and career advancement, and conduct research, to name a few.

Why should I not attend graduate school?

Graduate school is no small commitment, requiring many hours of classes, outside study, research, and experiential learning requirements. It can also be expensive. For instance, graduate school tuition is often more expensive than undergraduate tuition, and graduate school programs typically give out less financial aid. Furthermore, it can take a lot of time. Most Masters programs are two years, Juris Doctor (or J.D., the degree conferred to law school graduates) programs are typically three years, Ph.D. programs are five to seven years, and medical school is typically four years of study plus at least three years of residency.

How many schools should I apply to?

We recommend that students apply to several schools, including "reach," "middle-of-the-pack" and "safety" schools. At the same time, students should also keep in mind the cost of applying to each school, which includes fees upon application and for standardized tests, along with sending test score reports and other materials. While the ideal number of schools will vary from person to person, a manageable range is between five to ten schools. One exception to this is medical school applications. For medical school applications, it is not uncommon for applicants to apply to many more schools; in some cases, applicants will apply to upwards of twenty schools.

## Questions for Self-Exploration

In deciding whether or not to apply for graduate school, consider its impact on your career, your motivation for applying, your financial situation, and the timing of your decision.

Career Questions:

1. What can I do with my undergraduate degree?

2. Besides graduate school, what other ways could I continue learning?
3. What career do I want to pursue?
4. How do I know that this is a strong career match for me? Have I participated in job shadows, informational interviews, and/or internships in my career of choice to get a sense for the role?
5. Is a graduate degree a requirement for my intended career? Will a graduate degree make employment easier in my career of choice? Alternatively, will a graduate degree make me overqualified for a career, thus making my search more difficult?
6. What are my short and long-term career goals? Does attending graduate school help me achieve these goals? If so, how?

Motivation Questions:

7. Who wants me to go to graduate school?
8. How have my family members, friends, and professors influenced my decision to apply to graduate school?
9. What is motivating me to apply to graduate school?

Time Questions:

10. Will the time and monetary investment I make for graduate school repay me in the money and experience I earn throughout my life?
11. Is now the right time for me to attend graduate school?
12. Am I ready to commit to at least one more year of exams, homework, research, papers, and/or group projects?

Financial Questions:

13. Am I financially able to attend graduate school?

Learning Questions:

14. Are there other options available to you for continued learning in your field of choice? For instance, could you gain marketable skills through professional seminars, workshops, mass open online courses (such as those offered on websites like Coursera or edX), or a training certificate?