

# Guide to Graduate School

## Benefits of a Graduate Degree

### A Graduate Degree....

- Can influence how fast and how far you advance in your career
- Can give you greater flexibility to change careers; in many fields (especially technology, teaching and -level degree
- Can increase job satisfaction, in terms of the amount of responsibility you assume, the autonomy you have, and the content of the work you do
- Can result in increased salary

## Deciding to Go to Graduate School

Engage in self-reflection and examine your reasons for pursuing an advanced degree.

### Positive reasons for going to graduate school:

- You have a definite academic goal and/or career ambition
- You have researched the job market in your field and have weighed the costs of the degree against the benefits
- You are truly dedicated to learning and prepared for several years of intensive study

### Negative reasons for going to graduate school:

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- You are going as a way of putting off entering the world of work
- You are going because you feel pressured by others (e.g., family, academic advisor)

### Advantages to working first:

- Recharge your batteries
- Allow you to gain content-specific experience
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- How do you feel about research?
- Are you interested in pursuing a career in academia?
- How does financial aid compare between the two degrees?
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**Time Commitment/Attrition** How long does it take to complete the program and how many students drop out before completing? Be sure to ask students in the program for the realistic answer to this question.

**Size of Department** Can you get the attention you want from faculty members? How many faculty members are devoted to the department? Are they part-time or full-time? How many are tenured?

**Size of the Institution** Would you feel comfortable there?

**Student Mix** Consider the age, gender, and ethnicity of the student body. Would you be comfortable with there?

**Cost & Financial Aid/Scholarships** Assistantships or internships may be available which offer tuition in exchange for working or teaching on the campus. Do not rule out any program because of cost; if the program wants you, there may be additional funding of which you are unaware.

**Post graduation plans** Where have graduates obtained employment after graduation? Often, current students or faculty can tell you this.

**Housing/Living Expenses** Consider the cost of living in the area when weighing the total expenses: include housing, transportation and groceries. Investigate on-campus and off-campus possibilities.

Once

and the relative likelihood of admission. Use three categories to rank: **reach schools**

good chance for admission but I am

**possible schools**

and **safety schools**

## What Do Graduate Programs Look For In A Candidate?

**Three (3) general criteria**

- *Intellectual ability*

- Show evidence of focus, dedication and awareness
- Be honest

**DON'T:**

- Make yourself out to be someone you are not
- Dwell on weak points
- Employ dull chronological histories
- Disregard length limitation or lie

**The Interview \***

Many schools do not require interviews, but you can request one if you feel it would be helpful. If you are comfortable and confident with your interviewing abilities, requesting one is often a very good idea. Most interviewers are not concerned with your opinions; they are concerned with your ability to communicate effectively.

Some important tips include:

- Always review your application before you interview to emphasize the points you want to highlight
- Prepare for the interview with questions of your own
- Always follow appropriate professional behaviors (be on time, dress appropriately, and write thank you letters)
- Be aware of your non-verbal behavior such as tapping a foot, playing with a pen, or general fidgeting
- Practice for the interview and anticipate questions designed to assess your appropriateness for the program

\*Obtain and review the guide: *Preparation for the Graduate/Professional School Interview*

**Other Resources**

About: Grad School -<http://gradschool.about.com/>

- College and Grad School Planning- <http://www.petersons.com/>

The Pursuing Psychology Graduate School Information- <http://www.uni.edu/walsh/linda2.html>

General Information about grad school-<http://www.gradschools.com/>

*Book: Graduate School Essays* by Don Asher

**How Can the Case Career Center Help?**

- Conduct a mock interview with a career professional.
- Have your CV/resume reviewed.
- Have your personal statement or essay critiqued.
- Visit the Accenture Resource Library to access additional materials.

**Case Career Center 206 Sears**  
**<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/careers/> 216-368-4446**