



WHY GO TO GRADUATE SCHOOL? _____

- Because you want to obtain specialized knowledge in a specific area of study.
- Because many occupations require education beyond a bachelor's degree in order to receive the training necessary and be recognized as a professional in that career such as school counselor, lawyer and physical therapist.
- Because some careers require the graduate training in order to advance within the field.
- Because you want to conduct focused research and scholarship in a particular discipline of study such as history, sociology and chemistry.

POST BACCALAUREATE OPTIONS _____

Professional Schools

- Includes dental, medical, veterinarian, law, paralegal and business schools.
- Many professional schools do not require applicants to have a specific undergraduate degree; however, specific (related or rigorous) undergraduate courses may be an important factor. Typically, professional schools are interested in how academically challenging your previous coursework was.
- Professional schools often evaluate applicants heavily according to responses to application essay questions and/or a personal statement. They are concerned with responses to ethical/philosophical and scenario questions.
- Professional schools are interested in an applicant's background in terms of community service, leadership, campus and association involvement, work experience, and the result of tests such as the LSAT and MCAT.
- More students go directly into professional schools (immediately following undergraduate education), than those that go directly on to graduate school.

Graduate Schools

- There are many specialized paths to consider when applying to graduate schools. For example, a student interested in counseling could get a MEd. (Masters of Education) in Counselor Education, an MA (Master of Arts) in Counseling Psychology or a MSW (Master of Social Work) in Social Work. Each program may have an entirely different emphasis in terms of philosophical approach and may better prepare students for working in different areas of the market. For

example, some programs prepare students for careers as professors or researchers, others prepare students for careers in varying areas of industry such as business or government. It is important to have a solid grasp of the specialty area you want to pursue and the industry area you wish to work in when choosing a graduate program.

- Graduate schools are interested in an applicant's background in terms of community service, leadership, campus and association involvement, work experience and the results of standardized tests. (Some programs require both general and subject area exams and have minimum standards for admittance.)
- Some graduate programs may require you to obtain a credential file (typically education and pharmacy programs).
- Graduate degrees may or may not increase salaries depending on the academic area. (Investigate.)
- Many students take time off between undergraduate and graduate studies in order to acquire valuable work experience and further confirm their specialty area of choice. (Some industries and graduate schools prefer this.)

APPLICATION TIMELINE _____

You will want to start your evaluation of graduate programs a year in advance of graduation. Here is an estimated timeline for graduate school application:

At Least One Year Before Starting Graduate Program

- Begin researching possible options. Ask yourself, "What schools should I consider? Where do I want to live, geographically? What schools offer my area of study?"
- Research the schools on line and learn as much as you can via the webpage. What are the admissions requirements? When are the housing and financial aid deadlines?
- Visit the campuses.
- Which schools seem to be your top choices?
- Practice and study for standardized tests (GRE, GMAT, MCAT, LSAT).
- Visit the Career Development Services resource library and review graduate school resources.

One Year to Nine Months Before Starting Program

- Sign up and take required standardized test

- Review application materials and prepare required documents
- Ask for references
- Finalize personal statement

Seven to Nine Months Before Starting Program

- Complete application and financial aid forms
- Give references the recommendation forms to complete (if provided) and self addressed, stamped envelopes
- Mail applications, watching deadlines for admissions and financial aid
- Follow up by phone to verify all materials have been received

Interfolio is a resource you can use to put your portfolio together on-line. Link to it from the graduate school resources at www.auburn.edu/career.

EVALUATE GRADUATE PROGRAMS ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS _____

Program of study

- Degrees offered
- Areas of concentration
- Field work or research options
- Percentage of students attending full- or part-time

Admissions Information

Admissions Preferences

- Does the program prefer recent graduates or individuals with work experience
- Are there any prerequisites that you must meet before acceptance
- Break down of admission criteria, relative importance of test scores, GPA, recommendations, and experience
- State residency requirements

Admissions Requirements: What does each school require?

- Graduate Admissions Test (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT)
- Transcripts
- GPA
- Letters of Recommendation
- Application Essay/ Personal Statement
- Interview
- Portfolio or audition

Faculty

- Size of the department
- Diversity of the department
- Publications and professional affiliations

Financial Aid and Assistantships

- Type of assistance available
- Process for applying
- Documentation needed

Facilities

- Libraries, research, and lab space available
- Student Services available on campus
- Recreation and Clubs
- Medical Services

Community

- Location
- Size of school and community
- Services available outside of the university
- Housing options outside of the university

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS _____

What are the different levels of graduate degrees?

The three levels of graduate degrees include master's, specialist and doctoral degrees.

Master's Degree: Available in most every field of study, generally taking one to three years to complete

Specialist: Completed after a master's degree and generally prepares the individual for certification or licensure in a specific field, usually a one year program

Doctoral Degree: Highest educational level, requiring original research and/or practical application, length varying between programs

To how many graduate programs should I apply?

Generally, applying to four to six programs is sufficient. Remember that each application will require a fee. Review your evaluation of each school and program and select the ones that most appealed to you. Pay special attention to the level of competitiveness and balance your applications between highly and moderately competitive programs. The more options you have at the end of the process, the better.

What financial aid options are available for graduate school?

Financial aid is quite different in graduate school than in undergraduate school. Much of the financial aid at the graduate level is merit based, often in the form of a fellowship or an assistantship and many require a service component. Most of the awards are given by the academic department under which you plan to study. Be sure to look into these opportunities when researching schools. In addition, there may also be general assistantships throughout the university (residence life, for example) to consider. Below is a list of the various types of assistantships which may be available.

- **Graduate Assistantships:** 10-20 hours work/week; typically pay full or partial tuition and stipend
- **Teaching Assistantships:** Teaching, recitation courses and/or assisting a professor with office hours, ½ time
- **Research Assistantships:** Assisting ongoing research; can lead to own research project

- **Residence Assistantships:** Room and board and a stipend in a college residence hall

Most of the teaching assistantships are reserved for doctoral students. However, if you are pursuing a master's degree there may still be options for you if you start the process and apply early.

ASSESSING YOUR GRADUATE SCHOOL COMPETENCY _____

Note whether each of the twelve statements below are true, false or unknown for you:

- ___ 1. If I do not go to graduate school now, I may never go.
- ___ 2. I can get a job in my field without a graduate degree, but not in my specialized area of interest.
- ___ 3. I am unsure of my career goals and graduate school will help me clarify my interests.
- ___ 4. I am actively exploring both graduate school and direct entry into the market place.
- ___ 5. My professors are encouraging me to attend graduate/professional school.
- ___ 6. I cannot work in my field of interest without a graduate degree.
- ___ 7. The job market is crowded and a graduate degree will make me more competitive.
- ___ 8. A graduate degree will significantly increase my entry level salary.
- ___ 9. I like school; I am not ready to leave the academic environment.
- ___ 10. I have career-related experience as part of my background.
- ___ 11. I have always known that I would go directly from undergraduate school into graduate study.
- ___ 12. Most students enter my field of graduate study directly from undergraduate school.

The academic programs of study I am considering are: _____

My primary reason for considering graduate school now is: _____

Resource: <http://www.sc.edu/career/pdf/gradschool.pdf>