

GRADUATE SCHOOL TIPS

Graduate school is an opportunity to obtain specialized knowledge in a specific area of study; gain entrance into professions that require it (e.g. lawyer, counselor or physical therapist); advance within a particular field of interest; or conduct focused research and scholarship (e.g. history, sociology or chemistry). It is NOT meant as a way to avoid the world of work.

Research Programs

Application procedures and deadlines vary by institution. Start the research process one and a half years prior to the semester you wish to enroll. Once you have identified an area of study, create a list of schools. Then, review the catalog, department and faculty information, research focus, financial aid, application process, assistantships, etc.

Different Types of Programs

- **Master's:** Available in most fields, generally takes 1–3 years
- **Specialist:** Completed after a master's degree and generally prepares for certification or licensure in specific field (~1 year)
- **Doctoral Degree:** Highest educational level, requires original research and/or practical application (length varies greatly)

Resources

- **UT Martin Graduate Programs:** www.utm.edu/gradstudies
- **Pre-Professional Health Advising:** Kristina Pitz (kpitz1@utm.edu, 731.881.7478, 113 EPS Building)
- Research potential graduate schools, paying for graduate school, and test preparation:
 - GoGrad.org**
 - GradSchools.com**
 - GraduateGuide.com**
 - Fastweb.com/content/graduate-students**
 - USNews.com/best-graduate-schools**
 - Idealist.org/grad-schools**
 - Petersons.com**
 - PrincetonReview.com**

Select a School

Assess the following to evaluate your fit academically and personally to the available programs of interest:

- Location (distance from family and friends), size (city services and entertainment) and rural verses metropolitan
- Career/academic opportunities for your partner (if applicable)
- Cost of program
- Online programs versus campus-based program
- Opportunities for financial support (scholarships, loans, graduate assistantships, graduate teaching assistantships, etc.)
- Research interests are supported
- Short and long term career goals will be met
- Satisfaction of current students
- Size of program cohort
- Faculty/student ratio

- Programs focus, on research or industry
- Prerequisite courses for entrance
- Length of program
- Thesis, comprehensive exam and/or internship requirements

Evaluate Program Quality

To determine quality, consider the program's...

- Commitment to research and scholarship
- Reputation of the school, faculty and graduates
- Admissions standards
- Accrediting body

Assess your Graduate School Competency

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

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

Personal Evaluation

Considering this information and the research you have gathered, create a list of academic programs of study you are considering on a separate sheet of paper. Also, identify your primary reason for considering graduate school right now.

