



Considering Graduate School

Reasons to go to graduate school can range from a desire for personal growth to a belief that it will lead to greater (and faster) career advancement. Before making a decision, however, there are numerous things to consider.

Questions to Ask Yourself:

Will an advanced degree really help me advance in my chosen field?

It is really important to know upfront whether or not a graduate degree is truly needed in your field. To assume that it is, can often times be a costly mistake. Research is key in helping with this question. Talk to recent graduates in your field and ask how a graduate degree has helped them. Talk to industry recruiters about their recruiting forecast for the next several years. Research labor market trends. Make sure that an advanced degree is truly your next best step.

Should I enter graduate school immediately after college?

Consider your motive for starting graduate school straight out of college. Are you undecided about what to do after graduation? Are you intimidated or confused about the job search? Are you sure you don't need the benefit of work experience beforehand? Going to graduate school immediately because you feel it will buy you a little time to figure things out, is a poor (and again, costly) strategy.

Does my undergraduate work qualify me for admission?

Getting into graduate school is never a sure thing. You must determine if your undergraduate GPA, along with your admission test score(s) qualify you for admission. Many, if not most, schools also require prerequisites and a certain amount of work experience to be considered a competitive applicant.

How will I pay for graduate school?

Important question. Have you realistically computed the cost of graduate school? Have you researched deferred loan repayment programs, employer-financed education, or work as a teaching or research assistant? Are you willing to continue or once again take on a "student lifestyle?"

Am I sure about the academic program I've selected?

Graduate programs allow you to concentrate your studies in a single area. When considering a program, determine whether or not the program requires a thesis, foreign language proficiency, comprehensive exams, internship experience, etc. Consider whether the program is research- or professionally-oriented and know the difference. Determine if your field requires a master's degree or Ph.D. And lastly, check several independent sources to find out which graduate schools have the best academic reputations and placement records.

Going to graduate school is a big decision and one not to be taken lightly. Do the necessary research and make a decision based on good, solid information.

Source: Vick Center for Strategic Advising & Career Counseling, 2017