

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 in particular discipline (e.g. history, sociology or chemistry). It's NOT meant as a way to avoid the world of work.

Take time to think carefully about graduate school. This decision requires time and careful planning.

1. 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, request needed information: catalog, department and faculty information, research focus, financial aid, application, assistantships, etc.

Different Types of Programs

- **Master's Degree:** Available in most every field, 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)

Web Resources

- Murraystate.edu/Students/Graduate – continue here at MSU
- GradSchools.com & GraduateGuide.com – research programs
- GradView.com & Petersons.com – research paying for graduate school and test preparation
- PrincetonReview.com – research program rankings/expectations

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
- 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

3. 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.

The academic programs of study I am considering are:

My primary reason for considering graduate school now is:



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