



Questions to Ask Yourself When Considering Graduate School

- Is a graduate degree necessary or required for the career I am pursuing?
- How will I finance graduate school? Some graduate programs, particularly doctoral degrees in the sciences, may offer significant financial support while others will primarily offer loans.
- Do I need to take a gap year(s) to gain more experience or improve my academic record and become a stronger candidate?
- How much time will additional education require? A masters degree or accelerated bachelor program will take 2-3 years while a doctoral degree can take 5+ years.

Explore

- Research occupations with onetonline.org, Occupational Outlook Handbook or professional associations' websites to learn about the education and experiences necessary for the jobs you are interested in.
- Research prerequisite courses that you need to take for graduate programs. Health careers, in particular, require certain courses be completed to apply.
- Do an informational interview with a professional or graduate student to learn about their experiences.
- Visit admissions representatives at Career Center events or attend campus open houses to learn about their programs.

Prepare

- Meet with a career counselor to discuss a timeline for applying to graduate school.
- Develop relationships with faculty members and supervisors who might write you letters of recommendation and start early to get to know them. Strong letters come from people who truly know you and your goals.
- Gain experience through volunteering, internships, or research. Try to shadow people in your field to learn about the profession and even their graduate school experience, if applicable.

Apply

- Sign up for standardized tests (GRE, GMAT, MCAT, etc.) if it is necessary for your program. Develop a study schedule to set yourself up for success.
- Start drafting your personal statement/statement of purpose a few months in advance to give time to edit.
- Request letters of recommendation from faculty and employers. Let them know early to give them as much time as possible (2 months or so) to write a strong letter.
- Conduct a mock interview with a career counselor. Some programs will require an interview and you will want to be prepared!

Testing

- GRE – General graduate program tests. There are some programs that require a GRE Subject test (ex: GRE Psychology Subject Test)
- LSAT – Law School
- GMAT – Business School
- MCAT – Medical School
- PCAT – Pharmacy School
- DAT – Dental School
- OAT – Optometry School

Visit the Career Center website for more information about researching Graduate and Professional School and information regarding personal statements, statement of purposes and CV's : <https://www.csusm.edu/careers/resource/gradschoolinfo.html>