WHAT IS GRADUATE SCHOOL?

Graduate school includes Master’s programs (1-2 years of full time study following an undergraduate degree) and Doctoral/Ph.D. programs (approximately 4-6 additional years of study following a Masters Degree).

Compared to undergraduate studies, graduate level work is more:
- Advanced – it builds upon undergraduate education
- Focused – it emphasizes depth of knowledge
- Scholarly – it requires advanced critical analysis abilities, analytical/interpretive skills and in-depth research

TYPES OF PROGRAMS AND DEGREES

Graduate programs may be separated into three broad categories:

- **Professional Degrees** – provide specialized skills and qualifications to enter a specific profession which is regulated by a governing body (e.g., Medicine, Law, Teaching).
- **Applied / Hybrid Masters** – provide advanced study to prepare for a career in a specific industry or career area which is not regulated (e.g., Public Policy, Global Health, Sustainability).
- **Research or Academic Stream Masters or PhD** – Research oriented involving conducting independent research under supervision of an established academic scholar. There are two types of academic programs:
  - **Terminal programs** – Master’s and Doctoral degrees are achieved separately. Students may apply to Doctoral programs after their Masters degree.
  - **Non-terminal programs** – Master’s program feeds directly into Doctoral program without option of stopping after Master’s. Entered directly from undergraduate.

Additionally, your degree may be:
- **Course-based** – may be a combination of course work, practicum placement, qualifying exam and independent research. Typical of professional and applied masters programs.
- **Thesis-based** – a combination of required courses and a thesis project under the supervision of a thesis advisor. Typical of academic / research oriented programs.

TIP: If you plan on entering a thesis-based program, gain research experience at the undergraduate level by completing a thesis, (see also Research Experience tip sheet) participating in the Research Opportunity Program and / or obtaining research related work or volunteer experiences. See Tipsheet: Research Experience for more information.

WHY DO I WANT TO GO?

Given the amount of time and money involved in pursuing a graduate degree, consider your motivation for continuing your studies carefully. Graduate school may be a logical step to:
- **Meet professional ambitions** – Some careers require a graduate degree (Librarian, R and D Scientist, Psychologist)
- **Prepare for a career in post-secondary education** – College professors typically have a Masters Degree and university professors typically have a Doctoral Degree (or are in the process of completing one)
- **Pursue a love of knowledge** – For those who truly enjoy their field of study and wish to learn more about it
- **Allow for career change and advancement** – To change career path or better position self for promotion opportunities

IS GRADUATE SCHOOL RIGHT FOR ME?

Some questions to consider before committing to graduate school:
- Do I want to study this subject at a more intense level?
- How will graduate school help me reach my career goals? What are my other options?
- Do I have the necessary financial resources?
- Is this the right time for me to go (personally, financially, and career-wise)?
- How well do I meet the entry requirements?
HOW WILL YOUR APPLICATION BE EVALUATED?
Entry into graduate programs is highly competitive. Factors that contribute to admission decisions:

- **GPA** – most require a minimum B+ (3.3 GPA) during the last two years of undergraduate study
- **Suitability for the program** – determined by the quality of your application, your compatibility with the program, your research interests and match with faculty research
- **Skills and experience** – your research experience, volunteer / work experiences and extracurricular activities
- **Reference letters** – the type of referee and relevance of their comments are very important
- **Admission test scores** – if required (e.g., GRE [http://www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org) GMAT [http://www.mba.com/global](http://www.mba.com/global))

PREPARING EARLY
Prepare for graduate school during your undergraduate studies by:

- **Strengthening your GPA** – Although many programs look primarily at your final two years, a GPA that is consistently high will impress admission committees
- **Exploring your options** – Take a variety of courses and gain relevant experience to help determine your career and research interests, talk to T.A.s about their experiences, take part in networking activities, participate in the Extern Job Shadow program, attend program open houses and talk to professors about graduate programs
- **Identifying references** – Graduate applications require between 2-3 references. Get to know your professors by taking more than one class with those whose work interests you, participating in class discussions, attending office hours, and joining clubs that allow professors to get to know you outside of the classroom
- **Building experience** – Gain research experience through senior level thesis courses, the Research Opportunity Program, UTM internships or volunteering with a professor. Other relevant experience may be required for professional and applied Masters programs.

CAREER CENTRE RESOURCES

Events
- **Graduate and Professional Schools Fair**, in mid September
- **Law, Teaching and Medical Schools Information Sessions** – offered in both Fall and Winter terms. See the Events Calendar on the CLN [https://cln.utoronto.ca/home.htm](https://cln.utoronto.ca/home.htm)

Library Resources
- **Admission Information** – Pocket Guide to Graduate School Admissions, Guide to Professional Programs in Canada, Graduate School Admissions Advisor, Making it into a Top Graduate School
- **Personal Statements/Essays** – Graduate Admissions Essays, Mastering the Personal Statement, 50 Successful Harvard Application Essays, GradSource Magazine
- **Resume / Work Search** – Academic Work Search Essentials, How to prepare your Curriculum Vitae, Putting your Graduate Degree to Work, Career Options for Ph.D., GradSource Magazine
- **Tip sheets** – Applying to Graduate School, Admissions Tests, Funding Graduate School, Post-Graduate Programs, Professional Schools, C.V.s, Personal Statements

Services and Programs
- Career Counsellors – book an appointment to discuss your career direction and how graduate school may help you reach your goals
- Personal Statement and CV critiques - to refine these crucial application documents

ONLINE RESOURCES
- UTM Career Centre website – [http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers) see: Further Education
- A searchable Canadian directory of programs [http://www.universitystudy.ca/search-programs/](http://www.universitystudy.ca/search-programs/)
- Explore potential career paths after grad school [http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/resources-for-graduate-students](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/resources-for-graduate-students)

This tip sheet is intended as a counseling document and the information is subject to change. (Updated June 2016)