GRADUATE SCHOOL

‘Graduate school’ is just one type of further education program completed after undergraduate studies. Other types are Professional programs and Post-Graduate Programs (also see our tipsheets on these program types). This tipsheet discusses how to consider your options around both Graduate and Professional Schools.

Compared to undergraduate studies, graduate school 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

A Master's Degree takes an additional 1-2 years of full time study after an undergraduate degree and Doctoral/Ph.D. programs can take 4-6 additional years of study following a Master’s Degree.

TYPES OF PROGRAMS AND DEGREES

1. 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

2. Applied Masters – provide advanced study to prepare for a career and/or further research in a specific career area which is not a regulated profession (e.g., Public Policy, Global Health, Sustainability).

3. Professional Degrees – Provide specialized skills and qualifications to enter a specific profession which is regulated by a governing body (e.g., Medicine, Law, Teaching).

Programs may be course or thesis based and may include some or all of the following:

- **Course-based** – a combination of course work, practicum placement, qualifying exam and independent research. Typical of professional and applied master's 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, 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, consider your motivation for continuing your studies carefully. Graduate or professional 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 Master’s Degree and university professors typically have a Doctoral Degree
- 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
- Start early and take time to reflect. Being able to articulate on your motivations and goals is key to making a strong application.

IS GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL 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?
- How well do I meet the entry requirements?
HOW WILL YOUR APPLICATION BE EVALUATED?
Entry into graduate and professional programs is highly competitive. Factors that contribute to admission decisions are:

- **GPA** – most require a minimum B+ (3.3 GPA) during the last two years of undergraduate study is a typical mark needed to be considered
- **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 or professional 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 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 research focus 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 and Workshops**
- **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 CLNx [https://clnx.utoronto.ca/home.htm](https://clnx.utoronto.ca/home.htm)
- **The Road to Graduate School Workshop** – Offered both Fall and Winter terms

**Resources**
- **Admission Information**: Pocket Guide to Graduate School Admissions, Guide to Professional Programs in Canada, Graduate School Admissions Advisor, Graduate Admissions Essays, 50 Successful Harvard Application Essays
- **Personal Statements/Essays**: [Personal Statement E-Module](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/events-services) helps you prepare a first draft and follow up with a critique
- **Workshop**: [Mastering the Personal Statement](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/events-services) offered Fall and Winter terms
- **Tip sheets**: Applying to Graduate School, Admissions Tests, Funding Graduate School, Post-Grad Programs, Professional Schools, C.V. Worksheet, Personal Statements

**Services and Programs**
- Career Counselling – book an appointment to discuss your career direction and how graduate / professional school may help you reach your goals, and how to plan and prepare
- Personal Statement and CV critiques - to refine these crucial application documents
- The Job Shadowing Program – investigate career interests in short voluntary placements [http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/career-planning/career-exploration](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/career-planning/career-exploration)

**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)

Please note that this information is subject to change. It is best to refer to the original sources for the most up to date information. (Updated September 2019)