



APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Introduction

Compared to undergraduate studies, graduate school is a more concentrated course of study and expectations regarding the quality and quantity of your academic work are greater. Graduate programs refine skills and also entail:

- Focused studies in a specific discipline with fewer elective possibilities
- Rigorous evaluation of your work by professors and peers
- Smaller classes with much student interaction
- Work experience via internships, practicums, teaching, or research (original research is often required)

Available Graduate Degrees

When you consider graduate school, you may be thinking of professional schools (law, medicine, and business), master's programs, or doctoral programs. There are four main types of degree programs available.

- **Professional Master's** gives you a specific set of skills needed to practice in a particular field, such as education, business, engineering, social work, or other professions requiring a specialized training. It is generally a final or "terminal" degree, and involves an internship, practicum, or field work.
- **Research Master's** provides experience in research and scholarship, and it may be a final degree or a step toward the Ph.D. A master's degree usually takes one or two years of study.
- **Professional Doctorate** is the highest degree for areas such as medicine, dentistry, business and law which require practical application of knowledge and skills.
- **Research Doctorate or Ph.D.** is the highest academic degree and the primary credential for college level teaching. Involves both course work and an extensive and original research project. Usually takes four to six years of full-time study.

Before Applying

Consider before pursuing a graduate program:

- What are your short-term and long-term goals? Is a graduate degree necessary for these?
- What career opportunities will become available with this additional degree?
- Are you willing to make the time, monetary, and energy commitment?
- Do you feel motivated, disciplined and academically prepared?
- Is there a graduate student, professor, career advisor, or role model with whom I can discuss this decision?

Top 10 Things to Consider When Looking at Different Programs

1. What kinds of exams and scores are required for admission?
2. Is the school in a safe area with a reasonable cost of living?
3. Does the program offer teaching or research assistantships, grants or other types of financial aid?
4. Is the program accredited? Does the program have a good reputation in the field for this
5. Are faculty members involved in research and practice that interest me?
6. How many hours are required to complete the degree? How much work is involved to complete this degree?
7. Are the faculty considered experts in their field?
8. Will you feel academically challenged by your peers and professors?
9. Is a thesis, comprehensive exam or both required for completion?
10. How long does this degree take to complete? Does it have adequate facilities and university support?

Graduate Admissions

*Please note that this is a general guide, so for specific program admission requirements please reference the graduate program webpages directly.

Overall, the application process for grad school will include:

The Application Form (typically completed online)

Personal Statement

Letters of Recommendation

Admissions Exam Scores

Personal Statement

The personal statement is very similar to a cover letter in that it allows you to introduce yourself to the admissions committee and present your case for how your experiences have shaped you to become the best candidate for their program. The personal statement should adhere to the specific word counts listed in program admission requirements, be clear and concise, and grammar should be carefully scrutinized. The statement may be prompted by particular questions, or a freeform essay depending on program requirements. For additional assistance with writing the personal statement, please contact your advisor or Career Success and Professional Development.

Letters of Recommendation

The specific number of letters required will vary by program but should be completed by at least two professors with whom you have worked previously. Letters should be from professionals who have been able to observe your growth and development, specifically in areas of leadership, research and academic rigor. Be sure to request letters as early as possible! Provide your letter writers with a description of the program you're applying to, any areas you would like them to focus on, the due date and method of submission for each letter.

Admissions Exams Scores

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is the most commonly required exam for programs in the arts and sciences, including lab sciences, social work, counseling, psychology and education. The GRE covers general subjects such as math, writing and reading analysis. Specific subject tests may be required depending on the graduate program. Other specialized graduate programs require different exams such as GMAT, MCAT and LSAT for business, medicine and law respectively. Please reference program admission requirements for testing specifics.

Additional Resources and Guidance

As deciding to attend graduate school is a major decision, you may need suggestions and resources to help you define your career interests, search for appropriate graduate programs, compare benefits and costs of programs, and gather and develop your application materials. Please schedule an appointment with an advisor in Career Success and Professional Development by calling (314) 529-9374, emailing career@maryville.edu, or dropping by the Division of Student Success on the 1st floor of the University Library.