

“U.S. Graduate Schools - Deciding and Applying”

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Thinking about Grad School

Begin by asking yourself three questions:

- 1) Why do I want to go to graduate school?
- 2) Where do I see myself in the future?
- 3) What kind of graduate school experience do I need to reach these goals?

BUILD YOUR STORY.

What kind of program?

- **Professional School or Graduate Program?**
- **Master's or Ph.D.?**
- **Joint degree?**
- **Other options include:** Mid-Career Degrees or LLM.

When to go?

- Is it better to attend graduate school right after you complete your bachelor's?
- Or is it better to wait a few years and gain some work/life experience first?

Go Directly to Grad School	Go to Work First
<p>Pros You've already got the momentum and the discipline school requires.</p> <p>You may have fewer obligations, financial and otherwise, at 22 years old vs. working for 10 years and going back to school at age 32.</p> <p>Cons It can be difficult to divest yourself of the debt incurred with financing your education</p>	<p>Pros A few years on a job can give you a different perspective on what's important about your education.</p> <p>You can save money to pay for your education; your employer may offer tuition reimbursement as part of its benefits package.</p> <p>You can gain a deeper understanding of your field through hands-on experience.</p> <p>You can learn what problems need to be solved, generating research ideas.</p> <p>Cons It's easy to get addicted to a steady paycheck.</p> <p>Your choice to go back to school may require financial sacrifices from the other people in your life.</p>

Where to apply?

- **Credentials** – Is the program accredited? How is it ranked? What is its reputation?
- **Curriculum** - Courses offered, size of faculty, library. Are the courses offered going to enhance my skills?
- **Campus Life** – Number of years of program, location, extra-curricular activity offerings, etc. - Will this campus make me happy socially?
- **Counseling** – Mentoring, academic advising, international student support, etc
- **Cost** – Can I afford this program? Does the school offer merit- or needs-based funding?
- **Career Opportunities** – After I get this degree, what kind of job will I get and how long will it take me to get there?

Preparing to apply

- **Timeline**
 - 12-18 months before the semester you want to enroll
- **Documents you will need to apply:**
 - Transcripts
 - Letters of Recommendation
 - Personal Statement
 - Test Scores (GRE, TOEFL, GMAT, etc)

Funding

- Government Scholarships
- U.S. State Department international student programs
- Personal finances
- School-based funds: Merit- or Needs-based financial assistance for international students?
- Option to teach and receive scholarship?

Summer before Graduate School

- Work a part-time job, so you can relax and save up some money.
- Read some good books... in English.
- Review materials from your previous studies that might be helpful for your graduate program (consider packing these to take with you). *But do not stress about this!*
- Spend time with your family.

Orientation

What to expect during orientation:

- an introduction to all the important facilities on campus (health, safety, academic advising),
- an overview of degree requirements,
- an introduction to peers, professors and alumni.

Survival Tips

- Expect graduate school to be different than your undergraduate experience:
 - The courses may be more team-oriented, move at a faster pace and cover more material in a shorter amount of time;
 - Many courses may demand previous knowledge or prerequisite courses;
 - Your peers may be more serious about their work;
 - Your peers may be much younger or older than you;
 - You may have to seek out one-on-one counseling from your professors;
 - You alone will be responsible for ensuring you are meeting all of the requirements in a timely fashion.

Additional Resources

- Education USA, 170 Ngoc Van, Hanoi, Vietnam
- www.gradschools.com (online grad school guide)
- www.ogi.edu/csee/grad_school/intro.html (online tool to help you make decisions about grad school)
- Your peers

Conclusion

Questions?