



Is Graduate School Right for Me?

Deciding whether or not to go to graduate school has become a major decision for many recent college graduates. Factors such as lifestyle, career field, cost, and timing all play important roles in this decision. Graduate school can be a fruitful and fulfilling experience, but it is important to use discernment in determining if it is right for you.

Should I Go?

Graduate school is not the place to go to discover career direction. Rather, you attend graduate school because it is a way to attain your desired outcome. Here are some questions to evaluate:

- What are my short and long term career goals?
- Will an advanced degree help me obtain these goals?
- Am I choosing graduate school because I feel there are no other options at this time?
- Am I willing to invest the time, effort, and expense required for graduate study?
- Do I have the necessary academic and personal qualifications?

When Should I Go?

When to attend graduate school is an important part of your decision. There is not a single right answer regarding the best time to enroll, but here are some factors to consider:

Pros of taking time off

- Better know your career goals by working in the field for a few years
- Some graduate programs favor or even require work experience for admission
- Some employers will pay a portion or all of your graduate school expenses
- Gain solid financial footing
- Improve your chances for acceptance to graduate programs — especially if you were not the best student in your undergraduate program

Pros of attending right away

- You are accustomed to being a student
- Your study skills are sharp
- Fewer obligations outside of school
- Some occupations require an advanced degree even for “entry-level” positions
- Knowledge of the subject matter is fresh in your mind
- Life circumstances might change, making it harder to attend in the future

What Degree Should I Pursue?

Once you’ve decided to go to graduate school, make sure you choose the type of degree that is best for you! Some degrees require licensure in addition to your degree before you can work in the field. Do your research—don’t assume you know all the facts!

- **Professional Degrees** are designed for employment or advancement within a given field and stress the application of knowledge and skills. Examples: JD, MD, LPC, MDiv
- **Academic Degrees** are designed for intellectual growth and (sometimes — at the master’s level) are a prerequisite or doctoral work within a given field. They focus on advancing knowledge through original research in a given field. Examples: PhD, EdD, MA, MS

Do you need help deciding if graduate school is right for you?
Make an appointment with Career Development to discuss all your options!