Why Attend Graduate or Professional School?
Graduate study requires a significant commitment of time and money. A decision to attend
should not be made without first contemplating and clarifying your goals.

Before applying to graduate school, you will want to know about the working conditions,
employment outlook, and specific requirements of the field you plan to pursue. You also want
to know about the demands of the programs for which you are applying. Knowing this
information will help you find a good match between your skills, interests, goals, and needs. *It
is also important to note that most graduate admission programs are focusing on your GPA
from your last 60 cumulative hours from your undergraduate studies.*

Graduate degrees are usually either academic or professional in orientation. Academic degrees
focus on original research, while professional degrees focus on practical application of
particular knowledge and skills. Masters degrees take anywhere from one to three years to
complete, and a Ph.D. will usually take an additional four to seven years to complete. For
many fields, a Masters degree is sufficient for employment; examples include the Masters
Degree of Business Administration (M.B.A.), and the Masters of Social Work (M.S.W.). For
other fields such as medicine (M.D.), law (J.D.), or teaching at the college level (Ph.D.), a
doctorate is necessary. Once you have determined that you want to pursue graduate study,
you will want to start researching your options.

As you research choices for graduate school, consider the following questions:

- What are my long-range and short-range career goals?
- Is graduate school necessary for me to achieve these goals?
- In my field, is it easier to attend graduate school directly after receiving my
  undergraduate degree, or would I benefit from a couple of years of work experience?
- What is the cost of graduate school? – direct (tuition) and indirect (loss of possible
  earnings)
- At present, do I have other needs that conflict with pursuing a graduate degree?
- Will your job and salary prospects be enhanced by graduate studies?
- Are there employers who would assist in paying for graduate school?
- Are you looking into graduate school to avoid “the real world”?

Selecting the Right Program
Your assessment of your skills, interests, values, and goals will help guide you in selecting a
graduate program that is right for you. In order to select a school that meets your needs,
follow the steps below:
Identify and Research Potential Schools and Program Rankings

- Petersons.com
- GradSource.com
- GradSchools.com
- justcolleges.com
- PhDs.org
- GraduateSchoolRankings.net

Attend Grad School Fair on campus to meet with recruiters representing various schools and programs from across the country.

- Request catalogues and application materials directly from the graduate programs
- Check rankings in several publications (e.g., US News & World Report: USNews.com)
- Visit campuses: talk to students and faculty

Compare Graduate Schools/Programs

All of the following are important to consider:

- Your interests, goals, needs
- Financial aid opportunities, cost and residency requirements
- Ability to gain practical experience during the program (assistantships, research)
- Ratio of applications to acceptances
- Current research, publications, and professional involvement of the faculty
- Rating and/or accreditation of the program
- Housing options and community environment
- Entrance requirements
- Flexibility of the curriculum and length of the program
- Availability of placement services and placement outlook (e.g., Percentage of students who have a job at graduation, average salary of graduates.)

Understanding Graduate School Admissions Exams:

The four most common standardized tests for Graduate school are:

- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) http://www.ets.org/gre/
- Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) http://www.mba.com/us
- Law School Admission Test (LSAT) http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/about-the-lsat
- Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/

Make a Decision about Which Schools to Apply to:

- Apply as early as possible
- Narrow down your list of schools to 4-8
- Apply to “reach schools” (schools that you have a slight chance of being admitted to, “probable admits” (schools you have a good chance of being admitted to), and at least one “safety school” (schools you have a very good chance of being admitted to).