

Considering Graduate School

Is Grad School Right for Me?

About Grad School

Your experience as a graduate student is different from that of completing your undergraduate degree. Studies at this level are primarily research based and focus on advanced learning of a specific area, where a great deal of critical thinking, analytical and interpreting skills are required. The two broadest categories of graduate programs are 1) Professional and 2) Research. Professional programs tend to be course based, where as most research programs require the completion of a research-based exit component (i.e. a major research paper or thesis).

Recommended readings:

- Your future...a guide for potential graduate students”
<http://www.cags.ca/media/docs/cags-publication/CAGSHandbook05.pdf>
- Graduate Student Success Resources
<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/gradpd/helpfullinks/gssuccess.html>

Why Grad School?

- Your desired career requires a Masters or Doctoral level degree
- You want to gain further knowledge in a certain area
- You want to leave your future options open for possible advancement

Types of Graduate Programs

Level:

- *Masters (1-2 years of further education)*
- *Ph.D. (4-6 additional years of education depending on the program)*

Entrance to Ph.D. Programs may vary. Some programs offer entry into the PhD directly from the bachelor's degree; some offer a “fast-track” option in which a student begins at Master's level but transfers to the doctoral degree before writing a Master's thesis.

Factors to Consider

Finances - Look into assistance through grants and fellowships, consider being a research assistant or teacher assistant

Schools - Look into geographic location, visit the campus, consider their reputation and services, and evaluate what they have to offer

Programs - Go to an information session, consider the requirements and courses, and determine if the program fits with your own research interests



Career Services

How to Prepare

GPA: Most schools will look for a minimum B+ (75%) overall average achieved by completing an Honours Bachelors degree or equivalent. Be sure to work at keeping your marks as high as possible.

Suitability: Ensure that your own research interests match with the research topics of the program. Any relevant experiences through work, volunteer, or other research projects would also be beneficial. Some programs require acceptance and commitment from a specific research supervisor who is interested in working with and supervising the student on a research topic. It is important to research potential research supervisors and apply to the program specifically identifying the researchers they want to work with.

Statement of Intent: Beginning your statement of intent (personal statement) in advance will allow for perfecting your letter and making changes later. Admissions committees will be looking specifically for your letter to include your research and professional interests including your future goals, how the program will fit with your goals, your knowledge and experience in the program area, and how you will contribute to the school and program.

References: It is a good idea to become familiar with professors in your field through participating in class and attending office hours. This is because you will need between 2-4 references that can demonstrate your academic ability, and prove that you can contribute to and succeed in the program. It is also beneficial for professors to get to know you as comments in reference letters are far more important than the number of letters you have.

Admissions Test: Many programs will require that you complete the general or specific GRE or the GMAT as part of your application. These must be written in advance in order to be received by the application deadline.

The Application Process

It is necessary to check with each institution to find out what the required documents, grades, and scores are for your application. Common requirements include:

- Application form
- Admissions test scores
- Application fee
- Statement of intent
- A writing sample
- References
- Resume or CV
- Related work or volunteer experience
- Prerequisite courses
- Supplementary forms (application for funding, etc.)
- Post-secondary transcript(s)

Options if You are Not Accepted

Reapply to the program- discuss with faculty on how to make your application stronger

Consider alternatives to your career- visit the Career Resource Centre

Consider a post-graduate diploma program- to gain additional knowledge and experience in your field

Resources available in Career Services

- Complete Book of Graduate Programs in Arts & Sciences, The Princeton Review
- Graduate School Guide
- Cracking the GRE, The Princeton Review
- The Guide to Professional Programs in Canada, Sentor Media
- Entrance Exam Guide, Career Services, Brock University
- GMAT Study Guide, Kaplan
- Mastering the Personal Statement, John Richardson
- Perfect Personal Statements, Mark Alan Stewart
- The Global Resume and CV Guide, Mary Anne Thompson



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