



VITERBO
UNIVERSITY

CAREER SERVICES

Your Graduate School Guide

Is Graduate School Right for Me?

Before deciding to attend graduate school, think carefully about your reasoning. Ask yourself:

- What is my purpose for attending graduate school?
- Will attending graduate school increase my career prospects or opportunities for advancement?
- What types of programs would benefit my career goals? Is additional schooling needed to achieve them?
- What are the costs in terms of time and money?
- What skills do I already have? Can I achieve my goals without additional education?
- Do I envision myself succeeding in graduate school?
- Am I attending graduate school for lack of other options?

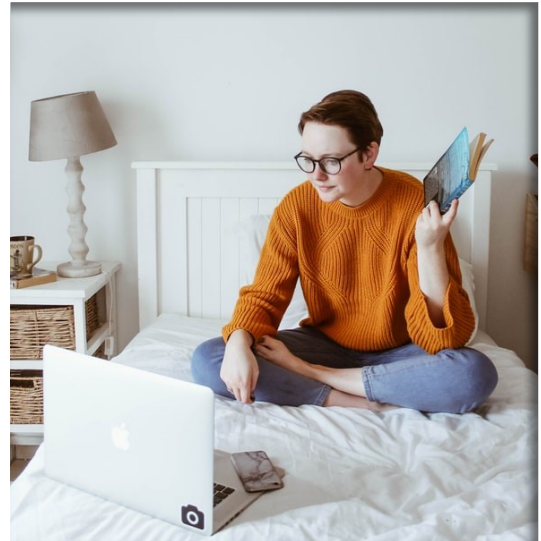


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Quick Tip: Research programs thoroughly by talking to program faculty, students, and professionals in your field. If you decide to attend graduate school, make sure it's for the right reasons!



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Program Considerations

When choosing a graduate program, consider:

- What is the reputation of the school and the program? Consider both the national reputation and reputation within your field.
- Is the program accredited? Does it meet standards for State licensure, if your field requires that?
- How selective is the program?
- What percentage of students find jobs in their fields? Do these jobs interest you?
- Is the philosophy of the program aligned with your goals?
- Does the program offer courses or specializations in your area of interest?
- How do students rate the program?

Curriculum

Consider the curriculum offered in the programs you're exploring. Programs in a particular discipline can vary greatly from one institution to another.

- Does the program offer the degree you want? Will the courses in the program help you meet your educational and professional goals?
- How many credits are required? How often are classes offered, and in what format?
- Is a thesis or certifying exam required?
- Are you required to complete an internship?
- Will you have opportunities to gain other practical experiences?



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Costs

Cost is an important factor when considering graduate school options. Consider:

- What is the cost of tuition? Is it expected to increase?
- Are there any other hidden costs?
- What is the cost of living in the area?
- Are assistantships, loans, and fellowships available? Does the department help students find funding?
- Are students able to work part-time or full-time?
- Is financial aid available? Will you qualify?

Geographic Location

If you select an online program, the institution location is obviously less important. If you select a hybrid program, be sure the commute is feasible for you. If you attend full-time, you'll be spending some time in a new community. Consider the following:

- Do you want to attend a large or small school? A large or small program?
- Are you limited to a particular geographic area or setting? If you're going to be unhappy thousands of miles from family, consider programs closer to home. If you're looking for an adventure as well as an education, extend your search to new cities in new areas of the country.
- Does the surrounding community meet your needs in terms of size, population, housing, and transportation? Do the available recreational activities match your interests?



Faculty

As a graduate student, you will likely have a very different relationship with faculty than you did as an undergraduate. Consider the following:

- Are faculty members accessible? What is the faculty-to-student ratio?
- Are faculty members willing to serve as mentors to graduate students?
- Are the faculty members well-known in your field? What have they published recently? Are they committed to teaching or research?
- Is there a faculty member with interests similar to yours? This is especially important for future research.

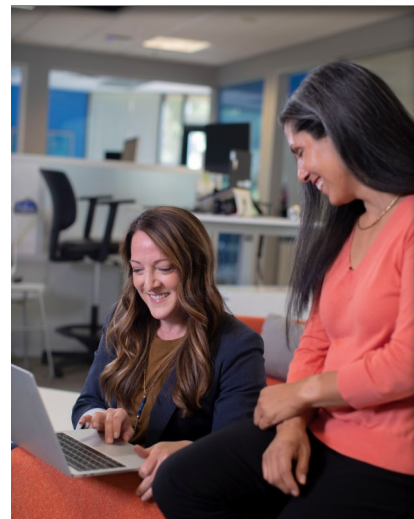


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Admission Requirements

Understanding admission requirements will help you decide which programs offer the best chances of acceptance. Some graduate programs require work experience before you can be admitted, while others accept students directly from undergraduate programs. Check into admissions requirements in advance so you have time to build your credentials. Balance your application process with “stretch” schools (high-profile, competitive institutions) and other options with less stringent requirements.



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Check out the following requirements:

- Preferred or required undergraduate majors or coursework, if any
- GPA
- Application fees
- Standardized tests (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, etc.)
- Academic or work skills
- Letters of recommendation

Need to take a “gap” year?

In some cases, entering a professional program right after graduation may not be your best option. Taking a “gap year” can give you time to:

- Gain work experience/save money to pay down debt.
- Complete internships or research.
- Research schools and additional programs.
- Pursue related service opportunities.
- Network with faculty, students, and other professionals.



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Additional Tips

- **Do your homework.** Check the Todd Weir Memorial Library for books about graduate programs. [Peterson's guides](#) are a good place to start; you can find them online at www.petersons.com/
- **Request a placement report.** You can often find placement reports on the institution's website. Use this information to review graduate occupations and salaries.
- **Talk to faculty members in your field of interest.** Find out what programs they recommend. They may also be able to refer you to faculty or students in your program.
- **Read the materials published by the program.** Most of these materials are available online; you may want to call or write to the program to ask for additional materials.
- **Schedule campus visits.** Program departments or graduate admissions may be able to help you arrange to attend a class or visit with faculty and current students.
- **Do an internship, volunteer, or get a job in your field of interest.** This shows interest and commitment to the field and helps you get valuable experience that may set you apart from other applicants.
- **Get acquainted with your field.** Join professional associations in your field. Read field-specific journals and publications, and attend meetings or conferences.
- **Seek opportunities to improve your academic writing.** Visit with a Writing Specialist or seek feedback from program faculty. Maintain a strong GPA to make yourself a competitive applicant.
- **Get involved.** Become active on campus and in the community by getting involved in leadership roles, service work, athletics, or campus organizations. Graduate schools look favorably upon well-rounded students.
- **Watch for graduate school fairs.** These are a great way to gather information about several schools all at once.
- **Study up!** Prepare for and take any standardized tests that may be required for admission.

Need help? Make a virtual appointment
with a Career Services staff member on:



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