THINKING ABOUT GRAD SCHOOL?

Earning potential by degree type

Try it before you buy it
If you are unsure of whether graduate school is right for you, or if you want to get a preview of the life of a graduate student, consider an undergraduate research experience through UW’s Undergraduate Research Program located in Mary Gates Hall: http://www.washington.edu/undergradresearch/.

What will I gain from an undergraduate research experience?
- Meet others who share your interests/goals and who have valuable experience to share.
- Establish relationships with faculty who can write strong letters of recommendation.
- Acquire lab and research skills, hone critical thinking and writing skills.
- Get an inside look at what an academic or research career can offer.

Discover yourself
What do you find exciting? Where do your passions lie? There are many individuals and services available to you as an undergrad to help you learn about yourself. Check out the UW Career Center’s Career Guide “Applying to Grad School”: http://careers.washington.edu/Students/Apply-to-Grad-School

Choosing a master’s or Ph.D.?
Typically, a Ph.D. prepares you for a career in academia as a researcher or professor. These degrees take two to eight years and culminate in a dissertation (doctoral-level thesis) defense. Professional degrees, such as a Medicinae Doctor (M.D.) or Juris Doctor (J.D.), are field-specific doctorates with specialized requirements.

Master’s degree programs introduce practical skills and frameworks in a specific field of study. They often last one to three years and conclude with a capstone project or thesis. Some master’s programs are designed as an
intermediate step toward a Ph.D. However, many Ph.D. candidates enroll in their program immediately after completing their bachelor’s degree.

**Letters of recommendation**
Graduates school applications require letters of recommendation, so stay in contact with faculty who know you best and can comment positively on the quality of your work. Recommendations from tenured professors in your prospective discipline carry more weight than those from new faculty or faculty outside of your field. Meet with your recommenders in person, so that they can get a clear understanding of your interests and qualifications. Provide them with a resume and outline of the courses you have taken from them, including research, projects, or term papers you completed in their class. These items will give them something concrete to use in their letters.

**Standardized testing resources**
Depending on your graduate program, you will likely need to take an exam (such as the GRE, GMAT, MCAT or LSAT) prior to the application deadline. There are on-campus and private resources to help you prepare:
- UW OMAD Instructional Center: [http://depts.washington.edu/ic/content/resources.php?style=text](http://depts.washington.edu/ic/content/resources.php?style=text)
- Association of American Medical Colleges: [https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/](https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/)

Reach out to the graduate program to which you are applying to find out the emphasis placed on exam scores during the admissions process and the typical scores of a strong candidate. Perform your best on the exam through practice and studying, but remember, it is just one component of your application!

**Writing the personal statement**
Graduate admissions committees looks for students who are well-matched to their program. The personal statement is your opportunity to demonstrate how your goals and interests align with the courses, faculty, and research areas offered by your prospective program. Before writing your personal statement, consider your motivations for pursuing a graduate education:
- What are the experiences that have brought you to this point in your life?
- Why are you thinking about graduate school?
- What do you hope to contribute as a student or as a graduate in your field?

A strong statement will:
- Clearly convey your interest and passion in your selected area of study;
- Demonstrate that you are familiar with the program and have sound reasons for applying;
- Reflect your intellectual curiosity, motivations, and earnestness of your academic pursuits;
- Assure the committee that you will be successful in the program.

**DID YOU KNOW ...**
- There is no optimal number of graduate programs you should apply to. Most student apply to five to eight programs. Find the right fit for you!
- You do not have to go through the graduate school application experience alone! Talk to graduate students, faculty members, or representatives from the department of your interest.
- There may be funding available to you! Start your research now to find internal and external financial opportunities.