

Going to graduate school is a major decision and big investment. Take the time to closely examine program(s) of interest and make sure the program will fit your goals and needs. Listed below are things to keep in mind when evaluating graduate programs. This list is not comprehensive; they may be other factors you want to consider before committing to a graduate program to ensure you are successful and make the most of your time in pursuit of an advanced degree.

Admissions

- What criteria are used to evaluate and select students?
- What are the admissions requirements?
- How important are grade point average and test scores?
- Will it be easier to get accepted after gaining work experience?
- What types of students does the program attract? (Some schools attract highly competitive people while others foster teamwork.)

Programs Offered

- What specializations are available?
- Does the program focus on theory and original research or practical application of knowledge and skills?
- Does the program provide real work experience such as practicums or internships?
- Is the curriculum structured or flexible?
- Are there opportunities to work on research projects?
- What resources are available?

Faculty

- Who are they?
- What are their credentials?
- Do they hold degrees in fields of expertise from leading universities?
- What awards, grants and special recognition have they earned?
- What have they published?
- What research projects have they conducted?
- Do they hold chairs or professorships?
- Does the department have nationally or internationally known scholars in the field?
- Do the top scholars in the program teach or are they primarily involved in research?
- Do they actively participate in the graduate school community?
- Is there diversity?
- What is the faculty/student ratio?

Philosophy Of Education

- What is the average length of time spent in the program?
- Do opportunities exist for specialization in areas of your own interest?
- Is the approach theoretical or pragmatic?

Reputation

- Is the university accredited?
- Is the program nationally ranked in terms of excellence?
- Is the program well established or relatively new?
- Who has graduated from the program and what are they doing now?
- What is the attrition level?

Multicultural Opportunities

- What is faculty and student composition?
- Will you have an opportunity to work with students from other cultures?
- What foreign exchange programs are available?
- Is it possible to study foreign languages?
- What multicultural experiences do the faculty bring to the classroom?
- Are international concerns substantially integrated into the curriculum?

Library

- Is there a comprehensive reference collection in your area of specialization? How many volumes?
- What special collections are available?
- Is the material accessible?
- Is a computerized system available?
- How many trained staff members are there?

Physical Facilities

- Are there adequate study facilities? (Sufficient classrooms and seminar rooms?)
- Are there areas for student interaction?
- Are the surroundings attractive and pleasant enough to endure throughout the program?

Cost

- What are the tuition and fees?
- What financial aid is available (loans, scholarships, internships, work study)?
- Are teaching and research assistantships available?
- How much is a non-resident tuition?

Geographic Location

- Consider weather and political/social climate. Do you want to live here for several years?
- Would you be happier in a small town or a large urban area?
- Does the area offer cultural and recreational activities?
- Is this a place where you might want to stay?
- What kind of impact will this location have on family and friends?
- What are the employment opportunities in the area?

Size

Look at the size of the department as well as the university. A large institution will have more extensive facilities and libraries. A smaller school will offer more personal attention and a sense of community.

State Regulations and Residency Requirements

Many state universities are required by law to give admission preference to in-state residents. These regulations apply to your legal residence and may affect the cost of tuition.

Career Assistance

- What career planning and job search assistance is available through the department?
- Is there an on-campus career center that offers counseling, job search training, employment leads and library resources?
- Does the program provide real work experience (practicums, cooperative programs, internships) to give you solid work experience?
- Are career services offered to alumni?

Networking Contacts

If you hope to develop relationships with industry leaders, select a school that prides itself on real-world orientation and opportunities to mingle with living legends. If you want a program that encourages graduates to network, seek a school with a well-developed alumni relations' office.