

Graduate and Professional School

Agenda for Today

- Graduate or professional school
- How to decide
- The application
- Course requirements
- Admission tests & essays
- Letters of reference & interviews
- Financial aid

Graduate School (academic)

- Doctoral degrees (5-7 yrs.)
 - Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy)
 - Some examples are:
 - Ph.D. in French Literature
 - Ph.D. in Social Psychology
 - Ph.D. in Political Science
 - Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences
 - Ph.D. in Structural Engineering
 - Ph.D. in Art History

Academic Master's

- 1 to 3 years
- M.A. (Master of Arts)
 - History, International Relations, English Literature
- M.S. (Master of Science)
 - Chemistry, Biology, Math, Psychology
- M.F.A. (Master of Fine Arts)
 - Theatre, Music, Art, Dance, Creative Writing

Academic Ph.D.'s

■ WHY?

In-depth knowledge in one field - you must love it !
Begins lifelong process of becoming a scholar
Leads to college teaching & research careers
Can go directly from B.A. or B.S. degree (typically)

■ WHAT?

Seminars, papers, labs in science (2-3 years)
Comprehensive or qualifying exam
Choose research topic & faculty advisor
Research (2-4 years; length depends on field)
Dissertation writing & oral defense

Academic Master's Programs

- WHY?

To be more competitive for Ph.D. admission, or
To learn more about a field

Generally not preparation for a profession:
except in: engineering, fine arts, music, writing

- WHAT?

Courses & seminars, laboratories
Research methodology courses
Comprehensive exam
Research project or thesis (variable)

Professional School

- Doctoral degrees
J.D., M.D., Pharm.D., Psy.D., D.D.S., Ed.D.
- Masters degrees
M.S.W., M.P.H., M.B.A., M.P.T., M.F.A., M.Ed.
- Certificate, credential
Physician assistant, teacher, paralegal

Some professional degrees:

- law, business, international affairs
- medicine, dentistry, optometry, pharmacy, physical & occupational therapy, dietetics, genetic counseling
- public health, public policy, city planning
- social work, counseling, marriage/family clinical/counseling/school psychology
- graphic arts, architecture, design

Professional Programs

- Leads directly to work in the field
- 2 to 4 + years
- Courses, seminars, research methods
- Comprehensive exam
- Fieldwork, internship req. for some
 - during and/or after the program
- Thesis or research project
 - not required for all programs
- Licensing exam (after the program)
 - requirement to practice in some professions

Before You Decide

- Are you qualified?
- Don't go without clear goals!
- How will the degree help you?
- Make sure you are committed!
- How will you pay for it?

OK, but what field?

- Related to your major?
- Related to your career goal?
- Related to your experience?
- Related to your interests/values/skills?
- Do you need related experience first?
- Will it prepare you for desired job?
- Will it fulfill you?

Reasons Not to go:

- Can't find a job
- Can't decide on career goal
- Avoid loan payback
- Parents want you to
- "Everyone else is doing it!"
- Can't figure what else to do

After you decide, then what?

- Choose schools
- Check out admission requirements
- Develop a timeline

Choosing the right program

- Consult faculty (for Ph.D. programs)
- Research schools on the web:
 - career.ucsd.edu
- Reference books, catalogs, rankings
- The school's or department's focus
- Academic & professional journals
- Visit schools if you can
- Talk to counselors at 4-year colleges

Timeline

- Narrow your interests
- Find programs that match
- Complete their course requirements (if any)
- Contact departments or schools
- Request school/depart. information
- Prepare for & take admission test
- Request reference letters
- Have official transcripts sent
- Write application essays
- Send applications
- Prepare for interviews (if req.)

Course Requirements

- Check with schools re: substitutions
- Finish before entering?
- What if you have B.A. in different field? (e.g., from History to Political Science?)
- Can you take grad courses before entering?

GPA Issues

- Cumulative, or
- Last two years' GPA
- Community college + UCSD
- GPA in required courses
- Upward GPA trends help
- Repeated courses
- Explain any “irregularities” on your application

Admission Tests

- General aptitude, or content-based?
- General GRE, DAT, GMAT on computer
- Subject GRE, LSAT, MCAT on paper only
- Preparation (courses, books, self-prep)
- Test's role in admission process
- Take test well before school deadlines
- Repeating the test (LSAT is averaged)

Applying

- Mostly done online
- Apply to individual schools, or
- On a system-wide application, or
- To an application service
- Save a printed copy for yourself

Applications Include:

- Application essay (incl. related experience)
- Transcripts (from all colleges attended)
- Test scores
- Reference letters
- Can require interview
- Can require a sample of your work
 - Papers, art portfolio, publications, etc.
 - Mainly in the arts, sciences & humanities areas

Application Essays

- Personal statement (professional school)
 - you as a person
 - related and other experience
 - your motivation & goals
 - challenges you overcame
- Statement of purpose (graduate school)
 - your academic & research
 - experience & goals

Experience

- Some schools require it:
 - teaching, clinical, research, related exp.
- Other schools prefer it:
 - community service, leadership, volunteer
 - Do you have enough?
 - e.g., 2 - 4 years FT work exp. pre- M.B.A.;
some research exp. pre-Ph.D.

Reference Letters:

- Usually three are needed
- May be able to send more
- Academic programs:
 - faculty & researchers
- Professional programs:
 - faculty, research, work, volunteer

When Soliciting Letters

- Call or email first
- Meet in person to ask
- Bring:
 - transcript, resume or list;
application essay;
work samples
- Send thank-you note

Your Work Samples

- Research paper
- Honors thesis
- Journal article
- Portfolio - for arts programs
 - slides
 - photos
 - videotape

Interviews

- Some teaching credential programs
- Some mental health programs
- All medical & health programs
- Some MBA programs
- Some science Ph.D. programs
- School vs. regional
- Who pays?

Interview Preparation

- research the field
- anticipate the questions
- practice your answers
- know yourself & your experience
- read your application carefully
- dress appropriately (no green hair!!)
- what questions you can ask
- send a thank-you note

Online Application Services

- Required for law, medicine, dentistry
- For a fee, they send the schools:
 - Your scores
 - Your transcripts
 - Your essay
 - Some send your reference letters too
 - You follow up with school applications

Financing the program:

- Academic graduate:
 - research & teaching assistantships
 - fellowships (school & other)
 - work study & loans
- Professional:
 - some fellowships & scholarships
 - mostly loans, work & savings
 - some loan forgiveness (e.g., law)
- Military scholarships for health professions

Good Resources

- [Career.ucsd.edu](http://career.ucsd.edu)

- Good career and school information

** [UCSD Grad School Fair](#)

each October

** [UCSD Law School Fair](#)

each November

(Check career.ucsd.edu for dates and times)

Appts. with Sue McPhatter in the Transfer Center

- Tuesdays, 9 to 3 p.m.
- Wednesdays, 1 to 3 p.m.

Good Luck
with your education
and your career !!