SO YOU ARE CONSIDERING GRADUATE SCHOOL…

Before you commit: seek guidance, research the programs, and plan ahead.

SEEK GUIDANCE
Try to determine if graduate school is right for you. Ask yourself: what program would you do, why would you do it, and what do you hope to get out of it? Connect with family, faculty, staff, and colleagues to help guide you to make the right decision.

RESEARCH THE PROGRAMS
Graduate school is a commitment of time and money so research to make sure you are making a wise investment. Evaluate programs on outcome, cost, faculty, and post-graduation opportunities.

PLAN AHEAD
Programs vary in terms of admissions cycles, financial aid application deadlines, testing requirements, and program pre-requisites. Make sure you keep track of all due dates to ensure that you have fulfilled requirements for admission.

WEIGHING THE REASONS

REASONS TO GO

You need the degree for your desired professional field/occupation
Some occupations require additional education for certain credentials and licenses or benefit from individuals who have an advanced degree.

You will increase your professional options and job prospects
Some occupations provide increased salary or advancement opportunities to individuals who have a graduate degree.

You have a desire or personal goal to obtain a graduate degree
Although this is a costly option, some people find satisfaction

REASONS TO NOT GO

You are uncertain about the next stage of your life and are still “exploring”
Graduate school is a significant investment and should not be entered into lightly. Talk with a Career Counselor, Coach, or Friend to make certain you are doing it for the right reason.

You are avoiding personal and/or financial commitments
Graduate school might not improve your chances for employment in all cases. Consider whether your occupation requires a graduate degree.

You are delaying your job search or you are dissatisfied with your current job
Graduate school costs money and may not make your personal problems go away. Find alternatives to addressing your commitments before enrolling in a graduate program.
TESTING REQUIREMENTS

As part of the admissions or financial aid process, you may be required to complete a standardized test; here are some common ones:

- **Graduate Record Examination (GRE)**
  Most graduate school programs

- **Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT)**
  Graduate business schools and MBA programs

- **Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)**
  Specific to law schools

- **Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)**
  Specific to medical school programs and colleges

PAYING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

Graduate school will require payment of tuition, fees, books, and potentially living expenses as well. Research these options when considering graduate school:

**Fellowships/Assistantships**
Fellowships are like merit-based scholarships (typically from a grant) that you can use to pay for graduate school-related expenses including books, housing, fees, and tuition. Assistantships are different from Fellowships and more similar to an undergraduate work-study program where you will either teach a course associated with your field of study or support research. Contact the school for additional information including application deadlines and any sort of requirements for consideration.

**Professional Development Funds**
Some companies and organizations provide some funding to their employees to take college courses or training affiliated with your current job function or to support advancement. This benefit is not provided at all companies and for all roles, so contact your supervisor or HR department to see if your current employer provides this benefit.

**On-Campus Employment**
Some institutions provide an education benefit to staff after a pre-defined period of employment. Although positions at the institution may be limited, many full-time (and some part-time) positions allow for some tuition abatement or remission even for graduate-level coursework and programs. Note that you will still need to meet the admissions requirement for your specific program if you choose this option.

**Loans and Financial Aid**
You can seek out additional funding on your own, and some schools offer need-based financial aid. Make certain you apply in advance for consideration for need-based financial assistance.

ALTERNATIVES TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

**Certification Programs**
Both online and in-person training for various certifications and credentials exist for a variety of professional purposes.

**Apps**
Various software applications are currently available for self-paced instruction on programming, foreign languages, and other skills.

**Continuing Education**
Community groups, non-profit organizations, and schools provide classes or programs on a variety of different topics, some of which are free.

**Video Services**
Video sharing sites (like YouTube and Khan Academy) offer instructional videos and tutorials.