IS GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR ME?
WHAT IS GRAD SCHOOL?

“Grad school” provides an advanced degree beyond the bachelor’s degree in a specific subject area. Here are some degrees. There are others:

- Master’s degrees (MA, MS, MFA, MSW, MBA)
- Master’s/PhD’s (combined program)
- Ph.D (Doctor of Philosophy)
- Pharm.D (for pharmacists)
- Ed.D (Education Doctorate)
- Psy.D. (Doctor of Psychology)
- Th.D. (Doctor of Theology)
- J.D. (Juris Doctor – law)
- M.D. (Doctor of Medicine)

These titles vary in different countries.
WILL A GRADUATE DEGREE BENEFIT ME?

*That depends on the type of work you want to do!*

To determine whether a graduate degree might be beneficial to your career pursuits:

1. Research careers that interest you to explore your options; and
2. Once you’ve narrowed down the options, learn about the academic backgrounds of those working in the field.
The first step in identifying careers that interest you is to conduct a self-assessment.

A self-assessment of your work preferences, values, skills, personality, and leisure preferences can help you hone in on the kind of work that might best suit you.

You can do a self-assessment online with Focus 2, provided by the Career Center.

Using Focus 2, complete each self-assessment and then combine the assessments to view careers that match one or more of your results. You can also explore what you can do with your major from Cal State LA.

Career counselors are available to discuss options and review your results. For more information, contact the Career Development Center.
Once you’ve narrowed down your career interests, research the academic requirements for the career.

Note that not all careers require an advanced degree for entry into the field. Sometimes advanced degrees are particularly helpful for when you want to advance within a career. Moreover, some employers offer aid to support an advanced degree.

To determine whether a career requires an advanced degree for entry into the field, you can:

• Research strategies for entering into a specific area of a field by using “What can I do with this major...?” provided by the Career Center;
• Locate required education and training for a career on the Occupational Outlook Handbook from the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics;
• Learn from professionals in the field. Candid Career features unscripted interviews with working professionals about their work; and
• Schedule an appointment with a career counselor for assistance.
Can I get into a graduate program if my bachelor’s degree is in an unrelated major?

This depends on the type of graduate program you are pursuing and its admissions requirements. Generally, graduate admissions committees will consider bachelor’s degree of all majors if you meet the admissions requirements.

Can I attend part-time?

Check with each individual program for the enrollment policies to determine whether part-time or evening study is available.
ADDITIONAL FAQs (CONT’D)

Will an advanced degree increase my earning potential?

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Career Outlook publication (September, 2015), “there’s more to going to grad school than the chance for extra income, especially because the payoff varies by occupation.”

“In some occupations, you’re likely to need a master’s degree to qualify for entry-level jobs. In others, a master’s degree may not be required, but having one might lead to advancement or higher pay.”

Several career fields in which workers tend to earn more with a master’s degree include: business, education, healthcare and social service, STEM, library science, public relations, recreation, and fitness.
Do I need a master’s degree before pursuing a doctorate?

This depends on the area of study and the program. Some schools require students to first take a master’s degree. Others offer Ph.D. status to entering students. Combined degree programs allow you to complete master’s-level work as part of the doctoral program. Research your options carefully, consider your level of commitment to the career, and evaluate your eligibility.

Is a doctorate better than a master’s degree?

This depends on your field. In some cases, a master’s degree is a preferred degree or terminal degree (no further advanced degree is required for practice in the field). In other cases, a doctorate may be preferred or required. This will become clear once you’ve identified your chosen career, learned about the academic backgrounds of its practitioners, and clarified the type of work you want to do.
WHY ATTEND?

**Right** reasons:
- Degree is mandatory for desired career
- Degree is not mandatory, but recommended
- Skill enhancement
- Enhance prospects for advancement

**Wrong** reasons:
- Don’t know what else to do
- Think that grad school will identify a career path for you
- Can’t find a job
- Want to please your parents (or someone else)
- Want prestige of advanced degree
- Want to maintain eligibility for student health insurance or delay repaying student loans
WHEN TO BEGIN

Upon graduation:
• Have financial means, or are comfortable with the amount of debt you might incur
• Chosen profession does not require years of work experience
• It would be less disruptive to your personal life now
• You’re eager, confident, and likely to get admitted to your program of choice

Reasons for delaying:
• Uncertain about your career plans
• Need more time to study for required admission tests
• Have a job opportunity
• Want to earn money
• Additional work experience will improve your chances for admission to grad school
NEED HELP RESEARCHING CAREERS?

The Cal State LA Career Development Center offers in-person and online resources to help you determine a career path and whether graduate school may be required for entry or advancement in the career.

For quick questions, visit us during walk-in hours.
Monday – Thursday, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

For personal assistance researching careers, schedule an appointment.
Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Call: (323) 343-3237.

Location: Between the university gym and Health Center
READY TO APPLY TO GRAD SCHOOL?

Online guides available at:

[calstatela.edu/applyingtogradsschools]

Who can help?

- Faculty person in your department

- University Writing Center
  Library Palmer Wing 2097
  343-5350/ [calstatela.edu/uwc]

- Health Careers Advisement Office
  (for those seeking health careers)
  King Hall D1044/ 343-5284
  [calstatela.edu/healthcareers]
REFERENCES


Presentation:

CAL STATE LA CAREER CENTER