TYPES OF DEGREES

Master's degrees: Some lead to a doctoral degree while others are the "terminal" degree for a profession. For full-time students, completing a master's degree usually takes 2 years.

Specialist degrees: Usually earned in addition to a master's degree, and will require additional coursework, training, or internship experience.

Doctoral degrees: Provides extensive knowledge of the field, trains you to do original and meaningful research, and prepares you to function as a faculty member. This degree may take anywhere from 4-6 years to complete.

IS GRADUATE SCHOOL RIGHT FOR ME?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Reasons to Go</th>
<th>Bad Reasons to Go</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You do not know what to do with your life and hope you will find direction in graduate school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You assume that a graduate degree makes the job search easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You are not really sure if you want to continue studying this field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You are not ready to join the world of work just yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All your friends are going on to graduate school, so it must be the right thing to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Your desired profession either requires an advanced degree or heavily favors people with advanced degrees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advanced education greatly increases your chances of advancement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You need an advanced degree to increase your earning potential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You are confident that your increased earnings will outweigh the time, money, and energy you will invest in a graduate degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You have a passion for your field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- **Accreditation**: While accreditation is not necessarily the key indicator of quality, you could face negative consequences if the program that confers your degree is not accredited.
- **Admission Standards**: Look for the number of applicants compared with the number of acceptances.
- **Reputation**: While rankings are an important measure of quality, you also need to investigate the source of the rankings as each use a different set of criteria.
- **Faculty**: Are the program’s faculty members well published? Do they publish in well-regarded peer reviewed journals? What are they currently researching? Does this research match your interests?
- **Multicultural/Diversity Opportunities**: Examine the composition of both the faculty and the students in the program. You need to determine where you’ll feel comfortable and appropriately challenged.
- **Current Students**: Request contact information or arrange a talk with current students to learn the pros and cons of the program from an insider’s view.
- **Location**: Where is the school located? What recreational activities are available? What is the social atmosphere? Can you be happy in this environment?
- **Cost**: What is the tuition for the program? What kind of financial assistance is available?
- **Career Assistance**: Does the program assist with the job search after you receive your degree? Where do the graduates end up working? What opportunities for internships, research, and jobs are available?
- **Graduation Requirements**: Does the program require an exit project, such as a thesis, dissertation, or comprehensive exam?
FUNDING GRADUATE SCHOOL
Graduate school can be expensive; however, financial aid is available in several forms.

- **Fellowships:** Fellowships vary and may include tuition and a stipend. They usually require full-time enrollment.
- **Assistants:** Are teaching, research, and other staff positions that usually include tuition, a stipend, and some benefits.
- **Scholarships:** Are awarded to incoming graduate students with proven academic records of achievement and typically focus on a specific area of study.
- **Loans:** Are available through the government or private lenders. Private loans generally cost more than federal loans.

For more information on your financial aid options, visit...
- [http://www.uco.edu/graduate/financial/](http://www.uco.edu/graduate/financial/)
- [https://fafsa.ed.gov/](https://fafsa.ed.gov/)
- [http://www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
- [http://www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

TIMELINE FOR APPLYING

**Spring of Junior Year — Summer before Senior Year**
- Begin researching graduate programs
- Meet with advisors, faculty members, and career development specialists to discuss programs
- Make a note of deadlines for tests, registrations, applications, interviews, essays, etc.
  - Most are between December and March, later deadlines fall between March and August
- Sign up for required standardized tests
- Identify potential reference letter writers
- Identify an initial list of 10 to 15 prospective graduate schools
- Begin looking into financial aid
- For medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service

**Fall of Senior Year**
- Take standardized tests.
- Generate a final list of universities to which you want to apply
  - We recommend the “Rule of 6” — two “reach,” two “middle-of-the-pack,” and two “safe bets”
- Write draft of application essays/statement of purpose
- Apply for financial aid available through program; assistantships, fellowships, scholarships, etc.
- Request letters of recommendation from faculty members and former employers
- Order official transcripts
- Finalize your essay/statement of purpose and have it reviewed at the Career Development Center
- Submit application for programs that have a late fall deadline

**Spring of Senior Year**
- Fill out the FAFSA form and submit as soon after January 1 as possible
- Submit all applications even if they are not yet due - many schools pay special attention to early applications
- Compare offers based on your top values
- Visit prospective campuses, if possible, and talk to faculty/students to help you make your final decision
- Research deadlines to apply for graduate assistantships offered
- Make a decision — contact other programs to decline or withdraw
- Send thank-you notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters or helped you during the application process
APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- **Application Form**
  You will likely have to apply to the graduate school as well as the specific department.

- **Application Fee**
  Application fees can be as much as $80 per school.

- **Official Transcripts**
  You can order UCO official transcripts for free through UCONNECT, fax, mail, or in person [https://www.uco.edu/em/registrar/transrequest.asp](https://www.uco.edu/em/registrar/transrequest.asp).

- **Admission Essay**
  Also called a personal statement, letter of intent, or letter of purpose
  - **General Essay Tips:**
    - Essay should be typed, not handwritten, and error free.
    - Make sure you respond to the questions asked. Follow instructions regarding length. If there is no limit, two double-spaced pages is a good rule of thumb.
    - Use a strong opening sentence or paragraph. Try to grab the reader’s attention.
    - Be clear and concise. Organize your essay effectively.
  - **Content Tips:**
    - Include a combination of personal and academic information.
    - Discuss the history of your interest and your goals for obtaining the graduate degree.
    - Go beyond the obvious and indicate how things such as extracurricular activities have impacted you or your choice of career.
    - Be as specific about your career goals as possible. Emphasize your passion for the field.
    - Be yourself. Don’t write what you think the admissions committee wants to hear.
    - Avoid controversial topics like politics and religion. Don’t criticize the profession.
    - Avoid clichés, for example, “I want to be a doctor because I like to help people.”
    - The statement can include some explanation of less-than-stellar grades or test scores.
  - **Before You Send It:**
    - Ask yourself and others if your essay is relevant, interesting, and memorable.
    - Have someone proofread your essay like a professor or someone familiar with essays.
    - Don’t send exactly the same essay to several schools if the questions asked are different.
  - **Resources**
    - [www.statementofpurpose.com](http://www.statementofpurpose.com)

- **Test Scores**
  Most schools require scores on at least one standardized test for admission. Typically, a minimum score is required but that score does not guarantee admission. We encourage you find out about the “average” test scores of people admitted to a program.

- **Letters of Recommendation**
  You will typically be asked for 2 or 3 recommendations, but each university will specify the number they require. A program may provide a recommendation form for your recommenders or simply request a letter.
  - **When deciding who to request letters from, you should consider the following:**
    - A professor in your field who knows you well and can speak to your academic abilities.
    - Someone in your field who has supervised you through an internship, field work, job, etc.
    - Start thinking about potential recommenders early. Visit professors during office hours, get involved in research or community service projects, and/or have conversations with supervisors about your career goals.