

# Graduate or Professional School

Considering graduate or professional school after graduation? Use the matrix below to help guide you with your decision.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	YES	NO
Do you know what career you would like long term?		
Does the career you would like to pursue long term require a higher degree?		
Do you know what you want to study and are you still curious and passionate about that particular field?		
Are you emotionally ready for the rigors of graduate school?		
Are you financially ready (it's an expensive proposition if you're unsure or unready)?		
Do you know why you want to go to graduate school?		
Do you have the necessary requirement(s) to enter the program you desire (major, test score, industry or volunteer experience, research, internship)?		
Do you know the type of graduate program you want to pursue? 1 year Graduate Degree; 2 year Master; Law; Medical; Allied Health; 5-7 year PhD; Research, Clinical, or Applied		

## IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO THE QUESTIONS ABOVE

### CONSIDER THESE TIMELINES IN APPLYING:

#### Sophomore year, second semester

- Talk with professors; line up research opportunities for junior year; start researching graduate programs

#### Junior year

- Know the application deadline for your graduate program
- Obtain faculty-directed research and independent research experience (summer, senior thesis, or capstone)
- Read broadly in the field; take notes on readings and ideas by major contributors in the field
- Get to know faculty members from whom you will want recommendations
- Study and prepare for the graduate school testing necessary for your program; free practice tests available through Kaplan
- Sign up for testing with enough time before application submission deadlines that you could take the test(s) once more to achieve a higher score

#### Senior year

- Research, evaluate, and select programs to which you want to apply
- Prepare CV or graduate school resume
- Figure out a graduate school finance plan
- Prepare and submit application materials

### COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS:

- Essay or Personal Statement and Resume/CV – begin with plenty of revision time
- Interviewing (particularly medical schools) practice interview skills before the first interview
- Recommendation Letters – ask faculty members with plenty of advance notice

## IF YOU ANSWERED NO OR ARE UNSURE HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOVE

- Begin talking to your professors, alumni who pursued a graduate program you are considering, current ND graduate students, and/or a career counselor at The Center for Career Development
- Learn more about graduate school in order to make a well-informed decision
- Consider the possibilities listed on the next page which would include: taking a "gap" year, doing service, gaining a fellowship, or entering the military
- Consider entering the world of work via an internship or job

### GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

- **Petersons Grad School Bound** - Includes details about student and faculty demographics as well as key dates and program fees.
- **Petersons Allied Health Graduate Programs** - Provides general overview with links to more specific programs.
- **ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA - Approved Law Schools** - Provides in-depth information about law schools and allows students to see likelihood of admission to different schools based on their GPA and LSAT scores.
- **Start Class** - Includes a list ranking law schools with some quick stats, and more details about each school when you click on it.
- **Princeton Review** - Provides variety of law school rankings, such as law schools with best professors, best resources for minority students, most liberal/conservative students, etc; includes a search by region.  
*\*Please refer to [undergradcareers.nd.edu](http://undergradcareers.nd.edu) for specific resources*

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## Additional Post-Graduate Opportunities

### The “Gap” Year

A gap year is taking some time off between life stages. During this period, you may explore a new interest area, or you may choose an experience that enhances your skills and career goals. Before deciding if a gap year is right for you, ask yourself:

- Are there experiences that I want to have before I enter my career?
- Do I need this experience to enhance my skills, or to build additional professional experience?
- Does this experience relate to my long term career goals? If not, am I okay with that?
- How long do I want this gap year to be? Do I want to travel internationally?
- Would I consider a three-month internship, such as with an NGO, before moving to another opportunity?
- Would this experience improve my CV or research skills to be a more competitive applicant for a graduate or professional degree program?

### Service

Choosing to volunteer post-graduation can be a life-changing experience and provide you with key skills for the next step in your career. Before deciding if service is right for you, consider the following possibilities:

- What community or social issue is most important to me?
- Do I want to spend one or two years dedicating time and energy to addressing community and social issues?
- Do I want to live in community or not?
- Is the service program faith-based or not? Is that an important

factor in my decision?

- Does the program offer a stipend or salary?
- Do I want a domestic or international service program?
- Do I need health insurance and does this program provide it (most do)?
- Does my service program provide housing?
- May I qualify for postponement or forbearance to repay my loans during my service?
- Does this volunteer opportunity provide an educational award applicable to education loans or future education tuition and fees?
- Can this service opportunity help build professional experience that will open the next career door for me?
- Will this opportunity allow me to work with populations or social issues I want to focus on longer-term?
- Find postings on Handshake and explore a vast array of service opportunities through the Center for Social Concerns

### Fellowship

A fellowship is a project or research that includes an applied component, offered in a wide range of areas – teaching, research, service, and further graduate study. Fellowships are competitive so begin investigating your sophomore year by talking with your professors and the staff at the Flatley Center for Undergraduate Scholarly Engagement (CUSE). A fellowship or Fulbright can also enhance your application for a graduate or professional degree program. Some fellowships can help pay for graduate studies. Check out the CUSE website or idealist.org to learn more about opportunities.

### Military

As an ROTC cadet or deciding to pursue Officer Candidate School, your post-graduate plans may be set for the next few years after graduation. However, there are still resources to help NOW with your career transition:

- **Notre Dame Alumni Career and Professional Services - ROTC Group (access through [my.nd.edu](http://my.nd.edu))**
- **DoD (Department of Defense) Transition Assistance Program (TAP)**



## PRE-LAW ADVISING

The Meruelo Family Center for Career Development offers pre-law advising for students interested in attending Law School. For more information, visit: [undergradcareers.nd.edu/prelaw](http://undergradcareers.nd.edu/prelaw)