Graduate or Professional School

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

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

**GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES**

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**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