



“So you think you want to go to Graduate School...”

- Graduate School overview
- Researching graduate programs
- Creating a winning application
- Resources and tips





Graduate School in Earth, Ocean, Atmospheric Sciences and related fields: Overview

Graduate school is the pursuit of a Master's or Doctoral Degree

Master of Science (M.S.)

2 year commitment approximately

Research & writing

Industry or research technician, education and outreach

Funding varies by field

Doctor of Philosophy in Science (Ph.D.)

4-6 year commitment

Extensive research & writing

Career in academics, research etc

PhD students are funded through teaching or research assistantships or fellowships

Professional Schools that offer Graduate Degrees

Specialized advanced degrees in professional fields such as medicine, business or law. There are only a few of these in our fields.

These programs rarely fund their students



Why go to Graduate School?

Graduate school requires intense commitment of time and resources.

Ability to work independently is a requirement!

Good reasons to apply:

- Professional development/ career goals
- Teaching, research, industry
- Intellectual curiosity

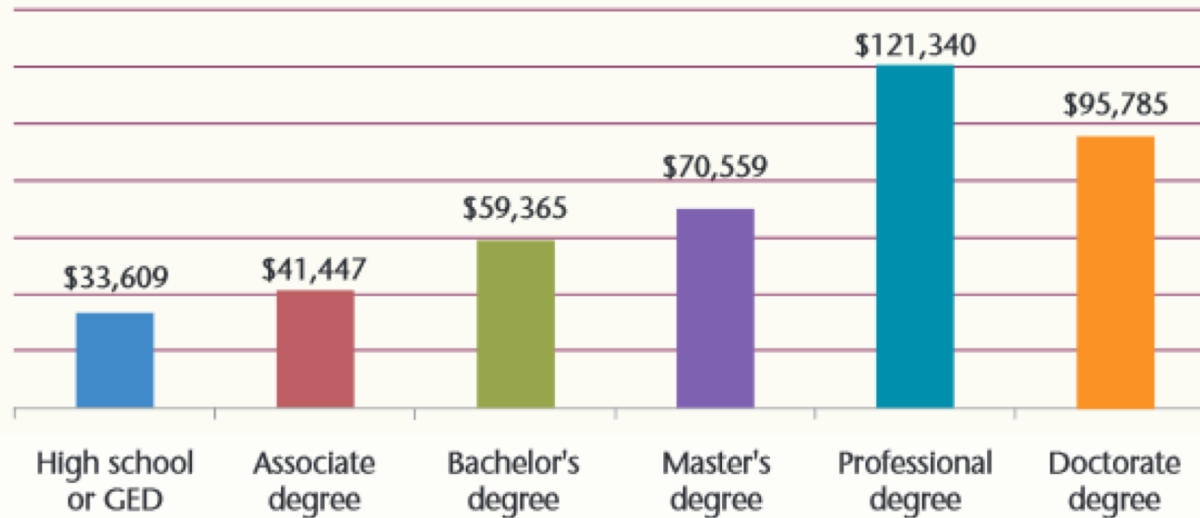
Bad Reasons to apply:

- Not sure what else to do
- Don't feel ready for a job
- Waiting to get into medical school...
- Looking for expanded undergraduate education



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Average Earnings by Educational Attainment, 2007



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.
All workers 25 years and older.



The Application Process

http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/pdf/CIC_GradSchoolGuide.pdf

Suggested timetable for applications

It is important to have a plan for completing the application requirements. Prepare a timetable with specific deadlines. The graduate admissions or funding deadlines may differ from the graduate program deadline. Be sure that you apply in time to receive full consideration for funding packages.

Summer before your senior year

- Begin to draft a personal statement of your academic and professional goals.
- Explore graduate programs. Become familiar with faculty interests, entrance requirements, and deadlines.
- Contact graduate programs that interest you and request information.
- Review for the GRE. Download FREE GRE PowerPrep software from the GRE web site, gre.org.

Hint: Even if your prospective program does not require the GRE, national fellowships and other funding sources may request GRE scores.

September

- Share your personal statement with professors you know. Ask their advice about which graduate programs you might consider.
- Consult your campus writing center to review your statements.
- Narrow your graduate program choices.
- Register to take the GRE.

October

- Take the GRE.
- Revise your personal statement, tailoring it to your chosen graduate programs.
- Order transcripts.

November

- Download application forms and complete a draft. Review and edit your drafts.
- Submit completed application forms.
- Ask faculty for recommendations. Give them specific information about deadlines and follow up to ensure that they meet the deadline.

December

- Submit your applications.
- Note: Letters of admission are sent on a rolling basis beginning in February.

January

- Follow up to ensure that supporting documents were received.

February

- Visit your prospective programs, if possible.

March

- Submit a FAFSA. Even if you expect to receive funding, it is good to have other options—just in case.

April 1

- You should receive admissions letters by this date.

April 15

- You must accept or decline offers of admission.



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Researching Graduate Programs

1. Your professors can give you the perspective on programs:
 - Which programs are on the cutting edge in your chosen field?
 - Where are the best research facilities in your chosen field?
 - From which programs are the most promising young scholars in your field graduating?
2. It is important to align your interests with available faculty interests when making graduate school choices.
 - Review the research areas of the faculty.
 - Do the courses and specializations offered fit with your interests and career goals?
3. Most students apply to between four to eight different graduate programs.



Researching Graduate Programs

Contact potential graduate advisors

- Select potential advisors
 - Find specific faculty members
 - Do your homework
 - Check their web site/ Read their scientific publications
- Contact the potential advisor
 - do this early – before applying!
 - Tell them:
 - why you are writing
 - why you find their research interesting
 - why you are applying to graduate school
 - Are they accepting any graduate students?
 - Research assistantship or teaching assistantship available?
 - Send them your:
 - Curriculum Vitae (Academic resume – long version)



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Writing a winning application

General Tips

- **Plan ahead.** Allow yourself plenty of time to gather the information you need and to review, revise, and edit. Allow yourself plenty of time to ask for letters of recommendation.
- **Seek help.** Get feedback from your professors or others in your field of study. Seek feedback from us. Also consider your campus writing center for help in crafting a strong personal essay and research statement.
- **Follow up.** Make sure that you submit materials on time and follow up to verify that all supporting materials are received on time.

Resources:

http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/pdf/Applying_CreateAWinningApplication.pdf

http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/pdf/Gradschool_TipsOnApplying.pdf

http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/pdf/Applying_WritingEssaysAndPersonalStatements.pdf

http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/pdf/Applying_LettersOfRecommendation.pdf



Asking for Letters of Recommendation

Select your references carefully. Choose references who know you well and can speak specifically to your proposed work.

Then, make it as easy as possible for them to write you a strong letter:

- 1) Give letter writers plenty of time!
- 2) Summarize what you are applying for.
- 3) Prepare a packet of information that will help define your particular strengths.
- 4) Make the logistics easy.
- 5) Waive your right to view the letters of recommendation.
- 6) Follow up to make sure the letters are sent and received.
- 7) Lastly, remember to follow up with information on your successes and remember to say thank you!



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Further Resources

- Website of the schools that you are applying to
- read the available information very carefully.
- <http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/toolbox.aspx#Graduate%20School>
- Us!