

Thinking About Graduate School?

Depending on your interests and goals, a graduate level degree might be a good fit to help you along your path.

What are some of the reasons you might want to consider a graduate degree?

- You want to pursue a specific career that requires additional education and training to enter the profession
- You want to gain more experience in critical thinking and research skills
- You have a passion for and interest in a particular subject and want to gain expertise on the topic
- You feel graduate school might give you a competitive edge as you prepare to enter the job market

Consider these reasons early on in your undergraduate program to ensure you have options in the future and time to prepare.

The more prepared you are and the more information you have will help you get ready for applying to graduate school. This is the perfect time to check out graduate school application basics and discover the actions you can take now to prepare for your future!

Check out the following topics to begin your planning:

GRADUATE SCHOOL PLANNING GUIDE

Research & Information Gathering

- ***Research & Information Gathering***

What are the different types of graduate degrees and licensures?

A graduate degree signifies mastery of a particular field of study and focuses more intensely on a subject than a bachelor's degree. There are many types of graduate degrees, professional degrees, and licensures to explore:

- **Master's Degrees:** A master's degree extends the knowledge gained in a bachelor's degree and narrows a student's focus of study. There are many separate types of master's degrees. Some of the most common are Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), Master of Education (MEd), Master of Business Administration (MBA), and Master of Fine Arts (MFA). Master's degrees usually take about 2 years, but this can vary depending on the degree program.
- **Joint/Dual Degrees (Grad Track):** Some universities offer joint degrees, where students can study and take classes for a bachelor's degree and a graduate degree at the same time, or for a

master's degree and a doctorate degree (depending on the university). This could shorten the time it usually takes to get both degrees. At UNT, these programs are called Grad Track programs.

- **Doctorate Degrees:** Doctorate degrees are the highest level of education that a student can earn. These degrees are highly specialized, typically focused on research, and give graduates the title of "Doctor." There are several types of doctorate degrees, the most common being a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Doctorate degrees usually take between 4 and 7 years to earn and often involve writing a dissertation, which is a lengthy document written about an extensive research project that the student chooses and facilitates. Other types of doctorate programs include a Doctor of Psychology (PsyD), Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA) or Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA), and Doctor of Education (EdD) – these programs tend to place less of an emphasis on research and are tailored more for clinical or practical practice.
- **Professional Degrees:** Professional degrees are very similar to doctorate degrees in that they are the highest level of education that one can earn in that field. However, professional degrees are more applied and practical rather than research-based – which means they focus on preparing students for a specific profession. Some examples of these degrees are a Juris Doctor (JD), Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD), Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS), and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM). Professional degrees vary in how long they take to earn. A Juris Doctor takes 3 years of full-time study at a law school, while a Doctor of Medicine degree takes 4 years of full-time study at a medical school before beginning a residency, which can last anywhere from 3 to 7 years (depending on the chosen specialty). Careers that require a professional degree often include a requirement to pass a licensure exam before practicing in the profession. We will explore licensure a little more below.
- **Licensure:** State laws require that workers in certain fields have a valid license to work in that profession. This ensures that only competent and ethical individuals are practicing that occupation. Here are some examples that have license requirements in many states: teachers, lawyers, doctors, cosmetologists, nurses, counselors, therapists, accountants, etc. The requirements to obtain a license are different for each state and for each occupation, but some things you might need to complete are specified training, logging a certain number of hours of work experience (sometimes supervised), and taking a licensure exam. Make sure to check the requirements for your chosen career and state to see if you will need to get a license. [License Finder | CareerOneStop](#)
- **Certifications:** Certifications and licenses are two terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, but there is a major difference between them. Certifications, while helpful in qualifying for roles in today's competitive job market, are not legally required to practice certain professions. Check with professional organizations for your chosen career path to see what certification programs they recommend or offer. ([Professional Association Finder | CareerOneStop](#))

Does your chosen career require a graduate degree or licensure?

- [O*NET](#) is a US Department of Labor website that has information about hundreds of career paths. Each job report includes education requirements, technical skills, wage information, and

growth trends. O*NET also has tools such as career assessments to gain self-knowledge and detailed information about careers that require education beyond a bachelor's degree.

- Example: [Job Zone - Archivists \(ononline.org\)](https://ononline.org/jobzone/archivists)
- Find a full list of the occupations marked as requiring a graduate degree on O*NET here: [Job Zone Five: Extensive Preparation Needed \(ononline.org\)](https://ononline.org/jobzone/five-extensive-preparation-needed)
- Visit the [Job Families page](#) on the Career Center website. Each job family features content to help you discover and learn more about the specific occupations within that family. This includes interviews with real professionals who supply insights about their chosen occupation plus targeted employment advice, sample job titles, places where you might work, career exploration resources, ways to gain experience, and more.
 - Example: [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – Career Center | University of North Texas \(unt.edu\)](#)
 - Job titles with asterisks generally require an advanced degree: [Sample Job Titles for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – Career Center | University of North Texas \(unt.edu\)](#)

Find out more about possible programs:

- Start with an initial web search for graduate programs in the field of study that are of interest to you.
- Start narrowing down the options according to the criteria that matters most to you. Some things to consider could be public universities vs. private universities, program cost, location, reputation & prestige, curriculum & program features, career services, school culture, etc.
- Request information from schools that interest you! You can get information about things like program costs or courses in the program. Gather information so you can get organized and stay on top of things like application deadlines.
- At UNT, there are 132 advanced degree options. UNT offers you more choices in how and where you study. Advanced degree courses are offered at three locations across the North Texas region as well as online. Take your career further with our [top-ranked](#) traditional and online programs.
- Browse a national [graduate school directory](#).
- Learn more about graduate degrees and career growth:
 - [Average Salary With vs. Without a College Degree | Indeed.com](#)
 - [Is Grad School Worth It? | Indeed.com](#)

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Application Process & Documents You May Need

• ***Application Process & Documents You May Need***

How many schools should you apply to?

- This number will vary from student to student, depending on their situation – but in general, you should only apply if you have enough time to perfect your application. Divide your options

into 3 categories: dream schools, target schools, and safety schools. Dream schools are the places that you would love to attend but have lower chances of being accepted, target schools are the schools that your application materials and metrics are closer to the acceptance standards, and safety schools are the schools where you are highly likely to be accepted. Keep in mind that some programs are extremely competitive, so it's good to keep your options open in case you do not get into your dream schools.

- Keep your application information organized!
- Use an Excel or Google Sheets file – include vital information like deadlines, application requirements, your progress on the application, etc. Start this process early – according to Kaplan, you should start researching schools 2 years before graduate school, start preparing application materials 1 year before graduate school, and start applying 9 months before graduate school. ([Applying to Grad School: The Ultimate Guide – Kaplan Test Prep \(kaptest.com\)](#))

Resume/CV

- One typically hears the terms “resume” and “CV” or “Curriculum Vitae” in relation to job applications, but they are also used when applying for graduate schools. In general, a resume is typically used for industry or corporate positions, focusing on your education, skills, and work experiences. While a curriculum vitae, also known as a CV or vita, is generally used to apply for positions in research or academic settings, such as a faculty position at a university, and focuses on an applicant’s research publications, grants, awards, and teaching experience – in addition to the education, skills, and work experiences that are also in a resume.
- For help with your [resume](#) or CV, check out our [CV Guide](#) and schedule an in-person, virtual, phone, or email appointment or meet with a [Career Coach](#) without an appointment during Drop-Ins. To find your Career Coach and for times and locations, go to [Connect with the Career Center](#). Business majors should access [Connect with the Career Resource Center](#) for times, location, and [Drop-In information](#).

Statement of Purpose or Personal Statement

- Graduate applications often require a short essay from the applicant. Each program is different in their requirements; we will go through two of the most requested types.
- A Personal Statement is generally 1-2 pages, and should be a summary of your interests, talents, achievements, and goals. You want your personal statement to reflect your personality, discuss your previous academic paths and career goals, and show the university why you are interested in their program. Universities may require that your personal statement be a response to a specific prompt, or they may want something that is more general. Some examples of prompts could be an event that contributed to the development of your academic and career goals, or a time that you experienced challenge in your life.
- A Statement of Purpose is similar to a personal statement in that it offers graduate schools a look into why you are interested in their program, but they are generally more focused on academics and research ideas. This can mean that you discuss your academic career/credentials, research interests, career plan, and why you feel the academic program that you’re applying for is the right fit for you.
- Learn more about [Statements of Purpose and Personal Essays](#)

Transcripts

- Graduate schools will commonly need official transcripts from any previous degree programs, undergraduate or graduate alike. This allows the graduate school to see all the courses that you have taken and confirm your previous GPAs. Collect your transcripts from all your previously attended schools, including community colleges. Some universities only accept transcripts if they are sent by your previous institutions, which can take some time, so be sure to keep deadlines in mind and give your school(s) enough time to process your request.

Letters of Recommendation

- In addition to the documents that you will write and the information you will provide, letters of recommendation are common requirements when applying to graduate school. Letters of recommendation supply a subjective view of your strengths, personal characteristics, content knowledge, and potential for success in the program and in the field. They can add supplemental information not found in your essays that supports your statements and ultimately shows that you are a viable candidate for the program.
- Because each program is different and their requirements unique, follow the listed guidelines and instructions exactly. There are various processes for submission. Some schools may ask for the individuals' contact information and will be sent a confidential link to submit their evaluation or letter or a fillable survey or form your contacts receive and complete. You usually do not see the submissions; they are supplied directly to the school for confidentiality and to allow for honest remarks about the applicant.
- Typically, you should ask your professors or others who know you in an academic setting to write your letters of recommendation. They should have knowledge of your academic and career goals, research and field interests, strengths in the classroom, and service or leadership as a student. You can also ask a supervisor, manager, or mentor to write a letter for you. They can address your work ethic, experience, and interpersonal and teamwork skills. It is not recommended to ask your family or friends to write your letters unless there is a compelling reason to do so. It is important that your reference can supply specific examples of your performance and contributions.
- It is crucial to communicate with your professors and potential recommenders about your application plans. Request a meeting with them, either in person, over the phone, or a video chat to update them on your recent accomplishments and future goals.
- Thank your recommenders: Show your appreciation to your recommenders by sending them a thank-you note or email. It's also a good idea to keep them updated on your application status.
- Overall, it's important to approach letters of recommendation with professionalism and respect. Good letters of recommendation can make a significant difference in the admissions process, so it's essential to choose your recommenders carefully and provide them with the necessary information to write a strong letter.
- Ideally, reach out to your recommenders at least 6 weeks (about 1 and a half months) before the application deadline (or your desired application submission date. Sometimes there are "preferred" or "early" admission dates, so sometimes the sooner the better.) You never want to sacrifice the quality of your application package, however, so planning is key!
- It will be helpful to supply your contact with information about your programs of interest, including website links to make it easy for them to quickly research. You may also want to share

your resume/CV and application essays. This will help your reference understand the most relevant information to share and have a better understanding of your goals.

- You may need to send a gentle reminder about your letters of recommendation if you have not received a reply to your request or confirmation from the school that information was received from your reference. Be mindful of ways your recommenders prefer to communicate. For example, is a work or school email, a brief phone call, or a LinkedIn or Teams message ideal. If you are not sure, ask them about their preferences.
- Learn more about [graduate school letters of recommendation](#).

Standardized Tests

- The most common entrance exams for graduate degrees are the GRE, GMAT, MCAT, and LSAT. These are the ones we will provide information on, but there are other exams out there. If you don't see your specific situation listed below, please make sure to check with your program and/or college to figure out which entrance exam you will need to take and how they might be used in the selection criteria.
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE): The GRE is a general test that assesses verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing skills. It is used for admission to graduate programs in a wide range of fields, including business, engineering, social sciences, and natural sciences. Learn more about the [GRE](#).
- Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT): The GMAT is a test specifically designed for admission to business school. It assesses verbal, quantitative, analytical writing, and integrated reasoning skills. Learn more about the [GMAT](#).
- Law School Admission Test (LSAT): The LSAT is a test specifically designed for admission to law school. It assesses reading comprehension, analytical reasoning, and logical reasoning skills. Learn more about the [LSAT](#).
- Medical College Admission Test (MCAT): The MCAT is a test specifically designed for admission to medical school. It assesses knowledge of natural, behavioral, social sciences, and critical analysis and reasoning skills. Learn more about the [MCAT](#).
- GRE Subject Tests: These tests assess knowledge in specific subject areas, such as biology, chemistry, literature in English, mathematics, physics, and psychology. They are sometimes required for admission to certain graduate programs. Learn more about [GRE Subject Tests](#). It is recommended to take practice tests early to show specific areas that you should focus on for deep studying and areas that may just need an overview.
- UNT has various resources to help you prepare for graduate school entrance exams. Reach out to the Learning Center for help.
 - [Graduate Entrance Exam Prep](#)
 - [GRE Preparation Course](#)
 - [Online GRE Preparation Resources](#)
 - [Online GMAT Preparation Resources](#)
 - [Online MCAT Preparation Resources](#)
 - [Online LSAT Preparation Resource](#)
 - [UNT Learning Center GRE Preparation Course](#)

Admission Interviews

- An interview is a common part of many programs' admissions process. Admission committees can evaluate candidates beyond what they learn about them on paper during an interview. The interview process will vary by school and program; they could be in person or virtual and conducted one-on-one or by a group of individuals. The interviewer(s) may ask questions about:
 - Career goals
 - Research interests
 - What you know about the program
 - Academic achievements
 - Community/volunteer involvement
 - Personal qualities and motivation
- Be prepared to give specific examples of your skills and to answer situational or behavioral questions, which ask how you have handled or would handle a particular scenario.
- Learn more about Academic Interviews: (source: [Top 8 Tips for Grad School Interviews](#))
 - **Know who you are**—and who you say you are. Review your application to the school before your interview day. Remember that all the interviewer knows about you is what they've read on paper, so they will likely start with what they know. You should know it, too.
 - **Track the highlights.** Think ahead of time about your role in leadership, volunteer, or professional positions. Be ready to relate several stories on how you've taken the initiative and been a role model for others. Consider how you might apply those abilities to your new graduate environment—whether from an academic or community perspective.
 - **Ask the right questions.** Prepare some questions ahead of time about the program, the school, or the graduate community. Make sure that your questions show you've done your homework. For example, if your question can be easily answered on the program's website or literature, dive a little deeper.
 - **"Why here?"** The interviewer will ask why you are interested in the school and program. Be prepared to give a compelling answer. Remember that honesty wins. "It's close to my family, affordable, and has a great post-graduate career network," is a perfectly acceptable answer—and much better than, "this has been my dream school since I was 12" ... if it hasn't.
 - **Focus on presentation—inside and out.** Project professionalism and friendliness. It's important to look the part in proper business attire, but that doesn't mean you have to wear the most expensive labels. You're evaluated on your presentation, not your price tag.
 - **Preparation leads to calm.** Stay as relaxed as possible. Not only will this help you project overall confidence and friendliness, but it will keep fidgeting to a minimum. Be aware of your other nonverbal communication, as well. Practice good eye contact and posture before the interview. It might help to hold mock interviews with trusted friends, family members, or even professors you're close to. Make these as official as you like—from running through questions over a video call, to putting on your interview suit and playing the part for a whole hour. Go about it however will make you feel the most relaxed on interview day.

- **Extend courtesy to all.** If you are meeting with other members of the program's administrative staff, apply the same interview rules to those interactions—no matter how brief. The perceptions of all administrative staff members may be highly valued and affect your overall evaluation.
- **Be yourself (you know this one).** Always be open and honest. A genuine truth beats a beautiful lie any day.
- Your professors, advisors, and Career Coach can offer tips and help you practice for your graduate school interview. You can also access free mock interviews for graduate admissions through Big Interview. Learn more about [Big Interview](#).

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Financing Your Graduate Education

- ***Financing Your Graduate Education***

- Before you commit to graduate school, it is important to have a plan of how you will pay for it. Research the costs of the programs you are interested in. Reach out to the admissions department to make sure you understand application costs, tuition, fees, residency rates, etc.
- Do not forget housing, transportation, books and materials, the part-time job market, and other cost of living items as you consider your budget and options.
- There are many ways to fund your graduate education. Here are some items to research and learn more about.
 - FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
 - [Financial Aid Eligibility | Federal Student Aid](#)
 - [FAFSA® Application | Federal Student Aid](#)
 - [Apply for Aid | Financial Aid and Scholarships \(unt.edu\)](#)
 - Scholarships & Grants
 - Can be merit or financial need based, or a combination of both, geared toward groups of people, or available through various affiliations and backgrounds.
 - Schools, private entities, government agencies.
 - Planning is key! Start searching early to not miss application deadlines.
- Try these free sources of information:
 - [UNT's Financial Aid and Scholarships Office](#)
 - U.S. Department of Labor's [FREE scholarship search tool](#)
 - [Federal agencies](#)
 - Your [state grant agency](#)
 - Your library's reference section
 - Foundations, religious or community organizations, local businesses, or civic groups
 - Organizations (including professional associations) related to your field of interest
 - Ethnicity-based organizations
 - Your employer or your parents' employers
 - Employment tuition reimbursement
 - Military/Veteran benefits

- ***Alert: Protect yourself from scams and learn about free resources.***
 - [Avoiding Student Aid Scams | Federal Student Aid](#)
- University, college, department, and program specific funding sources may be available. The graduate admissions office and department from the schools you are interested in can help you learn more about the options and timelines of various grants, scholarships, and other potential funding applications and deadlines.
- Depending on your program, skills and experience, and goals, you can apply to work with faculty and departments to help support university functions and support faculty in the field of study you are interested in.
- A sampling of employment/funding possibilities for graduate students include:
 - *On-Campus Employment*
 - Generally scheduled around your courses and academic commitments. Can supply an opportunity to gain in-demand job skills, such as teamwork, communication, and critical thinking.
 - *Teaching/Research Fellowships*
 - Teach or conduct research under the guidance of faculty.
 - *Research Assistant*
 - Work with faculty to conduct or aid with research projects in a specific field.
 - *Teaching Assistant*
 - Help faculty with teaching coursework. Ideal if you are interested in a career in academia.
 - *Graduate Student Assistant*
 - Support a wide range of projects and/or administrative duties in various university departments.
- Learn about UNT Graduate School Funding: [UNT Future Graduate Student Funding](#)
- Read more about funding your graduate school education: [Applying to Grad School: The Ultimate Guide – Kaplan Test Prep \(kaptest.com\)](#)

In your undergraduate program, you can gain experience and knowledge about your chosen career path through projects, internships, student organizations, informational interviews, Career Center events, on-campus employment, and mentorship programs! These steps may help you decide what other education and training is best for you. Check out the [Career Center](#) website to learn more.

Set aside time to reflect on your goals and reasons for pursuing graduate study. Discuss these with a faculty member, Career Coach, Academic Advisor, Graduate School Admissions Advisor, and other trusted people in your life.

How can I Learn More About Graduate School at UNT?

[Graduate Program List | Toulouse Graduate School® \(unt.edu\)](#)

Graduate programs are offered in many formats! UNT offers you many choices in how and where you study. Advanced degree courses are offered at three locations across the North Texas region and online. You can visit the Graduate Preview Event to meet faculty and program representatives.

Find more information here:

- [Future Students | Toulouse Graduate School® \(unt.edu\)](#)
- [Graduate Admissions | Toulouse Graduate School® \(unt.edu\)](#)
- [Videos | Toulouse Graduate School® \(unt.edu\)](#)

Visit the [Career Center](#) to help you achieve your goals and review the Action Step Checklist below. We look forward to meeting you!

Action Step Checklist

Your timeline and recommendations are unique. These are some general examples.

Please meet with your Academic Advisor and faculty for more information.

First & Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know faculty! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask questions in class Office hours After class Make a Career Coaching appointment to develop a plan Attend Career Center Employer Events/Workshops Find out about Internships/Job Shadowing Join a student organization or club Meet with your Academic Advisor regularly Reach out for help and support for your academic and personal success GPA matters! 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create a list of target programs and start connecting with schools' admissions and financial aid office with questions. Create your target application dates based on their schedule STUDY (and figure out schedule) for any entrance exams Start drafting notes for personal statements, essays, or statements of purpose Get more experience - internships, volunteering, relevant projects, or campus employment Attend Career Center events for professional growth Find a mentor – Mean Green Mentors Get help to create a great resume that captures your skills and experience Continue to get involved and make connections! Join the Student Alumni Association 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Request letters of recommendation from faculty Take time to discuss your preferred programs and ask for advice and feedback Finalize your application documents and have them reviewed (Writing Center, Career Coach, faculty, mentor) Explore all sources of financial aid options Make sure application materials are complete and you understand the school's process and requirements Schedule a mock interview Make sure your transcripts are correct and complete. Contact the Registrar's Office if you need help Evaluate offers, complete visits and required interviews Finalize aid packages
Notes:	Notes:	Notes:

References

[Current Guide to College Degrees, Certifications & Professional Studies | BigFuture \(collegeboard.org\)](#)

[These Are the Different Types of Grad School Programs \(and Why They Matter\) – Niche Blog \(niche.com\)](#)

[Start Your Grad School Search With Confidence | CollegeXpress \(collegexpress.com\)](#)

[Applying to Grad School: The Ultimate Guide | Kaplan Test Prep \(kaptest.com\)](#)

[Curriculum Vitae vs. Resume: What's The Big Difference? | Honor Society - Official Honor Society® Website \(honorsociety.org\)](#)

[CV vs. Resume: Key Differences \(Plus How To Write a CV\) | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[Graduate School Resume: How-To, Template and Example | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[7 Tips for Creating a Graduate CV | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[Writing A Great Graduate School Application \(affordablecollegesonline.org\)](#)

[How to Write a Powerful Personal Statement | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[5 Graduate School Statement of Purpose Examples \(And Tips\) | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[FAQ: What Is a Graduate School Letter of Recommendation? | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[What Is a Good GRE Score? A Guide to Test Sections and Range | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[What Is the GMAT? | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[A Guide to LSAT Analytical Questions \(With How To Answer\) | Indeed \(indeed.com\)](#)

[Learn About GRE \(ets.org\)](#)

[Applying to Grad School: The Ultimate Guide – Interview Tips | Kaplan Test Prep \(kaptest.com\)](#)

[How Long Should You Study for the LSAT? \(thenewargument.com\)](#)

[What does a graduate degree mean? – BigFuture | College Board \(collegeboard.org\)](#)