

Questions to Ask Graduate Programs

1. What do you teach here?
2. What is the largest and the most typical class size for a graduate class? Are classes restricted to graduate students? To majors?
3. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of going to grad school immediately after completing an undergraduate program? The advantages and disadvantages of waiting a few years? The best use of the interim time?
4. What are the criteria and process for selecting TAs, RAs, and Fellows?
5. Will I get to develop my own topics, or will I be expected to work on a professor's ongoing research?
6. What facilities are available for graduate students? Are there any restrictions on access?
7. What is the mean time to complete (a) class work, (b) research, (c) thesis or dissertation? (That is, what is the mean time to complete the master's or Ph.D.?) Ask about the program as a whole, but perhaps more importantly, by professor.
8. What is your attrition rate? Of those who don't finish, what are their reasons?
9. What kind of student thrives in your program?
10. How reliable is your financial support year to year? Is the first-year offer always sustained given attainment of academic goals?
11. What are the age range, gender balance, ratio of married/single, and geographical origins of graduate students in the program?
12. Can you tell me who is launching new projects? Which professors have won awards and grants lately? (These presumably need graduate assistants.)
13. Can you tell me about your placement rates and types of jobs obtained by recent graduates? (Avoid relying on testimonials and anecdotal evidence.)
14. May I meet some currently enrolled students? (In person or via phone or email; be sure to ask about their research topics and be sure to take notes on specific professors mentioned.)
15. How can I be a strong candidate for a program like this?