



So you're thinking about graduate school?

Resources for exploring graduate programs

Getting started: Graduate school can be a rewarding and professionally advantageous option, but sometimes it's hard to know where to begin. Start early and be aware of submission deadlines. If you're considering graduate school, it's best to make plans during the fall semester of your final year or earlier. This guide will help get you started!

Questions to ask yourself: Consider the following questions to help assess the benefits of and your interest in graduate school. See a full list of questions and answers [here!](#)

- What are your goals for graduate school? Are you interested in research and gaining in-depth knowledge about one topic? Will learning research methods and improving your scientific writing ability enhance your future career?
- Are you interested in starting a graduate program directly after your undergraduate degree, or first gaining some professional experience? Don't use graduate school as an excuse to put off finding a job.
- What opportunities are available to you with your undergraduate degree? Does attending a graduate program qualify you for additional or more appealing opportunities?
- What are the financial benefits and drawbacks?
- How much do you know about funding graduate school? Did you know some programs will pay you? You'll have more funding options if you begin the process early.

Use resources available through Career and Professional Development: CPD has excellent resources on the graduate school selection and admission process, including: how to choose a program, test preparation (e.g. GRE exam), application writing guides, graduate program fairs, and more. See [this page](#) for more information.

Talk with your faculty mentor and/or faculty in your graduate studies field of interest: Faculty in the field can provide you with valuable insight into the professional benefits of graduate programs. Here are a few ideas for what you might want to discuss with a faculty mentor:

- What to look for in a program, program reputation, suggested programs
- Whether you should continue at Virginia Tech or consider another institution

- Specific questions to ask a program director
- What to expect from a research program
- How to determine if you are competitive for graduate school or specific programs
- The difference between professional programs and thesis-based degree programs
- The implications of completing a M.S. degree before entering into a Ph.D. program
- Assistantship and/or financial aid options (some programs offer graduate research or teaching assistantships)
- Professional networking for graduate studies (including identifying a potential graduate advisor and faculty contacts actively recruiting graduate students)

Talk with a graduate program coordinator: Consider talking to a graduate program coordinator directly. This way, you can ask detailed questions about admissions, requirements, funding, advising, and opportunities for your top programs of interest.

Talk with your prospective graduate advisor: It's important to connect with faculty who may be your graduate program advisor. Do your research to identify an advisor whose interests align with your own. Admission to many graduate programs involves the recommendation or support of the prospective advisor. Questions for prospective program faculty might include:

- What are the employment opportunities for students who complete this graduate program?
- Did most students in the graduate program enter directly after their undergraduate degree or gain work experience first?
- Is the program geared toward full-time students or part-time students who are maintaining full-time employment?
- What are research opportunities and the interests and expertise of the faculty?
- What is the size of the entering student cohort? Do students work closely with fellow students?
- What guidance can they give on the application and admission process?
- What does your advising/supervision style involve?

Looking at graduate opportunities in CNRE?:

CNRE offers graduate programs in fisheries and wildlife sciences, forest products, forestry, geography, geospatial and environmental analysis, and natural resources. You can find information and program contacts [here](#).