

Guidance for Prospective Graduate Students

Taking the decision to attend graduate school can be one of the more important choices you make during your education. Listed below are some key points for you to consider as you seek out a graduate program and a research advisor. While they may not apply to all graduate education scenarios, many will certainly transcend disciplinary and program boundaries. By working your way through this list with prospective advisors, you can help ensure that the program, research, and supervisor are well matched.

1. There are many reasons why students pursue a graduate degree. Ask yourself honestly, why do you want to pursue a graduate degree?
2. Considering your response to #1, how do the program and the advisor you are considering meet your personal motivations to enter graduate school?
3. Does your advisor have a track record of success in the field in which you are interested? This can include supervisory style, publications, grants, teaching in the field, etc.
4. Do they have the expertise, background, finances, and infrastructure to guide you in the proposed program of research?
5. Do their students present and publish their research?
6. How long do their students take to complete their degrees? This is critical now that the Faculty of Graduate Studies has limits on how long you may reside in a particular program, depending on full-time or part-time status.
7. How many of their graduate students successfully complete their degrees?
8. What do their students do afterwards?

In pursuit of Questions 3-8, it is highly recommended that you talk with current and former students of your prospective advisor in

order to obtain a full understanding of what it is like to work under their guidance. You could also request copies of recent publications or completed graduate dissertations to review.

As well, a document you may wish to review prior to any discussions with potential advisors is the Faculty of Graduate Studies Advisor-Student Guidelines. All potential advisors will have this document available to them for discussion with you. Please bring it up in your own inquiries.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies Advisor-Student Guidelines go into significantly more detail, and raises many specific points of discussion between student and advisor.

Faculty from the Departments of Environment and Geography and Geological Sciences developed the advice provided above for students in their respective programs.