

# Questions to ask any graduate program:

1. What are the strongest areas in the department? Which areas are experiencing growth in research success and publications?
2. What is the largest and the most typical class size for a graduate class? Are classes restricted to graduate students or are undergraduates common in your graduate classes?
3. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of going to grad school immediately after completing the 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 teaching assistants, research assistants, and fellows?
5. I will probably need financial assistance. Can you tell me how most students fund their studies here?
6. Will I get to develop my own topics, or will I be expected to work on a professor's ongoing research?
7. What is the mean time to complete (a) class work, (b) research, (c) thesis or dissertation (if required)? (I.e., what is the mean time to complete the entire program? Ask about the program as a whole, but perhaps more importantly, *by advisor/mentor/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 is the age, race, gender balance, ratio of married/single, and geographical origin of graduate students in the program? (In other words: Are there any other people like me?)
12. I have compiled bibliographies of publications by your faculty off their web sites and my own research, but can you tell me which have won awards and grants lately (and 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, Skype, or email)? (Be sure to ask about their research topics and *be sure to take notes on specific profs mentioned.*)
15. How can I be a strong candidate for a program like this?

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Donald Asher, Asher Associates, 415-543-7130, [don@donaldasher.com](mailto:don@donaldasher.com)