Use Your Goal to Shape Your Decision

Your goal shapes your graduate school application. Without a goal, you may be applying to graduate school without direction.

Graduate degrees are bridges to something else, not stopping points or something to do so you can delay making career decisions after you graduate from college.

Ask yourself:

1. What is my goal/vision for myself immediately after I graduate with an advanced degree?

2. What is my long-range goal? Will a graduate degree be the first educational step or the only step I need to reach my goal?

3. What level degree (master’s or doctorate) do I need to reach my immediate and long-term goals? If you’re not sure:
   - Talk to faculty
   - Set up information interviews. Use LinkedIn to find professionals in the field doing the work you hope to do and ask them if they will chat with you for 15-20 about their work. You are getting information about someone’s job. You’re not asking for a job.
   - Talk to people during internships to learn what level degrees they have and how those degrees influenced the roles they’ve had and now have.

4. What type of degree do I need? Make sure you apply to the right type of program for your goal.

A non-research/non-thesis master’s will:
   - give you more advanced knowledge and application skills in your field
   - lead to a career in industry, entrepreneurship, etc.
   - may enable you to be an instructor at a university or community college
   - can lead you to having more job responsibilities in management
   - may be required for higher salary scales
   - not require research to graduate
   - Last 1 – 2 years
   - Can be online, in-person, or hybrid depending on the program
A research/thesis master's will:
- give you more advanced knowledge and possibly some application skills in your field
- give you more advanced research skills in your field
- set you up for a career that involves being on research teams in industry
- may enable you to be an instructor at a university or community college
- can lead you to having more job responsibilities in management
- may be required for higher salary scales
- serve as a bridge to a doctorate if you aren't ready to apply for one yet
- Require a thesis (large independent research project) to graduate
- Last 1 – 2 years (often 2)
- Can be online, in-person, or hybrid depending on the program

A master's with a research option will:
- give you more advanced knowledge and possibly some application skills in your field
- give you more advanced research skills in your field
- set you up for a career that involves being on research teams in industry
- may enable you to be an instructor at a university or community college
- can serve as a bridge to a doctorate if you do research
- will not require you to do research in order to graduate
- last 1 – 2 years (often 2)
- Can be online, in-person, or hybrid depending on the program

A BS/MS option
Georgia Tech as well as many other universities offer some opportunities for eligible students to apply a certain amount of graduate-level coursework towards a bachelor’s and a master's degree. The specifics and details of such programs depend on the university.

Georgia Tech has over [20 BS/MS degree programs](#).

You must apply to a Georgia Tech BS/MS program so talk to your academic advisor as soon as you can to learn what the eligibility requirements are.

A BS/MS program may:
- Provide a seamless transition from undergraduate to graduate school because you continue on in the semester after you graduate with your bachelor’s. You don’t have to wait until the regular admission matriculation semester, which is often only in the fall.
- Help you finish your master’s faster
- Reduce the cost of applying to and attending graduate school
• Give you peace of mind knowing you have been accepted into grad school
• Offer a non-reach and a research option so be sure to apply to the one

Incentives to apply for a BS/MS program may include:
• application fee waiver
• GRE requirement waiver
• seamless transition to graduate school no matter what term you graduate in
• reduced number of letters of recommendations (2 instead of 3)

A doctorate:
• is a research degree – if you don’t like research, don’t apply for one
• sets you up to be a career researcher/your career is research
• gives you highly advanced research skills and content knowledge
• is required if you want to be a professor in many fields
• is most often required if you want to lead labs and/or large and full-scale research or grant projects in academia, government, or industry
• may be required to reach the highest levels of administration in certain professional sectors
• can give you more credibility in the entrepreneurship world
• requires leading your own large research project and writing a dissertation (bigger than a master’s thesis) to graduate
• lasts 4 – 6 years
• can be online, in-person, or hybrid depending on the program