



## Graduate School Glossary

### **Accreditation:**

Recognition of an educational institution by an independent private organization. Over one hundred accrediting agencies exist. Some are recognized by the Department of Education and the Council of Higher Education Accreditation. Note that some are phony or fraudulent. Find a graduate program with a credible accrediting association; without this, your degree isn't recognized by many employers. Particularly important in the sciences, business, social sciences, and education.

### **Assistantship:**

Some graduate programs offer assistantships as a form of financial support for full time graduate students. Assistantships usually will pay tuition (full or a steep discount), fees and also provide you with small stipend in exchange for you to work (18-25 hours per week is standard) as a research assistant for a faculty member; other assistantships may be for teaching, administrative, or counseling, depending on the academic program. They are competitive.

### **Fellowship:**

A scholarship that, in many cases, is awarded based on merit. There is no work required for a fellowship.

### **Internship:**

Work experience as part of a field of study, which usually takes place over several months. It may be full-time, may require you to move, and you may be paid. An internship may be required for graduation from a graduate program, but may be waived under certain circumstances.

### **Stipend:**

A monetary grant to a student to cover costs other than tuition and fees.

### **Personal Essay/Statement:**

The Personal essay includes information on you, the applicant as an individual, your academic and career goals, and your experiences and activities that shaped your interests. The personal statement is very important and can determine your acceptance to a graduate program. Your writing ability is assessed by this essay. (**Also Known As:** Admissions Essay, Application Essay, Graduate School Essay, Statement of Intent, Statements of Purpose, Statement of Interests, Statement of Goals).

### **Thesis:**

A written work containing the results of research on a specific topic prepared by a candidate for a bachelor's or master's degree; a work of research culminating the master's degree. The thesis is based on an individual research conducted by you and supervised by your advisor.

### **Dissertation:**

A significant body of original empirical research designed to make a substantial contribution to a discipline or field of study. This work is associated with doctoral study, and often takes years to complete.

**Practicum:**

A work experience or hands-on portion of a class offered in graduate schools. For instance, clinical psychology students may spend 8 hours a week seeing clients to fulfill requirements for some classes. A practicum is smaller in scope than an internship and usually only lasts as long as the length of the course which requires it.

**Terminal Master's Degree:**

These are also referred to as professional master's degrees and include degrees with descriptive titles, such as Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.), Master of Social Work (M.S.W.), Master of Education (M.Ed.), or Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.). These are degrees that prepare you for a particular profession. Any further education at the Ph.D. level isn't considered necessary to enter your career field. Other "terminal" degrees may include journalism, international relations, architecture, public administration, and urban planning.

**GRE:**

Graduate Record Exam. This exam is required for admission to many graduate programs around the country. There are two elements: general and subject matter. Similar in purpose to the SAT's for undergraduate study, the GRE is an assessment of your knowledge, cognitive abilities and reasoning skills.

**LSAT:**

Law School Admissions Test. This entrance exam is required for admission to graduate program to earn a degree in law. Usually, the LSAT replaces other graduate school entrance exams for admission to a law program.

**GMAT:**

Graduate Management Admissions Test. This is an exam required for most MBA and business school graduate programs. As with the LSAT, it replaces other entrance exams for programs in business.

**MAT:**

Millers Analogy Test. This exam is used by many liberal arts, fine arts and social science graduate-level programs. It emphasizes qualitative and verbal reasoning skills more than the GRE does.

**MCAT:**

Medical College Admissions Test. To gain acceptance into medical school, this is the exam.

**Postdoctoral "Postdoc" Position:**

A position which allows individuals who have completed a Ph.D. to gain additional experience in their chosen field.

**Proposal:**

Also called a prospectus. A statement or paper in which the graduate student proposes to his or her department committee a thesis/dissertation topic with details on what the thesis/dissertation will accomplish, and how the research will be conducted. The proposal must be approved before work on the thesis/dissertation begins.

**Discipline:**

A broad field of study such as psychology, physics, English, or computer science.

**Committee Chair:**

The chairperson of the thesis/dissertation is a faculty member in the department the student is studying in. The choice of a chairperson is made by the student according to his/her proposed area of research. The chairperson acts as the academic advisor, as well as assuming primary responsibility for guiding the student throughout the thesis/dissertation research project and completion of the thesis/dissertation. The chair is responsible for the integrity and scholarly intent by insuring the thesis/dissertation is consistent with the standards of research in the discipline.

**Comprehensive Exam:**

Exams usually taken in the final year of the graduate program. The type of exam varies on the program and degree earned, but is usually a minimum of 8 hours in length. Exam questions are open ended to allow the student to demonstrate their comprehensive knowledge of the discipline. Usually, exam answers are evaluated by the committee of faculty who wrote the questions. Each question must pass by a majority vote for the student to pass the exam and be allowed to graduate.

**Master's Degree:**

The degree of professional certification in the field, following the Bachelor's. A master's curriculum usually rests on one to three years of course work and may involve a thesis, a limited research project or a comprehensive exam as the final requirement. The master's is not often a prerequisite for admission to a Ph.D. program.

**Doctorate:**

Another word for the Ph.D. or Doctor of Philosophy degree. Those who earn the Ph.D. are entitled to use the title "Doctor."

**Ph.D.:**

The Doctor of Philosophy degree, a research degree which usually involves coursework, special and general examinations, a major research project leading to the writing of a dissertation, and defense of the dissertation. The Ph.D. can require anywhere between three to seven years to complete depending on the discipline, institutional policies, and the student's preparedness.

**Committee:**

This may refer to one of several types of important committees:

1. **Admissions Committee:** This committee considers applications for graduate school. Decisions are made by a committee of faculty members within an academic department. For example, students applying to an engineering department will be admitted or denied by the admission committee composed of faculty members in engineering rather than by a central admissions director within the university's administration.
2. **Thesis/Dissertation or Examination Committee:** A committee of faculty members usually chosen by the graduate student from his or her department or from closely related departments. This committee helps the student plan the thesis/dissertation or determines the general content of the qualifying examination for the final thesis/dissertation defense. These committees usually serve both as advisors to the student and as examiners on the material studied or research performed.