

Questions To Ask During Your Campus Visit

Asking informed questions sometimes makes the difference in determining which department and institutions match your graduate degree aspirations. **Faculty and staff** often have long histories with their home departments and institutions. As such, ask questions that will solicit answers that rely on faculty and staff members' unique knowledge of the culture of your department and institution of interest. Similarly, **graduate admissions staff** are familiar with the overall picture of graduate studies at a particular campus. They are especially helpful in reviewing the specific requirements and procedures associated with admissions and degree completion. Finally, graduate students serve as one of your best sources for information on **graduate student** life. They possess experimental knowledge and often provide candid accounts and honest advice regarding the academic, social, and professional aspect of graduate school.

The following are some sample questions to ask faculty and staff, graduate admissions staff, and graduate students during your campus visits:

Questions to Ask Faculty and Staff During Your campus Visit

1. What distinguishes this department? Are there any special programs for which this graduate program is noted?
2. What are the characteristics of students who have typically *not* done well in your program?
3. What are the characteristics of students who have typically done well in your program?
4. What are some of the reasons why graduate students have left your program in the recent past?
5. What types of resources are available to assist students in designing, conducting and publishing their own research?
6. Does the department have both graduate assistantships and research assistantships? Are fellowships available?
7. How are graduate assistants chosen?
8. Do graduate assistants have office space?
9. Are there funds available to help students attend conferences and present their research?
10. Is there a mentor/advisor system? If so, how does it work? Are faculty advisors assigned to prospective students or do students have a choice?
11. How are students evaluated academically?
12. What type of academic, personal, financial, and career assistance is available to graduate students?
13. How diverse are the graduate students in your department? Are there support services or organizations for ethnic minorities and/ or women?
14. If a master's degree student wishes to pursue the Ph.D., will she / he have to reapply to the graduate program?

Questions to Ask Graduate Admissions Staff

1. When are admissions decisions typically made? When should students expect to be notified?
2. Are students automatically considered for graduate assistantships and fellowships or will I need to apply through a separate process?
3. What types of funding are available to graduate students?
4. How diverse is the graduate student population at your institution?
5. What type of academic, personal, financial, and career assistance is available to graduate students?
6. Is graduate housing available?
7. Typically when is financial aid dispersed? Is it dispersed prior to the first day of class, how do students ordinarily get their books? Are emergency loans available?

Questions to Ask Graduate Students

1. How would you describe the graduate students' relationships with faculty? Do graduate students receive an adequate amount of support, encouragement and constructive criticism?
2. Describe the typical duties of graduate assistantships. Are students treated as colleagues or clerical staff? In other words, are GA's given challenging, intellectually stimulating tasks or are they typically given clerical work?
3. Do graduate assistants actually have the opportunity to teach introductory courses (and/or labs if applicable)?
4. What are some things you wish you had known prior to beginning your graduate program?
5. What does it take to succeed in your program? What are the characteristics of the students who have typically done well in your program?
6. Why did you pursue graduate studies at this institution?
7. Typically, where do graduate students live? In addition, how much are the monthly costs? Does your financial aid package typically cover your cost of living?
8. What types of academic and personal support are available to students?
9. Are there any faculty or staff members who you would suggest that I get to know if I end up pursuing graduate studies here? Allies?