

Annual Evaluation of Graduate Students

Evaluation of graduate student program is an indispensable component of our graduate program intended to cultivate and support graduate student development as productive scholars and junior colleagues. The goal of the evaluation process is to establish shared expectations and standards regarding the quality and timeliness of coursework, comprehensive exams, second year paper, research products, the dissertation, and professional development. A related goal is to provide information useful to developing your individual development plan informed by your career goals and understanding of the opportunity costs of decisions about areas of study, timing of course completion, paper submissions to conferences and journals, service, summer internships, and paid consultancies / employment outside the University. Hence, evaluation involves much more than ensuring timely progression of the course of graduate studies.

Graduate students receive timely and constructive evaluations from three groups.

- Annual substantive feedback from the Graduate Committee about:
 - Graduate seminar completion and performance
 - Graduate assistant performance
 - Program benchmark progress (required coursework completion, second year paper, comprehensive exams, dissertation proposal, progress on completing dissertation)
 - Professional development
- Ongoing, regular substantive guidance about coursework, research, professional development, and career plans from their advising team (the primary advisor, committee members, and other mentors)
- Substantive evaluation and guidance on course projects and seminar performance from faculty instructors

Procedures

In March of Spring Semester, all students are required to submit the annual Graduate Student Progress Report. Regardless of your level in the program, students who do not submit the progress report will not be considered eligible for funding. Failure to submit the progress report may also result in a registration lock and negatively affect your academic standing in the department.

Faculty advisors and GA supervisors submit annual evaluations of advisees and graduate research assistants. The Director of Undergraduate Program is consulted about performance of TA responsibilities. Faculty instructors of foundational graduate program seminars are also consulted about performance.

In April of Spring Semester, the Graduate Committee reviews the records of all graduate students, regardless of funding eligibility. Based on the annual evaluations, the Committee prepares recommendations regarding departmental funding for the subsequent year. Students who are recommended for funding are ranked based on the evaluation criteria below.

The department aims to fund all eligible students if they are making good progress on advancing through the graduate program (see Graduate Handbook, Good Progress Policy section) and their evaluation materials indicate research productivity and professional development. Students who are beyond funding eligibility are evaluated for funding as GAs or lecturers, depending on available positions and reasonable progress. The Graduate Committee considers extenuating circumstances (health and/or family issues, heavy teaching load, problems with committees and unexpected issues with course scheduling) when evaluating students.

The Graduate Director prepares and sends a letter to each student summarizing the Committee's assessment of the student's progress and offering constructive criticism and guidance moving forward. For students who are determined to be below expectations for making good progress, the letter includes specific actions that must be taken in the subsequent academic year to remain in good standing in the program.

Evaluation Criteria

Coursework. Components include course requirement completion and performance. Course requirement completion criteria are timely completion of required program and area seminars to allow students to take comprehensive exams in the third year of the program. Performance criteria include overall GPA, distribution of grades across seminars, incompletes, and instructor evaluations of student contributions to seminar discussions and the quality of written coursework. Incompletes, as well as ongoing problems with completing coursework on time, raise concerns and may lead to a lower ranking for funding.

Progress on Program Benchmarks. Components include the quality of intellectual products (second year paper, comprehensive exams, dissertation) and the timeliness of completion. Factors such as the originality and rigor of student coursework and research, the breadth of the course of study, and ability to respond thoughtfully to faculty critiques and guidance are also considered.

Professional Development. Four components are assessed. First, initiative in seeking opportunities for research experiences, funding, conference presentations, and publications is considered. Second, regular engagement in department workshops, colloquia, and annual Rosenberg and Form lectures is assessed. Third, development of a teaching portfolio and attendance at TLTC events are considered. Fourth, service to the department through the Graduate Student Forum and department, BSOS, and University committees is considered.

Reasonable progress

1st year

- Completion of at least 4 of the required M.A. courses with grades of “A”
- Identification of 2YP topic
- Selection of advisor and reader for 2YP
- Completion of NSF GRFP application materials
- Initiative in seeking out research opportunities and funding
- Regular attendance at department events

2nd year

- Completion of all required M.A. courses with grades of As
- Submission of NSF GRFP proposal if not submitted first year
- Completion & Presentation of 2YP
- Submission of work to academic conference
- Participation in collaborative research projects
- Regular attendance at department events

Third Year / Pre-Candidacy

- Progress towards submitting 2YP for publication by fall semester 3rd year
- Completion of specialty exams by spring semester
- Dissertation topic identified & proposal draft prepared by fall semester of fourth year
- Completion and successful defense of dissertation proposal no later than spring semester of 4th year
- Enrollment in Teaching Sociology seminar (if interested in teaching independently)
- Submission of work to academic conferences and attendance if on program
- Submission of proposals to relevant UMD and external funding calls
- Participation in collaborative faculty and/or peer research projects
- Submission of journal manuscripts for publications
- Service to department, College, University and/or discipline
- Regular attendance at department events

Post-Candidacy (4th and 5th Years)

- Selection of dissertation committee by spring semester of fourth year
- Full dissertation draft written by end of spring semester of fifth year
- Development of documents required for going on the job market fall semester of sixth year (updated CV, writing sample, job talk, research statement, teaching portfolio)
- Presentations at academic conferences
- Submission of journal manuscripts for publications
- Engagement in collaborative research projects
- Service to department, College, University and/or discipline
- Regular attendance at department events