Graduate Student Survival Guides


This resource provides a realistic snapshot of what one may expect in an average graduate program. Topics addressed include how to choose a program, what work might be assigned, how to navigate the thesis/dissertation process, how to stay motivated, and how to acquire financial support. It also has a section directed toward advisors on how to be a helpful and effective advisor for graduate students. Finally, the article details specific ways in which graduate students can become integral members of the research community, such as attending conferences, publishing, and networking. A comprehensive list of references and resources is provided.


The article, co-authored by two professors at a Graduate University, provides insider tips to the realities of graduate school. The authors begin by defining what it means to have a PhD; they then offers tips on how to finish a dissertation (e.g., how to choose a topic, prepare a literature review, and select a committee; options for publication). Lastly, they explore the process of securing a position in academia (i.e., searching for appropriate positions and departments, networking, writing resumes and selecting references, tips for interviewing, tenure-related issues, and post-doctoral positions.


In this easy-to-read resource, Dr. Jain cautions students not to undertake the dissertation process without appropriate guidance. She coaches students to carefully select their topic, dissertation committee, and research materials; to establish a timeline; to carefully structure writing periods; to establish a peer support group; to seek regular feedback from their advisor, and to stay positive, among other helpful tips. Dr. Jain presents her ideas in clear, bulleted lists, making them user friendly for doctoral students.


This article begins by exploring the decision to attend graduate school, focusing on costs, preparation during the undergraduate years, and how to apply to graduate programs. The author then discusses the life of a graduate student, providing information about course load, being a teaching and/or research assistant, fellowships, and outside jobs. Next, the article discusses how to transition from a student to professional role and how to prepare for the written and oral comprehensive exams. It then identifies the many intricacies of the thesis/dissertation writing process, such as choosing an advisor and developing a research idea. Finally, the question “Is a professorship in your future?” is answered as the author provides a description of life in academia and how one can prepare for that transition while also exploring alternative options such as careers in government and industry.