Starting Off Right: How to Make the Most out of Graduate School

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Grad School is VERY challenging, are you ready?

What is your reason for going to grad school?
Essential Skills of Graduate Students

- Initiative
- Tenacity
- Flexibility
- Interpersonal Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Communication Skills
“People who end up with the good jobs are the proactive ones who are solutions to problems, not problems themselves, who seize the initiative to do whatever is necessary to get the job done.” – Stephen R. Covey
Initiative

• This is your project: it’s your job to ensure that it’s successful
  • Be a valuable member of a team: bring new ideas and insights
  • Be the driver of your project
    • This will mean different things for different students
  • But also *seek* and *follow* guidance
• Same idea goes for your time in graduate school
  • It’s YOUR responsibility to make the most of it
Tenacity

- You don’t need to be a genius to earn a Ms or PhD
- You do need to have tenacity
- It’s common to have a slump period
  - Often ~ 3rd year
Common Challenges

- Impostor Syndrome
- Difficulty in learning specific skills/comprehending papers
- Project is not working
- Staying motivated in a low-structure environment
- Unclear faculty expectations
- Doubts about the value of the experience/degree
- Did you hear about a pandemic?
Flexibility (+ Resourcefulness)

- Plan on encountering roadblocks
  - What if the equipment/material you need is difficult to access? What if it breaks?
  - What if you realize you picked the wrong lab/advisor?
- How can you maximize your efforts?
  - Going to a different lab/country to do part of your work?
Persistence

Implement - Check - Repeat

VS

Tenacity

Implement - Analyse - Adjust
Interpersonal Skills

“I thought I was here because of my thinking skills!”

“Yes, I think I have good people skills. What kind of idiot question is that?”
Interpersonal Skills

• Embrace the “politics” and cultivate a positive attitude
  • This is the best way to get things done effectively
  • You will likely end up in a leadership role and will need to be effective

• Simple rules:
  • Respect people’s expertise, advice, and time
  • Understand and adjust to different work styles
  • Always give credit where credit is due
  • Apologize if at fault
  • Avoid making assumptions

*How to Win Friends and Influence People, by Dale Carnegie
What one thing could you do (that you are not doing now) that, if done on a regular basis, would make a positive difference in your life?
Setting priorities

“Failing to plan is planning to fail”

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The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen Covey

K. Furness. Adapted from S. Covey “7 Habits” series
Communication Skills

- Consistently ranks as one of the top skills desired in job candidates
  - Is that really so hard to have?
  - What are “communication skills”?
Non-Verbal Communication

Dr. Albert Mehrabian’s 7-38-55% Rule

Elements of Personal Communication

- 7% spoken words
- 38% voice, tone
- 55% body language
Refining skills in graduate school...
A successful graduate experience will equip you with the skills and credentials to get a job in your career of interest.

Your graduate program will provide you with the necessary technical and theoretical skills.

But you still need to learn how to best leverage your skills to be a successful professional.
Skills to develop in graduate school

**Career Advancement**
- Interviewing skills
- Career exploration

**Professionalism**
- Punctuality
- Reliability

**Management and Leadership**
- Conflict management
- Mentoring Up

**Research Skills and Knowledge**
- Research design
- Responsible conduct of research

**Effectiveness and Purpose**
- Time management
- Self care

**Communication**
- Grant proposal writing
- Public speaking
The Individual Development Plan

Structured Planning Tool

Set short-term goals
- Productive and intentional training

Set long-term goals
- Build professional skills, meet interests & values

Mentoring tool
- Establish mentor/mentee expectations, have difficult conversations

Living document
- Revisit yearly to assess progress and revise goals

- Mentoring tool

- Structured Planning Tool
# Early Stage
**Doctor of Philosophy: 1-2 years**

- Develop broad-based knowledge of field
- Determine more specific topic for your thesis
- Complete safety and other required training
- Learn about Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)
- Learn how to use citation manager software
- Identify dissertation supervisory committee members
- Learn about rigor and reproducibility in research

## Research Skills and Knowledge

- Join professional society in field
- Volunteer for organizations and conferences in field
- Develop funding plan and apply for fellowships and grants
- Help organize events

## Management and Leadership

- Become familiar with Gainesville and campus culture
- Learn expectations of department and campus culture
- Create Individual Development Plan (IDP) degree timeline
- Become familiar with campus resources
- Devise time management strategies
- Devise wellness strategies
- Identify purpose and goals of graduate education

## Effectiveness and Purpose

- Identify and build relationships with mentors
- Establish mutual expectations with advisor
- Learn proper conference attendance etiquette
- Participate in conferences, seminars, and department events
- Present at conferences
- Present at local and international conferences

## Professionalism

- Attend teaching assistant workshops
- Visit the Dial Center for Written and Oral Communication
- Take a proposal writing course
- Use your library's publication, submission standards, and writing style
- Visit Writing Studio

## Communication

- Create Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Review curriculum vitae or resume with mentors and colleagues
- Meet with career services
- Set up LinkedIn profile
- Research internships

## Career Advancement

- Revise and revise Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Review curriculum vitae or resume
- Explore career options
- Contact potential collaborators and employers
- Do internship or externship
- Start to build intentional network

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# Middle Stage
**Doctor of Philosophy: 2-4 years**

- Start writing articles for publication
- Develop dissertation proposal or project proposal/prospectus
- Learn identify and develop tools and skills needed for research
- Continue to develop expertise and skills
- Complete comprehensive and/or qualifying exams
- Engage in heavy data gathering
- Complete proposal writing training
- Complete data visualization training

## Research Skills and Knowledge

- Mentor undergraduate students
- Serve in leadership role in professional society
- Seek out and lead collaborative efforts
- Attend leadership and management development training
- Join university committees
- Apply for dissertation fellowships and grants

## Management and Leadership

- Identify values and compatible career options
- Enhance emotional intelligence
- Evaluate skills and areas for improvement
- Devise time management strategies
- Practice self-care

## Effectiveness and Purpose

- Present at conferences
- Find out about local and international funding
- Serve on university committees
- Expand student organizations and community outreach
- Present at conferences
- Expand pool of mentors and peers
- Gain international experience

## Professionalism

- Serve as a teaching assistant or teach course
- Attend career fairs and interview/negotiation workshops
- Participate in conferences, seminars, and department events
- Attend career fairs and interview/negotiation workshops
- Conduct informational interviews
- Define LinkedIn profile

## Communication

- Develop and teach course
- Complete at Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) contest
- Form or join writing group and engage in peer editing
- Attend Dissertation Bootcamp
- Write early career proposal/fellowship application

## Career Advancement

- Revise and revise Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Review curriculum vitae or resume with mentors and colleagues
- Attend career fairs and interview/negotiation workshops
- Conduct informational interviews
- Define LinkedIn profile

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# Final Stage
**Doctor of Philosophy: 4-6 years**

- Practice presenting dissertation to peers and faculty
- Ensure appropriate storage and access of data and protocols
- Write dissertation
- Publish research
- Develop independent research plan

## Management and Leadership

- Mentor early graduate students
- Engage in peer mentoring
- Apply for postdoctoral fellowships and grants
- Develop entrepreneurial skills

## Effectiveness and Purpose

- Present at conferences
- Network for diverse career options
- Be a positive representative of school and field
- Promote accomplishments on social media
- Create ePortfolio

## Professionalism

- Attend teaching assistant workshops
- Visit the Dial Center for Written and Oral Communication
- Take a proposal writing course
- Use your library's publication, submission standards, and writing styles
- Visit Writing Studio

## Communication

- Develop and teach course
- Complete at Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) contest
- Form or join writing group and engage in peer editing
- Attend Dissertation Bootcamp
- Write early career proposal/fellowship application

## Career Advancement

- Revise and revise Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Review curriculum vitae or resume with mentors and colleagues
- Attend career fairs and interview/negotiation workshops
- Conduct informational interviews
- Define LinkedIn profile

- Prepare job application materials and practice “job talk”
- Apply for any necessary visas
Campus Resources

Office of Graduate Professional Development
Office of Graduate Professional Development

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Office of Graduate Professional Development

• Weekly professional development workshops
  – Finding a thesis/dissertation topic
  – Giving effective oral presentations
  – Finding scholarly information
  – Academic writing
  – My world is not my doctoral program
Office of Graduate Professional Development

- One-on-one professional development advising
- One-on-one career advising (with C3)
- Roadmap for Success
- Fall Series: Successful Job Search
- Spring: Preparing Future Faculty
- Writing program
Campus Resources

- Counseling and Wellness Center
- Libraries
- Career Connections Center
- Office of Teaching Excellence
- Dial Center for Written and Oral Communication
- GatorWell
- Thrive@UF
- Writing Studio
NCFDD

SKILL #1: Every Semester Needs a Plan
Watch Now

SKILL #2: How to Align Your Time with Your Priorities
Watch Now

SKILL #3: How to Develop a Daily Writing Practice
Watch Now

SKILL #4: Mastering Academic Time Management
Watch Now

SKILL #5: Moving from Resistance to Writing
Watch Now

SKILL #6: The Art of Saying No
Watch Now

SKILL #7: Cultivating Your Network of Mentors, Sponsors, & Collaborators
Watch Now

SKILL #8: Overcoming Academic Perfectionism
Watch Now
LinkedIn Learning

Top liked on LinkedIn Learning

- Negotiating Your Job Offer (1h 19m)
- Managing High Potentials (17m 31s)
- Cert Prep: Project Management Professional (PMP)® (6h 15m)
- Working with Difficult People (1h 46m)
Employee Assistance Program

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Call: 833.306.0103  Your toll-free number gives you direct, 24/7 access to a licensed counselor, who will answer your questions and, if needed, refer you to a counselor or other resources.
TTY: 800.697.0353

Online: guidanceresources.com  Log on today to connect directly with a consultant about your issue or to access articles, podcasts, videos and other helpful tools.
App: GuidanceNow™  
Web ID: UFEAP
Fall 2020 content:

- **Course:**
  - Equity in STEM for all genders
- **MOOC:**
  - An introduction to evidence-based STEM teaching
- **Workshops:**
  - Bring an inclusive mindset to your teaching
  - Reducing math anxiety among students
- **Events:**
  - Engaging students through high-impact practices
Staying informed

A RESOURCE AND OPPORTUNITY NEWSLETTER
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA GRADUATE SCHOOL OFFICE OF GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OGPD Website
OGPD Calendar
Submit Your Event to OGPD
Balance is Important

• Don’t focus on your project to the exclusion of everything else

• Earning a graduate degree is like running a marathon: you can’t run like a sprinter and expect to reach the finish line

• You need to cultivate your mental and physical wellness to be a high performer
  • Treat these activities as investments: they increase the quality of your work
What next?

• Attend professional development opportunities on campus!
• Explore the wealth of resources UF has to offer
• Specific advice with clear directions: http://faculty.washington.edu/wpratt/survive.htm
Take Away

• Grad school can be an amazing time
• Do the best you can – that’s why you’re going to graduate school
• Don’t neglect “soft skills”
• Set goals - but be flexible
• Explore other interests – it’ll make you happier and might just land you a job
• Build relationships