

DISSECT Graduate Program Evaluation Tool for Racial/Ethnic Marginalized Students

DISCLAIMER: *We are a group of clinical psychology PhD students who identify as Asian American, Black American, Multiracial, and Middle Eastern (Lebanese) cisgender women. We acknowledge that our experiences do not represent all experiences and there may be important factors that we may have missed in creating this tool. Given our reliance on lived experiences in developing a tool for racial/ethnic marginalized students, we focused primarily on anti-racism and racial/ethnic marginalization. However, we want to acknowledge that systems of oppression and marginalization occur in various forms beyond racism, including heterosexism, ableism, sexism, classism, ageism, religious persecution, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism. Furthermore, individuals who hold multiple oppressed identities experience unique intersectional experiences of oppression and discrimination. Thus, we view this tool as iterative and open to feedback. We welcome any suggestions or additions to improve this tool, which can be emailed to stephaniehyu@ucla.edu and dejcleme@okstate.edu.*

Instructions: The aim of this tool is to provide insight to assist systematically excluded and/or racial/ethnic marginalized students in considering important factors for selecting a graduate program. *Students can use this tool however they see fit.* Suggestions include asking current graduate students some of these questions after receiving an offer from a program and comparing programs based on responses to these questions by rating items via the scale below.

Higher scores on each module indicate greater engagement by the department, program, and/or lab in equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and anti-racism initiatives.

To what extent does/has the department/program...

5 – To a great extent

4 – Very much

3 – Moderately

2 – Somewhat

1 – Slightly

0 – Not at all

N/A - Not available; information not openly provided by department*

**It is recommended that for information that is not openly provided by the department, prospective students ask questions about these specific items to current graduate students either during the interview process or when making decisions after securing offers.*

***Footnotes indicate additional notes to consider in the Appendix.*

Item	Score
<i>Diversity & Inclusion</i>	
1. Have racially/ethnically diverse graduate student cohorts ¹	
2. Have racially/ethnically diverse faculty ¹	
3. Integrate content on racial/ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as the history of systemic racism in psychology, throughout all courses in the department curriculum (rather than only in a single course or lecture)	

4. Have a department and/or area-specific equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) officer	
5. Have committees to strategize EDI and anti-racism initiatives that center student voices and are equitably distributed such that the burden for implementing these initiatives is not only on racial/ethnic marginalized students and faculty ²	
6. Invite diverse speakers, as well as those who conduct research on racial/ethnic and cultural diversity, to give talks at department events	
7. Offer grants specifically to fund projects or protect time for faculty or graduate students conducting EDI and anti-racist work within the department	
<i>Equity/Access</i>	
8. Take action to make the graduate application process more accessible and equitable. Examples: ● Hold annual diversity information sessions (i.e., webinars, coffee hours) ● Hold annual “Diversifying Psychology” days/weekends ● Dropped the GRE requirement ● Require applicants to write a diversity statement/share their perspective on EDI ● Offer online interviews that do not disadvantage applicants who are unable to interview in-person ● Provide application fee waivers ● Post internship match rates and licensure pass rates³ ● Other methods of making the application process more accessible and equitable not listed here	
9. Take direct action to support living wages and better working conditions for graduate students (e.g., unequivocal support for graduate student strikes ⁴ , recent graduate student stipend increases).	
10. Distribute general departmental awards/scholarships/fellowships equitably to support research on racial/ethnic and cultural diversity in psychology conducted by racial/ethnic marginalized students	
11. Offer departmental awards/scholarships/fellowships that specifically support research on racial/ethnic and cultural diversity in psychology conducted by racial/ethnic marginalized students	
12. Provide departmental support to undocumented students both with and without DACA comparable to other students in the program, including but not limited to stipends/fellowships, teaching assistantships, and health benefits ⁴	

13. Provide equal opportunity for undocumented students both with and without DACA to apply for internal departmental and university fellowships, grants, scholarships and other types of funding ⁵	
14. Provide additional resources, such as legal consultants or offices, to support undocumented students both with and without DACA in navigating social and legal issues ⁵	
15. Provide departmental support to international students comparable to other students in the program, including but not limited to out-of-state tuition waivers, stipends, teaching assistantships, and health benefits	
16. Provide equal opportunity for international students to apply for internal departmental and university fellowships, grants, scholarships and other types of funding	
17. Provide additional resources, such as legal consultants or offices, to support international students in navigating social and legal issues, such as assisting prospective students in applying for a Visa	
18. Provide faculty training on best practices for mentorship of racial/ethnic marginalized students	
19. Fund undergraduate research programs supporting the research of students who have been systematically excluded from academia on the basis of their race/ethnicity	
<i>Anti-racism</i>	
20. Release statements condemning racism in various forms (i.e., xenophobia, anti-Asian violence, Indigenous erasure) and supporting racial/ethnic marginalized students ⁶	
21. Release statements condemning anti-Black racism, in support of Black Lives Matter and Black students ⁶	
22. Disseminate a land acknowledgment that elevates Indigenous people and highlights their land rights, with attention to the local history of colonialism, forced removal of Indigenous people, and erasure of their history ⁶	
23. Host graduate student spaces (e.g., therapeutic services, support groups, activist organizations) specifically to support racial/ethnic marginalized students during ongoing racial violence	

24. Have racial/ethnic marginalized students who report experiences of racism and/or microaggressions from their peers, faculty, or the department (reverse coded)	
25. Have embedded mechanisms for students to report racism and/or microaggressions from their peers, faculty, or the department, with clearly outlined protocols for how the department will respond	
26. Have workgroups or committees to strategize and implement anti-racist initiatives aimed towards <i>power redistribution and structural changes</i> within the department that include and center student voices ²	
27. Publicly acknowledge the university/department/program's racist history and invite open dialogue with the community about how they can enact anti-racist policies	
28. Conduct program evaluations of existing racist policies and programs that disadvantage racial/ethnic marginalized students	
TOTAL SCORE	

Clinical Module

Item	Score
1. Have racially/ethnically diverse clinical supervisors	
2. Facilitate clinical training and supervision from a multicultural lens, such that trainees and supervisors are encouraged to consider identity factors of the client, graduate student therapist, and supervisor in therapy and supervision	
3. Provide training on how to manage racism or microaggressions towards the trainee during therapy	
4. Integrate course content on cultural responsiveness in therapy, as well as on the history of racism in mental health treatment, throughout the clinical curriculum (rather than only in a single course or lecture)	
5. Have mechanisms in place to safeguard against the use of clinical assessments and/or measures with harmful or biased wording	
6. Offer opportunities to provide services in another language	
7. Offer practicum placements to provide services with diverse and/or marginalized communities and clinic settings	

8. Provide consideration of or clinical training on community intervention approaches or frameworks to mental health treatment that move beyond typical clinical delivery models (e.g., Radical Healing)	
TOTAL SCORE	

Lab-Specific Module

To what extent does the prospective faculty advisor/mentor...

5 – To a great extent

4 – Very much

3 – Moderately

2 – Somewhat

1 – Slightly

0 – Not at all

N/A - Not available; information not openly provided by the faculty advisor and/or lab website*

**It is recommended that for information that is not openly provided by the faculty advisor and/or lab website, prospective students ask questions about these specific items to current graduate students either during the interview process or when making decisions after securing offers*

Item	Score
1. Have/mentor diverse graduate students from racial/ethnic marginalized groups in their lab to graduation	
2. Address potential experiences of racism or microaggressions towards their graduate student mentees within and outside of the lab, including from themselves	
3. Acknowledge and provide space for racial/ethnic marginalized mentees to process ongoing racial violence (e.g., during individual and lab meetings)	
4. Seek out and attend faculty training on best practices for mentorship of racial/ethnic marginalized students	
5. Participate in EDI and anti-racism initiatives for the department	
6. Discuss factors related to racial/ethnic and cultural diversity when providing mentorship on their graduate student mentees' research	
7. Know about and support graduate student mentees in applying for funding specifically for racial/ethnic marginalized students historically excluded from academia	

8. Take direct action to support living wages and better working conditions for graduate students in their lab (e.g., fund graduate students on their grants, express unequivocal support for recent graduate student strikes ⁴).	
9. Model reflexivity when conducting community-based research with marginalized groups to ensure active collaboration with and meaningful involvement of members of these groups with relevant lived experiences	
TOTAL SCORE ⁶	

APPENDIX

We provide the following working definitions of equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism to frame this tool (University of Michigan, n.d.):

- **Equity:** Equal opportunity to achieve the same outcomes, with recognition that individuals from oppressed groups are systematically disadvantaged and should have differentiated inputs from an organization to achieve these same outcomes; when “everyone has the opportunity to dance”
- **Diversity:** the presence of individuals of diverse backgrounds, including by race and ethnicity, citizenship status, language, national origin, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, (dis)ability, religion, age, and socioeconomic status; when “everyone is invited to the party”
- **Inclusion:** the voices of individuals of diverse backgrounds, particularly those from marginalized groups, are welcomed and heard, marginalized voices can be expressed safely, and are more importantly heard, ultimately influencing decision making and future directions; when “everyone gets to contribute to the playlist”
- **Anti-racism:** “the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably” (NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity, n.d.,)

Footnotes

1. When responding to questions 1 and 2 (To what extent does the department/program have racially/ethnically diverse graduate student cohorts/faculty?), consider whether the department/program has historically recruited racially/ethnically diverse graduate students and faculty, or if purposeful recruitment has been motivated only recently due to heightened attention to and demands of accountability for issues of systemic racism that have always been there, but were not as salient or attended to by the White majority prior to the racial justice protests in the summer of 2020. We did not include explicit consideration of historical inclusion and recruitment of diverse students and faculty in this tool given that this information can be difficult to find for prospective students. However, we want to encourage students to evaluate whether this appears to be a value of the department/program or a performative action.

It is also important to consider diversity and inclusion of individuals of graduate students/faculty from multiple racial/ethnic groups. In other words, be wary of representation of individuals from one racial/ethnic group but not others. Furthermore, it is important to consider the diversity and inclusion of students and faculty from marginalized groups beyond race/ethnicity, including students who are neurodivergent, sexual or gender minorities, disabled, socioeconomically or geographically disadvantaged, linguistic minorities, etc., or who hold multiple marginalized identities simultaneously.

Finally, while diversity of current graduate students/faculty is an important minimum standard of graduate programs, be wary of indications of tokenism. Racial tokenism

occurs when those from racial/ethnic marginalized groups account for less than 15% of the total workforce in a context (Flores Niemann, 2017), representing a program's symbolic effort to give the appearance of inclusion rather than a true effort to dismantle systemic barriers. Racial tokenism is difficult to operationalize and thus we did not include its explicit consideration in the tool. However, examples can include if a few students from specific racial/ethnic groups are present at all interview events and called on to speak on behalf of all racial/ethnic marginalized students; or if programs provide media advertisements, such as videos or brochures, touting the accomplishments of racial/ethnic marginalized scholars without actually having individuals representing these racial/ethnic groups within their cohorts and faculty.

2. Does the burden to implement EDI and anti-racism initiatives fall solely on one workgroup/committee that is made up of primarily racial/ethnic marginalized students and faculty, or are initiatives distributed throughout workgroups and other mechanisms within the department? If so, this may be an indication about structural support for EDI initiatives and how they are or are not sustained.
3. Successful clinical psychology internship match rates do not differ significantly for racial/ethnic marginalized applicants (Dimmick & Callahan, 2021). However, racial/ethnic marginalized individuals demonstrate significantly lower first time pass rates on the licensure exam for psychology (Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology; EPPP) compared their White peers. (Sharpless, 2019 & 2021). In attempts to address this disparity, how has the university helped to prepare racially/ethnically marginalized students for a successful first time internship match and licensure exam pass rate (e.g. covers the cost of study material, offers prep courses, disseminates study tips and practice workbooks)? Is the university transparent about disclosing student internship match rates and first time pass rates for licensure?
4. Unions representing graduate students within the [University of California system](#) and adjunct faculty in [The New School](#) went on strike in 2022. Strikes vary in terms of their demands, but are often in service of fighting for living wages and better working conditions for academic workers, and can also include demands to enhance equity for marginalized students (e.g., disability justice, international student fee remissions, greater support for caregivers). It is the bare minimum for faculty/programs to agree not to retaliate against striking graduate students. Whether or not a faculty mentor or graduate program as a whole supports/has unequivocally supported graduate student strikes (and strikes in general) is strongly indicative of how they see/value graduate students in their programs, as well as whether they truly act in line with their purported values of DEI. **If you are applying to a graduate program that has undergone a recent strike, we HIGHLY recommend that you ask multiple graduate students what the faculty/program response has been.**
5. For more in-depth resources on how to assess universities for their commitment to supporting undocumented students, please refer to the following excellent resources developed by UndocuPhDs: 1) [ten important questions to ask the department](#) and 2) a guide on [Assessing Institutional UndocuCompetence](#). Furthermore, policies related to undocumented students vary by state, as well as internationally.
6. Note that university/department/program statements condemning racism in support of racial/ethnic marginalized students, as well as land acknowledgments highlighting the land rights of Indigenous people, are the bare minimum and can be indicative of

performative action if not coupled with active efforts to dismantle systems of oppression within the department (see item 21).

7. If your prospective mentor receives a low score (or you are a mentor rating yourself on this tool) in the “Lab-Specific Module,” see the Stage 2 Mentorship/Advisor Relationships resources in our DISSECT Marginalized Survival Kit linked here: https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Helping_Give_Away_Psychological_Science/Marginalized_Survival_Kit:_Navigating_Academia_as_a_Marginalized_Student

Other Considerations:

- In addition to the items on this tool, it is recommended that prospective students directly ask current racial/ethnic marginalized students whether they feel supported by their department/program and their peers, as well as whether they feel a sense of community within their department/program. Qualitative reports of how supported students feel are just as important as quantitative indices, such as the proportion of racially/ethnically diverse students in a program, for evaluating actions taken within the department/program. Universities, departments/programs, and faculty may be implementing a number of concrete EDI and anti-racist initiatives, but these hold little meaning if racial/ethnic marginalized students themselves ultimately do not feel supported within their graduate communities. Support may look different to different people (e.g., professional development support, emotional support, financial support) and what is meaningful or needed for you individually to succeed may vary year to year. It is recommended to ask multiple students about their experiences to hear the full spectrum of what support may look like for current students at any one program.
- Another consideration when choosing between departments are their approaches to lived experiences in the interview. While graduate training is a professional endeavor, you are a whole person whose experiences undoubtedly played a role in your research and clinical interests. It is recommended to think about how that shows up during this stage. Do interviewers express interest in your prior professional and relevant personal experiences? Is there an explicit and/or subtle devaluation of “me-search,” or research about marginalized communities conducted by members of those communities (Thai et al., 2021)?

References

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