

Additional Questions you might want to ask graduate students and faculty during your visit to X Graduate Program

The PhD Program

1. What is the reputation of the graduate program?
2. What do you consider the strengths of the graduate program?
3. What do you consider the weaknesses of the graduate program?
4. Why do you like about X?
5. What don't you like about X?
6. Why did you decide to come to X?
7. What qualities did you look for in a graduate program?
8. What are the methodological resources for research?
9. Do graduate students obtain strong quantitative training?
10. Is there specific training/equipment/course work in my primary area?
11. How much collaboration occurs within the department?
12. Are students treated like collaborators (or overqualified research assistants)?
13. How many first author publications do most students graduate with?
14. Are students working on cutting-edge projects?
15. Are these publications in top journals or secondary outlets (e.g., chapters)?
16. What are the future trends in the program/department?
17. Are you hiring new faculty in the future (what is the ratio of junior to senior faculty)?
18. What is the drop out rate?
19. How many years do most students take to complete the program?
20. What is available academically outside of classes? (lab meetings, discussions, symposia, colloquia, reading groups, etc.)
21. How often do outside speakers and visiting scholars visit?
22. What are the networking opportunities (e.g., Four College Conference, major conferences in the area)?
23. How have recent graduates fared on the job market? (postdocs, research universities, liberal arts colleges, industry, etc.)
24. When students graduate, what makes them stand out relative to others on the job market?
25. How successful are former students after they leave (e.g., are they winning awards or failing to get tenure)?
26. Do graduate students get office space?
27. Do graduate students have skilled research assistants?
28. What do students and faculty do during the summer?
29. Are other grad students/post-docs around and able to help if the PI is unavailable?

Mentoring

1. How helpful and responsive (e.g., emails, meetings, manuscript reviews, stats questions) is your potential advisor?
2. How productive are students in my potential advisor's lab?
3. Are students in this lab taking the lead on projects?
4. What is your advisor's policy regarding authorship?
5. Are the students in this lab conducting cutting-edge research?
6. How much feedback do students get on their progress?
7. If I come up with new ideas or new approaches, will faculty be willing to work with me?
8. How often do grad students work with faculty members who are not their primary advisor?
9. Is it possible to work with faculty from other areas or other departments?
10. How many students does each faculty member advise?
11. What is the mentoring philosophy of my potential advisor(s)?
12. How often does the faculty member meet with his/her students?
13. How often does the lab meet as a group?
14. How supportive are other faculty?

15. Which are the best labs to work in? (hint: there is significant variation across labs)
16. How many studies to grad students normally work on at a given time?
17. Are the students fulfilled?

Funding

1. What is the funding situation for students?
2. Is summer funding available?
3. Is travel funding available?
4. How many students have graduate fellowships?
5. Do students win other major awards?
6. Are health care benefits available?

Teaching

1. Are students required to teach many courses?
2. What are the teaching/teaching assistant requirements?
3. Do students get to plan their own courses?
4. Do I get paid to teach?

Coursework

1. What types of graduate courses are offered?
2. What are the degree requirements? (coursework, general exam, oral exam, dissertation, etc.)
3. How heavy is the course load?
4. How are classes structured? (reading, exams, discussions, presentations, etc.)
5. How many statistics courses are available?
6. Do students allowed to audit courses that they aren't required to take?
7. How much background will I get in other areas of training in the program?
8. Can I take elective courses in other departments or universities?

Social Life

1. Do students get together socially?
2. How friendly is the program atmosphere?
3. How supportive or competitive are the students here?
4. How do you like living in X?
5. What non-academic activities do students here normally engage in?
6. How much informal, casual interaction takes place between the faculty and the students?

Miscellaneous

1. What is the intellectual environment like outside the department (is it vibrant or boring)?
2. Are there other opportunities in the University/City for you to pursue your professional interests (e.g., science writing, collaboration with other departments, research in applied contexts, etc)?