

Doctoral Student Experience Survey: 2016 Results

The Graduate Center, Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness

Respondents

- The Doctoral Student Experience Survey was administered in November 2016. A total of 710 of the 3,322 Fall 2016 enrolled doctoral students responded to the survey, for a response rate of approximately 21%; 669 students completed the entire survey. Approximately 85% provided consent for their survey responses to be matched to their other GC data for research purposes.
- 31% of survey respondents are in the Humanities cluster, 29% in the Science cluster, and 40% in the Social Science cluster (compared to 31%, 27%, and 42%, respectively in the Fall 2016 population). Response rates by program are provided in the Appendix.
- The survey respondents slightly over-represent females and students in Levels 1 and 2, and under-represent males, URM students and students in Level 3.

	SURVEY RESPONDENTS	FALL 2016
FEMALE	441 (62%)	1,856 (56%)
MALE	267 (38%)	1,463 (44%)
UNDER-REPRESENTED MINORITY	75 (17%)	496 (24%)
LEVEL 1	248 (35%)	1,023 (31%)
LEVEL 2	201 (29%)	798 (24%)
LEVEL 3	255 (36%)	1,501 (45%)
HUMANITIES	218 (31%)	1,041 (31%)
SCIENCES	208 (29%)	891 (27%)
SOCIAL SCIENCES	284 (40%)	1,390 (42%)

Application & Admission Process

- The majority of respondents indicated that the GC provided them with accurate information about costs (69%, N=681), a realistic assessment of financial support (60%, N=680), clear information about requirements and expectations (71%, N=680), and a timetable for completing program requirements (71%, N=681). However, less than half indicated that they were provided with the average time-to-degree for recent program graduates (49%, N=680) and information about career prospects for doctoral recipients in their field (43%, N=677). Less than one-third (29%, N=680) indicated receiving a list of places where recent program graduates were employed after graduation.

- Respondents indicated the following top three difficulties when transitioning into their graduate program (N=600): finances/funding (45%), feeling like they belong in their program (35%), and amount of class or other program work (34%).

Assessment

- About 42% of respondents indicated that, other than course grades and satisfactory progress letters from the Registrar, they are not provided with an annual or more frequent assessment of their academic progress. Among those who are assessed (N=240), over 90% indicate that such assessment is helpful.
- Many students indicated that they do not receive sufficient guidance from their program on preparing for their first and second examinations. Students in the Science cluster were least likely to indicate receiving guidance to prepare for their exams.

<i>I received sufficient guidance from my program on preparing for my:</i>	Percentage agreeing (either “strongly” or “somewhat”)				<i>N</i>
	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Social Science</i>	<i>Total</i>	
First examination	81.0	57.6	60.4	63.6	107
Second examination	64.8	54.5	55.8	58.1	124

The Dissertation

- Approximately 60% of respondents receive sufficient guidance from their program on the dissertation process, with some variability among the clusters. Students in the Social Science cluster were less likely to agree with the survey statements.
- Slightly less than one-quarter of respondents changed their dissertation topic (N=315). Students in the Science cluster were most likely to change their topic (33%), while students in the Humanities were least likely to change their topic (15.5%).

	Percentage agreeing (either “strongly” or “somewhat”)				<i>N</i>
	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Social Science</i>	<i>Total</i>	
I received sufficient guidance from my program on selecting a dissertation topic	69.9	64.8	55.6	63.0	316
I received sufficient guidance from my program on selecting a dissertation advisor	58.6	56.8	38.7	50.5	317
There was/is a sufficient pool of faculty from which I could select a dissertation advisor	61.6	72.7	46.7	58.7	317
I have received sufficient guidance from my program on the dissertation process	77.9	60.2	46.0	60.3	317
A group of faculty members (in addition to my advisor) is keeping track of my dissertation process	58.6	61.4	47.5	55.2	317
I receive ongoing, constructive feedback on my dissertation from my advisor	76.0	83.0	76.4	78.2	316

	Percentage agreeing (either “strongly” or “somewhat”)				<i>N</i>
	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Social Science</i>	<i>Total</i>	
My own goals and research interests are incorporated into my doctoral dissertation	96.2	93.1	90.3	93.0	316
I believe that I am making steady progress on my dissertation	79.8	81.6	78.9	80.0	315

Advising

- The majority of students have positive relationships with their academic advisor, and are satisfied with academic advising at the GC. There are some very slight differences by cluster.

	Percentage agreeing (either “strongly” or “somewhat”)				<i>N</i>
	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Sciences</i>	<i>Social Sciences</i>	<i>Total</i>	
I would characterize my overall relationship with my faculty advisor as supportive	87.7	83.8	83.5	84.9	591
I am satisfied with the amount of time I spend with my advisor	73.3	73.5	72.5	73.1	590
I am satisfied with the quality of time I spend with my advisor	79.7	75.9	76.7	77.5	590
My advisor shows concern for my progress and well-being as a student	83.9	77.1	81.8	81.2	590
I receive timely, constructive feedback on my progress towards my degree from my advisor	75.9	73.3	71.7	73.6	586
I am able to work out disagreements or differences with my advisor	77.9	75.9	73.0	75.4	586

Climate

- The majority of students have a strong social support system, either within their program (21%), outside of their program (25%), or both (42%, N=578)
- The majority of students in all clusters believe that students are supportive of one another. However, students in the Humanities cluster were more likely than students in the Science or Social Sciences clusters to report that their program encourages building a professional network and interacting with faculty outside of the program; and that they are satisfied with the quality of program-sponsored activities. Humanities students were also more likely to report a sense of belonging to their program, and a belief that doctoral students are treated with respect.
- Humanities students are less satisfied with the amount of diversity and inclusion at the GC, compared to students in the Sciences and Social Sciences.

	Percentage agreeing (either “strongly” or “somewhat”)				N
	Humanities	Science	Social Science	Total	
Students in my program are supportive of one another	85.1	86.0	83.6	84.8	579
My program encourages students to build a professional network that includes faculty outside of my program at the GC	71.5	58.5	59.7	63.0	578
My program encourages students to interact with faculty outside of my program at other institutions	69.8	49.7	49.3	55.8	577
I am satisfied with the quality of program-sponsored activities designed to promote social interaction within my program	61.0	43.8	47.4	50.6	575
At this point in my studies, I feel a sense of belonging to my program	74.8	67.3	62.9	67.9	577
Doctoral students in my program are adequately represented on standing committees	58.4	50.4	47.6	51.7	573
I am satisfied with the amount of diversity and inclusiveness at the GC.	50.5	71.2	60.5	60.5	574
Doctoral students in my program are treated with respect	83.4	79.1	73.2	78.1	576

Professional Development & Career Advising

- The majority of respondents indicated that they received instruction, practice, or professional development training, either formally or informally, in the following areas: research/professional ethics (84%, N=647), conducting independent research (77%, N=647), oral communication and presentation skills (74%, N=650), teaching/pedagogy (70%, N=647), preparing articles for publication (66%, N=648), and writing proposals for funding (64%, N=647). Areas in which relatively fewer students received training are: creating written materials (CVs, resumes, etc.) for a job search (54%, N=647), supervision and evaluation of others’ work (53%, N=644), and preparation for job interviews (41%, N=645).
- The top three sources for career advice at the GC are: faculty advisors (66%), program Executive Officers or Coordinators (37.5%), and formal workshops offered by programs (30%). Just under 50% believed that career advice from a faculty advisor has been most helpful compared to other available sources of career advice (N=640).
- Half of the respondents are satisfied with the career advice they have received at the GC (N=595), and 43% are satisfied overall with the career-related services and resources available at the GC (N=596).
- The majority of students feel they can obtain guidance at the GC regarding faculty careers (73%, N=595) and other careers in education (51%, N=591). However, fewer students agreed that they can obtain guidance regarding careers in non-profit organizations (33%, N=589), the private sector (32%, N=586), and government (29%, N=587).

- Similarly, students believe that their program does a good job preparing students for faculty careers (78%, N=597) and other careers in education (53%, N=591), but less so for other types of careers (26.5% or less, N's range from 584 to 588).
- The top three career-related services/resources in terms of percentage rated either extremely or somewhat effective are: funding announcements (56%, N=580), speakers, panels and roundtables with career professionals (53%, N=574), and internship, part-time and full-time job postings (43%, N=580).
- Approximately 8% (N=563) completed an internship while at the GC. Among those completing an internship, 64% were paid and 36% were unpaid (N=45).

Research & Professional Development Support

- Approximately 38% (N=651) of students indicated that they received financial support from the GC to attend professional meetings or conferences. About 24% had work published in a scholarly journal or publication as first author, and an additional 9.4% had work published as secondary author (N=648).
- The majority of students (88%, N=648) assisted with research and/or conducted their own research during their time at the GC; however about 21% are not satisfied with the amount of research they have conducted.

	Percentage agreeing (either “strongly” or “somewhat”)				N
	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Social Science</i>	<i>Total</i>	
I am encouraged by my program to attend professional meetings/conferences	86.5	73.8	79.9	80.1	652
I am encouraged by my program to publish in scholarly journals and publications	74.8	73.2	75.9	74.7	652
I am satisfied with the amount of research I have conducted at the GC	65.5	59.9	51.4	58.3	647

Teaching

- By the time they finish their program at the GC, 8% of survey respondents believe they will not teach a course, 26% believe they will teach 1-5 courses, 34% believe they will teach 5-10 courses, and 32% believe they will teach more than 10 courses (N=572). Humanities students estimated teaching more courses than students in the Sciences or Social Sciences.
- The majority of students (58%) teach courses only at CUNY, while a smaller number teach only outside of CUNY (2%) or both at CUNY and outside of CUNY (17%, N=526).
- A small percentage of students (9%) have taught hybrid or online courses inside or outside CUNY (N=566)
- As shown in the table below, many students need additional training and support in teaching and pedagogy.

	Percentage agreeing (either "strongly" or "somewhat")				N
	Humanities	Science	Social Science	Total	
I was appropriately prepared and trained before entering the classroom.	32.9	37.4	29.1	32.8	513
I am satisfied with the teaching support I have received at the GC.	33.5	36.7	24.9	31.0	512
The teaching experience available during my time at the GC is adequate preparation for an academic/teaching career.	65.3	41.7	53.9	54.2	513
My teaching experience helps me develop or is related to my research interests.	50.0	32.4	44.7	43.0	512
Training in teaching and pedagogy was a valued part of my professional development experience.	48.5	46.0	37.9	43.4	509
I was given adequate notice of the courses that I was assigned to teach on CUNY's campuses.	46.7	43.9	46.3	45.7	512
I was given adequate support when teaching a new course on CUNY's campuses.	32.1	29.0	28.2	29.6	510

Career Goals

- 29% of respondents are currently looking for a full-time position, and 7% are looking for a part-time position that utilizes their doctoral experience (N=562). The majority (68%) are willing to relocate for employment (N=558).
- Just under three-quarters of respondents hope to secure a faculty career, 38% are interested in careers in the private sector, 26% are interested in non-profits, 22% on other careers in education (not faculty), and 21% on government careers (N=561). The majority of respondents (66%) prefer working for a U.S. 4-year college or university other than a medical school (N=556).

Administrative & Student Services

- The percentage of students rating administrative offices and services either excellent or good (among those not indicating that they did not use the service) ranged from 46% to 75% (N's ranged from 556 to 561).
- The five highest rated offices/services are: on-campus computer resources (75% rated excellent or good, N=561), the Bursar's Office (74%, N=559), International Student Services (71%, N=557), the Provost's Office (71%, N=557), and web-based computer resources (69%, N=560).
- The three lowest rated offices/services are: space available for social interaction among students in a program (46% rated excellent or good, N=558), Information Technology Office (53%, N=560), and GC-provided child care (53%, N=59).
- Approximately 82% of students rated the overall GC library services as excellent or good (N=559).

Funding & Financial Support

- Almost 90% of respondents are working for pay this semester (N=567).
- About 43% of students applied for external grants or fellowships not funded by the GC or CUNY. Of those who applied, 44% won at least once (N=561).
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents received a five-year GC fellowship (N=553).
- The top three sources of financial support for students are GC fellowships (73%), adjunct teaching at CUNY (27%), and a spouse's, partner's or family earnings or savings (24%, N=556).
- Only about 30% indicate that they receive sufficient financial support to maintain an acceptable standard of living (N=557).
- Just under 40% agreed that the GC's stipends are competitive compared to other institutions to which they applied (N=554).

Academic Progress

- The top three factors cited as obstacles to academic progress are work obligations (34% say this is a major obstacle and 35% say this is a minor obstacle, N=554), family obligations (14% and 38%, respectively, N=555), and program requirements (13% and 35%, respectively, N=553).
- 67% of respondents anticipate the total time spent in their program will be 5-7 years (N=563).
- Just under two-thirds of respondents believe that insufficient funding slows their progress toward earning the degree (N=558).

Overall Satisfaction with the Graduate Center

- The majority of survey respondents are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their program's curriculum (80%, N=559), teaching by program faculty (79%, N=558), their program's intellectual climate (83%, N=558), their research experience (81%, N=552), and their program overall (85%, N=557). Responses by program are shown in the Appendix.
- 79% would recommend their program to other students considering graduate studies in their field (N=560).

Appendix

Response Rates by Program

	Number of Respondents	Number of Fall 2016 Enrolled Students	Response Rate
Anthropology	26	158	16%
Art History	18	126	14%
Audiology	21	42	50%
Biochemistry	12	83	14%
Biology	44	147	30%
Business	24	57	42%
Chemistry	43	120	36%
Classics	6	22	27%
Comparative Literature	16	96	17%
Computer Science	16	114	14%
Criminal Justice	13	96	14%
Earth and Environmental Sciences	10	92	11%
Economics	18	114	16%
Educational Psychology	13	59	22%
English	27	216	13%
French	9	36	25%
Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages	25	84	30%
History	27	115	23%
Linguistics	12	59	20%
Mathematics	11	91	12%
Music	44	185	24%
Nursing	14	51	27%
Philosophy	18	99	18%
Physics	22	104	21%
Political Science	20	86	23%
Psychology	98	445	22%
Social Welfare	14	65	22%
Sociology	38	140	27%
Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences	10	47	21%
Theatre	25	62	40%
Urban Education	9	111	8%

Overall Satisfaction by Program

	% Very Satisfied + % Somewhat Satisfied ^a					
	Curriculum	Teaching	Intellectual Climate	Research Experience	Program Overall	Would recommend program ^b
Anthropology	14 (74%)	14 (74%)	16 (84%)	13 (72%)	16 (84%)	14 (74%)
Art History	12 (80%)	12 (80%)	11 (73%)	12 (80%)	13 (87%)	10 (67%)
Audiology	10 (71%)	10 (71%)	9 (69%)	10 (71%)	8 (57%)	9 (64%)
Biochemistry	6 (67%)	5 (56%)	8 (89%)	9 (100%)	8 (89%)	7 (78%)
Biology	26 (74%)	25 (71%)	23 (66%)	31 (89%)	28 (80%)	21 (60%)
Business	17 (89%)	18 (95%)	18 (95%)	19 (100%)	19 (100%)	19 (100%)
Chemistry	26 (84%)	23 (74%)	25 (81%)	28 (93%)	28 (90%)	24 (75%)
Classics	3 (75%)	3 (75%)	3 (75%)	3 (75%)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)
Comparative Literature	11 (79%)	12 (86%)	13 (93%)	12 (86%)	12 (86%)	12 (86%)
Computer Science	11 (85%)	9 (69%)	13 (100%)	10 (77%)	11 (85%)	9 (69%)
Criminal Justice	12 (100%)	12 (100%)	12 (100%)	11 (100%)	12 (100%)	11 (92%)
Earth and Environmental Sciences	4 (67%)	5 (83%)	6 (100%)	5 (83%)	5 (83%)	4 (67%)
Economics	8 (67%)	7 (58%)	9 (75%)	9 (82%)	10 (83%)	10 (83%)
Educational Psychology	9 (75%)	8 (67%)	9 (75%)	4 (33%)	8 (67%)	7 (58%)
English	19 (95%)	17 (85%)	16 (80%)	15 (75%)	17 (85%)	18 (90%)
French	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	6 (86%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)
Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages	21 (100%)	21 (100%)	21 (100%)	20 (95%)	20 (100%)	21 (100%)
History	18 (86%)	19 (90%)	20 (95%)	19 (90%)	19 (90%)	20 (95%)
Linguistics	7 (70%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	7 (70%)	7 (70%)	7 (70%)
Mathematics	7 (78%)	7 (78%)	8 (89%)	7 (78%)	8 (89%)	7 (78%)
Music	26 (72%)	33 (92%)	31 (86%)	27 (77%)	30 (83%)	29 (81%)
Nursing	10 (91%)	11 (100%)	11 (100%)	10 (91%)	11 (100%)	10 (91%)
Philosophy	17 (100%)	15 (88%)	14 (82%)	17 (100%)	16 (94%)	15 (88%)
Physics	17 (89%)	14 (78%)	15 (79%)	15 (79%)	15 (79%)	15 (79%)
Political Science	11 (69%)	12 (75%)	11 (69%)	11 (69%)	12 (75%)	11 (69%)
Psychology	62 (78%)	56 (70%)	65 (81%)	66 (83%)	66 (83%)	62 (78%)
Social Welfare	12 (86%)	11 (79%)	13 (93%)	10 (77%)	11 (79%)	10 (71%)
Sociology	12 (50%)	15 (63%)	16 (67%)	11 (48%)	15 (63%)	16 (67%)
Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences	6 (67%)	6 (67%)	7 (78%)	6 (67%)	8 (89%)	8 (89%)
Theatre	22 (100%)	21 (95%)	21 (95%)	20 (91%)	21 (95%)	20 (91%)
Urban Education	5 (71%)	4 (57%)	6 (86%)	5 (71%)	5 (83%)	6 (86%)

^aPercentages are based on the number of students per program responding to the question.

^bPercentage indicating Strongly agree or Somewhat agree.