

Miwako Hisagi

My name is Miwako Hisagi, and I entered the program in September 2002 and graduated in May 2007. Also my co-chairs each had a 6 month sabbatical in 2005. Prior to CUNY, I received my master's degree in Linguistics and I was a full-time Japanese teacher for seven years. Through my teaching experience, I gradually accumulated my research topics and decided to pursue my career. Thus, when I came to CUNY, I already had my research topic, which I thought a "MUST" for the Ph.D. program. CUNY was somewhat unique in that sense (i.e., students can decide their research topic "after" they entered the program). Another unique point is that there are a lot of part-time students at CUNY. That is also unusual.

These are the crucial points if you want to graduate within certain years. If you know your research topic, and if you are full-time student, then you can probably graduate within seven years.

Of course you may need to do some adjustments for your research idea since you will learn some new ideas through the courses and the lab experience. But even though you may change your topic after entering the Ph.D., at least you should have some idea BEFORE you enter the Ph. D. program. Otherwise, it is easy to get lost while you are students.
My strong recommendation is:

1. Think VERY carefully BEFORE you become a PhD student.

Why do you need a Ph.D.?

What is your goal after the Ph.D.?

Is it worth being "poor (=student life ^_^)" for several years if you become a full-time student?

2. Have your tentative research topics with some background & reason BEFORE you become a PhD student.

3. If you are not sure, you might want to wait another year or so. That is to say, 1 year delay to enter the program might be better than 3 year delay of the graduation. :)

Everyone has a different background, different commitment in life and different personality. Thus, there is no one right answer.