University at Buffalo
Graduate School of Education

Fall 2026 GSE Orientation

Important Tips and Suggestions for New Graduate Students

Table of Contents

How to Thrive in Graduate School: Tips from GSE Students……...2

Working with Your Faculty Advisor……..4

Microaggressions: What To Do……5

GSE Departments and Programs……..6

How to Thrive in Graduate School:

Top Ten Tips from Current and Former GSE Students

1. Get to know the faculty in your department. Take classes from as many different faculty members as possible. Go to faculty office hours. Ask faculty about their research and professional interests, and talk to them about your own.

2. Graduate school is rigorous by design. Prepare to be challenged, but don't worry too much about your grades. Focus on learning what you need and want to learn.

3. Consider your future career goals and think about how your graduate experience can help you get there. Beyond earning the degree, take advantage of opportunities for networking, internships, mentoring, attending conferences and publishing. When possible, take advantage of the professional development sessions and other learning opportunities offered by your department, GSE and UB. This is an important part of your education outside of formal classes.

4. You will be doing a lot of reading and you will want to remember much of it. Consider using a citation manager such as EndNote to organize your reading and notes. This will be especially helpful as you prepare for comprehensive exams. EndNote is available for free to UB students at library.buffalo.edu/endnote/.

5. Advanced research and writing skills are complex and take time to develop. Seek out advice on how to do things like write for a scholarly or professional audience, find primary and secondary sources, conduct literature reviews, and plan a thesis or dissertation. Advice can come from your advisor' other faculty, fellow students, librarians , and books and web resources. Take the time to try different methods and figure out what works best for you.

6. Get to know your cohort and develop supportive relationships. Get to know students outside of your program and department as well, when possible. You may discover unexpected opportunities for collaboration.

7. Seek out opportunities to be involved in scholarly and professional conversations through presenting your work at conferences or publishing in journals.

8. Remember to take care of yourself! Graduate school can be stressful and the workload can be heavy, but don't feel guilty about taking the time you need to take care of your health and well-being needs. Build time for sleep, exercise and any other care you need into your schedule. Talk to faculty and other students about how they navigate work/life balance. You may find it

helpful to develop a self-care plan at the beginning of each semester, just as you plan your other activities.

9. Doctoral students: Start thinking about your dissertation topic as =soon as possible, but don't feel the need to commit right away. Discuss your ideas with your advisor, other faculty and other

students. Ask more advanced students about their topics and how they chose them.

10. Online students: Develop the habit of staying in regular contact with your advisor, instructors and fellow students. Take time early in the program to get familiar with UB's online resources, including the library website , UBLearns , and the GSE online education website.

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WORKING WITH YOUR ADVISOR

Your faculty advisor can help you with planning your coursework and finding opportunities during your Master's program that will help you achieve your future goals. Below are a few tips for establishing a productive relationship with your advisor.

GOAL SETTING



At the beginning of your graduate program, think about your short and long term goals. Share those with your advisor, and discuss your progress regularly. Let your advisor know what kinds of professional and academic opportunities you are interested in. If your goals change, let your advisor know.

MEETINGS



Meet with your advisor at least once per semester, in person or via video chat. Before each meeting, think about what you want to discuss, and let your advisor know beforehand. Arrive on time and prepared for meetings. If you don't understand something your advisor says, you should always feel free to ask clarifying questions.

COMMUNICATION



Working with your advisor is a two-way street. Learning to communicate effectively is essential. Shared expectations and open communication is a foundation for a meaningful advising/mentoring relationship that allows you to share what is working and what needs improvement.

The better your advisor knows you and your professional and academic goals, the better they can help you. Developing a good relationship with your advisor will make your graduate school experience more productive and beneficial.

From the Office of the Associate Dean for Student and Faculty Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer

MICROAGGRESSIONS

"Indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group."

WHAT TO DO IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU OR IN YOUR PRESENCE

FROM A PROFESSOR

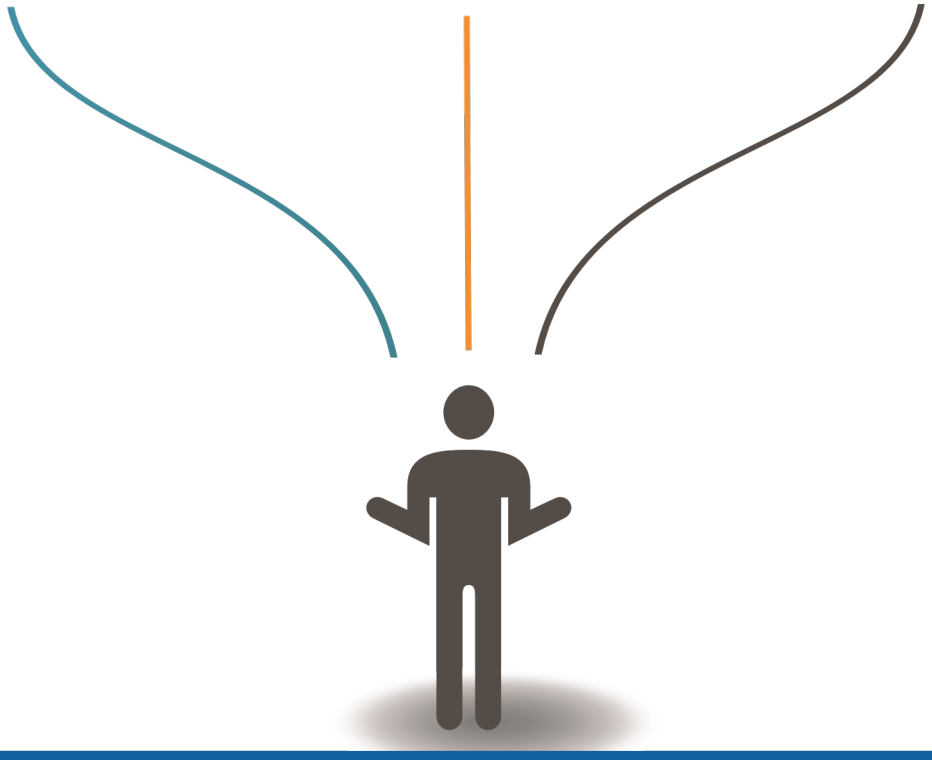
- If comfortable, explain why the comment was harmful and how it affected you.
- Speak with your professors outside of class and share your experience and what you need/want from them.
- If no response or support is received, speak with your advisor, program director, department chair or GSE's Senior Associate Dean for Faculty and Student Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer.

FROM A STUDENT

- If comfortable, explain why the comment was harmful and how it affected you.
- Get social support and seek advice from others with similar experiences or those you trust.
- If no response or support is received, speak with your advisor, program director, department chair or the GSE Senior Associate Dean for Faculty and Student Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer

AROUND CAMPUS

- If comfortable, explain why the comment was harmful and how it affected you.
- Get social support and seek advice from others with similar experiences or those you trust.
- Speak with your advisor for additional support.
- Take formal action through program or institutional channels.



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Graduate School of Education Departments and Programs

Counseling, School, and Educational Psychology	Educational Leadership and Policy	Learning and Instruction	Information Science
Master's Programs • Educational Data Science • Mental Health Counseling • Rehabilitation Counseling • School Counseling • School Psychology **Doctoral Programs** • Counseling Psychology and School Psychology • Educational Data Science	Master's Programs • Educational Culture, Policy and Society • Higher Education Administration • Higher Ed & Student Affairs Administration Doctoral Programs • Educational Leadership • Educational Culture, Policy and Society • Higher Education Administrative Certification (LIFTS) • School Building Leader • School District Leader	Master's Programs • Education Studies • English Education Studies • Learning Sciences & Educational Technology • Literacy Education Studies • Math Education Studies • Music Education Studies • Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Doctoral Programs • Curriculum, Instruction and the Science of Learning • Language Education and Multilingualism • Learning and Teaching in Social Contexts	Master's Programs • Information and Library Science • School Librarianship • Legal Information Management and Analysis (combined MS/JD program) • Music Librarianship (combined MS/MA program) Doctoral Programs • Information Science

*In addition to master's and doctoral programs, GSE also offers several graduate certification programs.

*A range of teacher certification programs in 9 content areas are offered through the Department of Learning and Instruction.