

Collected Questions To Ask When Visiting a Graduate Program

Compiled by Logan Pearce, from multiple sources, 2022

Questions for Current Graduate Students:

Quality of life:

- Are you happy?
- Do you like living in this city?
- What do you do for fun? Social life?
- Do you have friends/socializing outside your program?
- What is mental health support like in the program and at the university?
- What is student health insurance and health care like? Are you satisfied with the health care you receive?
- Have any students started families while in the program? What is that process like, what kind of support did they receive?

Housing:

- Is the stipend enough to live comfortably on?
- Housing: availability, price, distance, quality.

Academic Program:

- Why did you choose to go to this school?
- Was there anything surprising about attending this school?
- How did you choose your advisor? What is their advising style?
- What kind of resources do you have as a student? computing, travel, observatory support, publications, attending conferences
- How long does it take to graduate?
- Who are the best advisors? The worst?
- What is diversity like at this school?
- Has anyone ever left the program during your time there? Why?
- Can students work with multiple advisors? Can students switch advisors?

- What are the qualifying exam processes like? Can you "fail out"?
- Are the faculty/admin open to student feedback and input? Are they responsive to change or suggestions? Do they take student concerns seriously?

Department Values and Inclusion:

- Is there a values committee within the department? How engaged are the students in activities for under represented communities in the department? At the university?
- What sort of outreach efforts are students engaged in? How supportive is the department of outreach beyond research work? How supportive are advisors?
- How supportive is the department/advisors for exploring careers outside of academia?
- Is there room for students to participate in affinity groups (e.g. LGBT+ groups, Black Student Association, etc) outside the department?

Questions for Faculty:

- What is the process for choosing a thesis topic?
- Do you collaborate with any other professors?
- What is your advising style?
- How often do you publish?
- Where do you see your research going in the next five years?
- Where do PhD grads go? Fellowships? Postdocs? Leave academia?
- How many papers are grad students expected to author? How many do they actually author?
- What is the graduation timescale?
- What is the process like from entering to getting a PhD?
- What kind of resources do students have? computing, travel, observatory support, publications, attending conferences
- What resources are available for students for: finding housing, resolving various kinds of difficulties (roommates, office mates, peers, professors, personal), adjusting to grad school
- Can students work with multiple advisors? Can students switch advisors?

Adapted from several sources:

http://astrophysics.physics.fsu.edu/documents/currie_grad_school_advice.pdf,

<https://svrn359087164.wordpress.com/2022/01/14/some-things-to-consider-when-considering-a-graduate-program/>