

Attachment 9: Discussion Topics Guide

Discussion Topics Guide

The following is a list of topics that could be included in a potential graduate school experience module.

Communication of Important Information. Items in this area assess the availability, quality, sufficiency, type, and extent of communication of important information on the doctoral program or university (e.g., grading policies, degree requirements, attrition and job placement rates) and on a student's academic progress in the program.

Program/Campus Climate. Items in this area are designed to capture doctorate recipients' perceptions of the social and intellectual climate on their campus or within their doctoral program.

Professional Development Experiences. Items in this area cover a broad range of professional development experiences from research and teaching assistantships to formal or informal training in instructional methods, project management, or public speaking.

Curriculum and Instruction. Items in this area focus on various aspects of the curriculum and instruction, including the availability and quality of courses, and the difficulty, breadth and depth of the curriculum.

Skill Development. Items in this area capture the contribution of the graduate school experience to the development of particular skills, including soft skills. The development of these skills is apt to be closely tied to a student's professional development experiences and the graduate school curriculum.

Faculty and Staff. Items in this area largely focus on the level and quality of support and advice students received from their dissertation advisor and other faculty members who served in advisory or mentoring roles.

Scholarly Products and Presentations. Items in this area ask respondents to report on the number of presentations, publications, and patents they authored or coauthored during their graduate school career.

Financial Support/Aid. Items in this area go beyond the information currently collected in the SED, asking respondents about the availability or adequacy of the level of assistance they received, years and sources of support, and fairness of its distribution.

Student Support Services. Items in this area ask about a range of student support services from career guidance and placement services to health services and services for students with disabilities. Students are asked to report on the frequency with which they used the services and their satisfaction with or the quality of the services.

Factors Hindering or Facilitating Academic Progress. Items in this area ask respondents to identify factors that hindered or facilitated their academic progress in graduate school. The items overlap considerably with the intent of items in other areas, but also include topics not covered elsewhere in the framework (e.g., family obligations, immigration laws and regulations, employer support).

Campus Life and Activities. Items in this area ask respondents to report on the availability of campus activities (e.g., cultural events, student organizations, and athletic programs) and on the extent to which they participated in those activities.

Program and University Facilities. Items in this area ask doctorate recipients to report on the quality or availability of office space, library holdings, office equipment, classrooms, research labs, and other physical facilities.

Overall Satisfaction. Items in this topic area are designed to measure doctorate recipients' overall level of satisfaction with their graduate program, graduate school experience, or major components of their experience.