Getting what you came for: working with your committee

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How to choose and an advisor

- Ideally select advisor before starting grad school
- Align research interests
- Funding considerations
- Ideally advisor is a mentor
- Choose committee members very carefully
What advisor does for you:

- Helps you develop a plan of work
- Guides your research
- Meets with you regularly to assess progress
- Provides clear and helpful feedback
- Conducts rigorous but fair examinations
- Reads and returns drafts in a timely manner
What good advisors provide

• Coach and model good professional practices (research, teaching, publishing, presentations, writing grants, etc.)
• Pass on knowledge of both written and unwritten rules of the disciplinary community
• Advocacy with other faculty, GS and potential employers
• Helps in the job search
Please list 3-4 traits of a bad committee chair or member

You have 2 minutes
Bad Advisors/ mentors

- Never has time to meet with you (neglect)
- Rarely provides feedback or gives constructive criticism
- Uses power in a detrimental way (abuse)
- Keeps student in perpetual darkness
Building relationships

• Get to know your committee members
• Let them know who you are
• Trust and confide
• Take initiative
• Learn how to network
• Always be prepared for meetings
• Ask lots of questions
• Ask “Am I on target?”
Recipe for Success - main ingredients

1. Organizational skills
2. Social skills
3. Psychological traits
Organizational skills

- Manage your time – get organized
- Calendar – lists of tasks
- Make daily progress
- Balance your commitments
- Ethics – good habits
- Documentation/ progress reports (summarize, graph data)
- Goals and milestones
- Always be prepared
Social skills

- Work on your image
- Read cues from others
- Keep regular work schedule
- Join support group
- Don’t be timid – “manage up”
- Volunteer to do things in dept.
- Deal with stress
- Have a sense of humor
- Attend social functions
Psychological characteristics

• Maturity
• Tenacity
• Resilience
• Love what you do
• Positive attitude
• Don’t be timid
• Be assertive but humble
• Don’t be overconfident
Preparing for Prelims and Final Exams

• Ask committee to allow you practice (tips)
• Try to get specifics of what you need to know
• Sit in on a survey course of discipline
• During exam let your committee members argue
• Try to answer everything, but if you don’t know admit it
Defending your thesis

- Talk to other students
- Observe defenses of others, if possible
- Play devil’s advocate with your own thesis
- Be up on the latest literature
- Prepare list of possible questions
- Know about current events
- Prepare for presentation thoroughly
For international, minority or female students

- Master the English language
- Learn about the American system of higher education (emphasis on independence)
- Get a mentor that understands you and your issues
- Form a support group
- Socialize into your discipline – learn to compete
- Get professional help if needed
Why students get in trouble:

• Not allowing enough time to get work done - procrastination
• Thinking “I can get away with this” or “nobody will know the difference”
• Difficulty dealing with stressful situations and managing time properly
• Self-delusion
Getting ready for the job

- Find out what your attributes and weaknesses are (know thyself)
- Match abilities with job requirements
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities, internships, etc.
- Talk to many people in your field – network
- Prepare for interview
Most important advice

• Manage up
• Publish, publish, publish
• Work very, very hard
• Keep your nose clean
• Don’t blame other people for the way things are
THE END
BEGIN TO MANAGE NOW!

• Please take 2-3 minutes and partner with a neighbor. Talk about a difficulty you each is having and suggest ways to resolve issue.