

**Council of Graduate Schools
Completion and Attrition in STEM Master's Programs**

Factors Affecting Degree Completion Survey

Welcome to the Factors Affecting Degree Completion Survey.

You have been selected for this study because you enrolled in a master's degree program but are not taking classes in the current semester/quarter or have left or withdrawn from the program.

We urge you to participate in the survey—your responses will be invaluable in helping us obtain a deeper understanding of students' experiences and circumstances as well as the factors that are associated with leaves of absence and decisions not to continue with the program.

We appreciate your willingness to participate. Thank you, in advance, for your time and input.

Throughout this survey, we use the term "enrollment" or "enrolled" to mean registered for credit and attending classes or working on a thesis in the current semester/quarter.

1. Are you enrolled in a master's program this semester/quarter (i.e., actively taking classes and/or working on your thesis)?

- Yes, I am enrolled and attending classes/working on my thesis (*Please do not complete this survey; it is intended only for students who are either on a leave of absence or have left or withdrawn from the program.*)
- Yes, I am enrolled but not actively taking classes or working on my thesis (*Go to question 2*)
- No, I am not enrolled/I have withdrawn from the program (*Go to question 2*)

2. In what program are/were you enrolled? _____

3. When did you first enroll in this program?

Month (MM) ____ ____
Year (YYYY) ____ ____ ____ ____

4. When were you LAST enrolled in this master's program? That is, when were you LAST actively taking classes and/or working on your thesis?

Month (MM) ____ ____
Year (YYYY) ____ ____ ____ ____

5. In total, how many semesters/quarters were you enrolled in the program? _____

6. While enrolled, were you attending the program primarily full-time or part-time?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Mix (some semesters/quarters part-time, some full-time)

7. What were the THREE main reasons you enrolled in your master’s program? (Check up to three responses.)

- To improve my skills and knowledge
- To increase opportunities for promotion, advancement, and/or pay
- To meet requirements of my current employer
- To meet requirements of a prospective employer
- To learn more about something in which I am particularly interested
- Best option available at the time
- To facilitate a job/career change
- To use as a stepping stone for even more education (e.g., Ph.D.)
- Other (please specify): _____

8. What are your future plans for the next year? (Check all that apply.)

- Pursue this degree
- Go on for a doctorate or other graduate degree
- Continue in my current job
- Look for employment related to my degree
- Look for employment regardless of whether or not it is related to my degree
- Don’t know

9. When you were enrolled in the program, how often did you feel that:

	Frequently	Occasionally	Not at all	N/A
Your job responsibilities interfered with school				
Your family responsibilities interfered with school				
Your employer supported your academic aspirations				
You were treated unfairly at school because of your gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion				
Your family fully supported your academic aspirations				

10. When you were enrolled in the program, how often did you feel:

	Frequently	Occasionally	Not at all	N/A
Isolated from other students in the program				
Disengaged/disinterested in school				
Supported by a network of students in the program				
Interested and engaged in your educational program				
Worried about your mental or physical health				
That your program would help you meet your career goals				

11. To what extent did the following factors contribute to your leave of absence/decision not to continue?

	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	Not at all
Lack of adequate financial support				
Lack of support from faculty				
Pressure of outside employment (long hours, conflicts with employer, job-related travel)				
Difficulty of coursework or other program requirements				
Program structure				
Health-related issues (illness of self or family member)				
Lack of family support				
Family constraints (addition to the family, difficulties arranging child care)				
Distance of school from work or home				
Lack of peer support				
Lack of institutional or program supports				
Being a part-time student				

The next set of questions asks about your experiences with the master's program.

12. Did you visit the campus before enrolling in the program?

- Yes, I visited the campus before enrolling in the master's program (Go to question 13)
- No, but I attended this institution as an undergraduate (Go to question 13)
- No (Go to question 14)

13. To what extent did this influence your decision to enroll in the program?

- Not at all
- To a small extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a great extent

Throughout this survey, when using the term “job” or “employment” we mean paid employment at or outside the university, excluding assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, or other paid work that was considered part of your program.

14. While you were enrolled in your program, were you working for pay at or outside the university (excluding assistantships, fellowships, or traineeships)?

- Yes, for the university (Go to question 15)
- Yes, for a non-university employer (Go to question 15)
- Yes, self-employed (Go to question 15)
- No, not working for pay (Go to question 16)

15. On average, for how many hours per week were you working for pay during a semester/quarter?

- Less than 20 hours per week
- 20-30 hours per week
- More than 30 hours per week
- Don't know (occasional jobs, hours vary)

The next few questions ask about how you financed your education (including tuition, fees, books, living expenses, and health insurance.)

16. Indicate the LARGEST source of financial support for your master's program. (Choose only one.)

- Assistantship, fellowship, scholarship, grant, traineeship
- Paid internship, clinical residency
- Loans (any source)
- Personal earnings or savings
- Family earnings or savings
- Employer reimbursement/assistance
- Support from a foreign government
- Other (please specify): _____

17. Indicate the SECOND LARGEST source of financial support for your master's program. (Choose only one.)

- Assistantship, fellowship, scholarship, grant, traineeship
- Paid internship, clinical residency
- Loans (any source)
- Personal earnings or savings
- Family earnings or savings
- Employer reimbursement/assistance
- Support from a foreign government
- Other (please specify): _____

18. Approximately how much money have you PERSONALLY borrowed in student loans for your UNDERGRADUATE education?

- None
- \$1 - \$5,000
- \$5,001 - \$20,000
- \$20,001 - \$50,000
- \$50,000 and above

19. Approximately how much money have you PERSONALLY borrowed in student loans for your GRADUATE education?

- None
- \$1 - \$5,000
- \$5,001 - \$20,000
- \$20,001 - \$50,000
- \$50,000 and above

20. Were you guaranteed financial support at the time you were admitted to the program?

- Yes, for more than one year
- Yes, for the first year only
- No

21. To what extent was financing your education a challenge?

- To a great extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

22. Did you have an advisor?

- Yes (*Go to question 23*)
- No (*Go to question 28*)
- Don't know (*Go to question 28*)

23. How frequently did you meet with your advisor(s) to formally discuss your academic progress?

- More than once a month (*Go to question 24*)
- Monthly (*Go to question 24*)
- Once a semester/quarter (*Go to question 24*)
- Once a year (*Go to question 24*)
- Never (*Go to question 28*)

24. To what extent was the feedback provided by your advisor useful?

- To a great extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

25. How helpful was your advisor in supporting your career goals?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Of little help
- Not helpful at all
- Don't know

26. How satisfied were you with the quality of advising?

- Very satisfied (Go to question 28)
- Satisfied (Go to question 28)
- Dissatisfied (Go to question 27)
- Very dissatisfied (Go to question 27)

27. Which of the following would have improved the advising experience? (Check all that apply.)

- More time
- Better quality time
- More/better career/professional guidance
- More/better research guidance
- More interest and encouragement
- More structured feedback
- Other (please explain): _____

28. Did your program or department hold an orientation when you enrolled in this master's program?

- Yes, and I attended the orientation
- Yes, but I did not attend
- No
- Don't know

29. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about your program.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A
Requirements of my program were presented in clear, written form					
The faculty were helpful and interested in students					
Academic milestones and timelines were clearly outlined					
Courses were available when I needed them					
The program was well-structured in terms of sequence of courses					
Overall, the courses provided useful information					
Some courses or components of the program were a waste of my time					
The faculty were generally supportive and available					
Requirements and expectations for assistantships were clearly articulated (for example, in terms of time required, time off, workload, sick time, etc.)					

30. Overall, how satisfied were you with the quality of teaching in the courses you have taken?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

31. Does your program or institution offer the following? If so, did you participate in or use any of the following? (Check one column for each offering.)

	Not offered or don't know	Yes, offered but I did not use/participate in	Yes, offered and I used/participated in
Social events for students and faculty			
Speaker series			
Job placement services			
Career counseling			
Ombudsman, grievance procedures, conflict resolution			
Student associations			

32. When you were enrolled, did you receive any formal or informal instruction, practice, or professional development in any of the following? (Check “Yes” or “No” for each.)

	Yes	No
Oral communication and presentation skills		
Writing clearly for different audiences		
Research methods		
Working in collaborative groups		
Conducting independent research/scholarship		
Project management (e.g., budgeting, staffing, allocation of resources, etc.)		
Research/professional ethics		
Teaching skills/methods		
Preparation for job interviews		
Preparation for non-academic careers		

33. Have you experienced any of the following during the past two years? (Check all that apply.)

- Marriage or marriage-like relationship
- Birth/adoption of child(ren)
- Death of immediate family member or friend
- Divorce/separation
- Assumed primary responsibility for a person with illness or other disabling condition
- Major illness (mental or physical) or other disabling condition
- Retirement
- Loss of job
- None of these

34. What aspects of the program did you like MOST?

35. What did you like LEAST about your program?

36. What changes to the program or institution could help students complete the degree in a timely manner?

These last few questions ask for some demographic information.

37. What is your marital status? *(Check only one.)*

- Married or in a marriage-like relationship *(Go to question 38)*
- Living together, unmarried *(Go to question 38)*
- Widowed/Separated/Divorced *(Go to question 39)*
- Never married *(Go to question 39)*
- Prefer not to answer *(Go to question 39)*

38. Is your spouse/partner currently working?

- Yes, full-time
- Yes, part-time
- No

39. Are you ...

- Male
- Female

40. Not including yourself or your spouse/partner, how many dependents do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

41. What is your age? Are you ...

- Under 25
- 25 to 29
- 30 to 34
- 35 to 50
- Older than 50

42. What is your citizenship status?

- U.S. citizen (*Go to question 43*)
- Non-U.S. citizen with permanent U.S. resident visa (green card) (*Go to question 43*)
- Non-U.S. citizen with temporary visa (*Go to end of survey. Do not answer questions 43 and 44*)
- Prefer not to answer (*Go to question 43*)

43. Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina?

- Yes
- No

44. What is your racial background?

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- White
- Two or more races

THANK YOU!

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. We appreciate your time and input.

***** END OF SURVEY *****