

useful tool for gauging whether you are reaching your audience, whether what you are teaching is being learned, and whether you are fulfilling your part of the bargain as a professor.

Exams, qualifying/comprehensives/generals

Every graduate program has a slightly different route to completion, but exams of some sort are a common feature. They are known as qualifying exams, comprehensives, or generals, depending on the school. These exams are a way to assure that students are well prepared in the field before moving on to write a dissertation.

It is important to work closely with your advisor in shaping the exams, if that option is given, and/or at least in preparing for them. This means getting the requisite book list and taking the courses, especially graduate seminars that will best prepare you. The exams can often be geared to orienting your research for the dissertation, thus speeding along your progress for the program as a whole.

The exams can be an ordeal, or they can be a useful exercise in gaining and demonstrating proficiency. Approach them like a job. Be systematic and thorough in your preparation. Don't let the hype that sometimes develops around them get to you. After all, you have been successful this far, so there is every reason to be confident that with adequate study you will do fine. If the experience becomes a burden, do not hesitate to get the counseling or other support you need to get through it.

Faculty club

If your institution has a faculty club, consider a membership, and/or if it is automatic, consider using it. The club can be a convenient place to lunch with colleagues, conduct meetings, and hear interesting lectures. Some clubs even have overnight accommodations, a great choice for visiting lecturers or colleagues from