



The Graduate and Professional Student Senate

Student Survey: Department of Asian Languages & Literature Fall 2014: Catalyst Survey Results

Submitted to the University of Washington Graduate School: December 17, 2014

The [Graduate and Professional Student Senate](#) (GPSS) is the official student government representing 15,000 graduate and professional students at the University of Washington, Seattle to actively support and improve all aspects of graduate and professional student life. GPSS provides and advocates for the tools needed to enhance personal and professional development, and safeguards the interests of the students it represents.

The Graduate School works with GPSS to involve graduate students in ten-year reviews of all graduate programs and works on their behalf to ensure that graduate and professional students are supported in their studies. The data collected through the GPSS student survey is a vital component of the Graduate Program Review process conducted by the Graduate School and is included in the review committee's final Program Report to the Graduate School Council.

For the Graduate Program Review of the Department of Asian Languages and Literature, the GPSS conducted an electronic Catalyst survey requesting feedback from all graduate students in the department. The purpose of this survey is to ensure that voices and opinions of students in the program are taken into account while the future direction of the program is under consideration.

The survey results are largely quantitative, and although this report provides a comprehensive summary, the original questions raw survey data are available from the GPSS office upon request. This survey took place between October 23, 2014 and November 5, 2014 and achieved a response rate of 16.2% (6/37).

For more information about the GPSS Program Review process or questions regarding this report, please contact gpssex@uw.edu or gpspres@uw.edu.

Review, Scope and Purpose:

This review *does* contain a summary of graduate student opinions and feelings regarding their department. This review *does not* seek to evaluate the department or give a general overview of the academic program. For more general and background data regarding the department, academic program, faculty, courses, and research, please see the University of Washington Department of Asian Languages and Literature Self-Study provided to the Graduate School.

I. Academic Program

Demographic Makeup: The six students who completed the survey included one Master’s student and five Doctoral students, two of whom had advanced to candidate status. 83.3% were full-time students.

Ratings of the academic program were very positive, with 100 % of respondents rating the academic standards of the program as ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. All of the respondents also rated the intellectual quality of the faculty and their fellow graduate students as well as the integration of current developments in their field as either ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’.

The intellectual quality of the faculty



Integration of development in my field



Ratings of the program space and facilities were mixed as shown in the table below, with the majority of students rating space and facilities as ‘good’ or ‘very good’.

Program Space and facilities:

Response	Percentage (%)
Excellent	16.7
Very Good	33.3
Good	33.3
Fair	16.7

While the majority of respondents agreed that the program fosters a sense of intellectual community, only a third agreed that the program encourages collaboration and teamwork and only half agreed that their program provides opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary work.

All respondents agreed that the program supports their research or professional goals and that the amount of coursework was appropriate for their degree, but one theme that emerged among several comments throughout the survey indicates inconsistencies around course requirements. Some course requirements and courses listed on the website have not been offered in over ten years, and students report that there is no consensus among faculty about what constitutes the department's course requirements.

Program encourages collaboration and/or teamwork:

Response	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	16.7
Agree	16.7
Neutral	50.0
Disagree	16.7

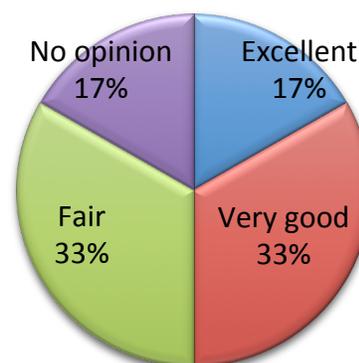
II. Research Experience

Overall, students rated the research training in the program highly. All of the respondents reported that the level of training they received before beginning their own work was 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'. The same number (100%) reported that the quality of faculty guidance they received in formulating a research topic was either 'very good' or 'excellent'. 62.5% reported that the level of assistance from support or technical staff in the program was 'above average' or 'high'. In regards to the level of support from technical or support staff in their program, 16.7% said it is 'average' 66.7% said it is 'above average' and 16.7% said it is 'high'.

50% of respondents said that the availability and quality of opportunities for research in collaboration with one or more faculty members in their program is either 'very good' or 'excellent', 33.3% said it is 'fair' and 16.7% gave 'no opinion'.

Only one of the respondents noted that they have been assisted in writing a grant proposal. Three said they have not and two gave no answer. Four respondents have attended a professional conference and presented a poster or paper at a conference.

Availability and quality of opportunities for research in collaboration with one or more faculty

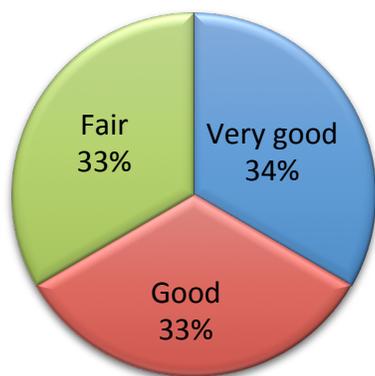


III. Career Counseling / Job Search

While 100% of respondents reported feeling 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the career counseling they had received, reports on the quality of advice on various topics were mixed.

Most respondents reported having received either ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ quality advice on careers in higher education and academic employment opportunities. However, the numbers dropped with regards to the advice quality for employment opportunities outside academia; one third of respondents reported receiving ‘fair’ advice on careers outside academia.

Advice on employment outside academia



Ratings were mixed about advice on how to search for a job and how to prepare for an interview. Additionally, half of respondents reported ‘fair’ or ‘no opinion’ with regard to how to prepare a resume or curriculum vitae. Although this may at first glance appear to indicate a lack of consistent preparation of students for career opportunities, comments from students indicate that is not the case. Many stated that departmental staff and faculty provides job market preparation and professional development workshops for students who are further along in their degree programs, and thus closer to the need for employment assistance and preparation.

IV. Academic Advising

In applicable cases, 100% of respondents were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the quality of academic advising as well as with the amount of communication they had with their advisors. Most felt they received adequate advice on preparing for oral exams (75%), preparing for written exams (60%), selecting a thesis/dissertation advisor (100%), performing research (100%), and standards of academic integrity (100%).

V. Departmental Community

All respondents reported a sense of community that is either ‘excellent’, ‘very good’ or ‘good’ and high on openness to diversity. However, responses were mixed with regard to the department’s commitment to attracting diverse students. While 33.3% of respondents rated their programs as either ‘high’ or ‘above average’ in attracting diverse students, 16.7% rated this trait as ‘below average’. A majority (66.7%) felt that the program offered at least an ‘above average’ level of support for the needs of diverse students with the rest having ‘no opinion’. A third of the respondents did not know if their program had a diversity committee, and a few added that they would like be able to comment on diversity issues, but do not feel qualified to do so because they are uncertain as to why there is little diversity in the department. Some respondents added that they would like to participate in the evaluation of incoming students to help improve diversity.

Among the 50% of respondents who receive end of year feedback from their advisor(s), all were satisfied. Of the remaining 50% who do not receive feedback, 66.7% said they would like year-end feedback. Additionally, two thirds of respondents highlighted the importance of communication with students and faculty from other programs in the department.

VI. Funding

While the majority of participants (66.7%) anticipate completing their program with no debt, 33.3% will have outstanding loans upon completion. 16.7% report that they will incur debt of \$10,000 - \$24,999, while 16.7% will have accumulated loan debt greater than \$25,000. The majority of respondents (66.7%) felt that the program did not provide sufficient funding, 16.7% felt that it did and 16.7% were unsure if funding provided was sufficient. The majority (66.7%) felt that the criteria for financial support in their program were clear and available.

Estimated loans at graduation:

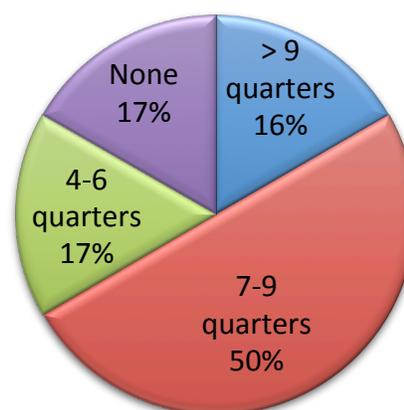
Response	Percentage (%)
\$0	66.7
\$10,000 - \$24,999	16.7
\$25,000-\$39,999	16.7

More than half of respondents (67%) reported being funded by teaching assistantships for 7-9 quarters or more during their graduate careers and 16.7% reported being supported for 4-6 quarters. We do not have data on whether or not these teaching assistantships are in the department, or in other departments of related fields. Only 25% of respondents reported being funded by non-service fellowships or by traineeships or grants. 25% reported relying on personal funding for more than 1-3 quarters of their program.

Respondents commented that there is need for more funding opportunities in the department, more fund raising outreach to local businesses, and more Teaching Assistantships in the Asian Languages and Literature department. These comments seem to indicate that students are seeking TA opportunities outside the department in order to fund their education.

Students report that the dearth of funding opportunities in the department makes it difficult to attract top tier students, which in turn limits the potential for increasing diversity in the department. The lack of funding will also leave many students graduating with “crippling debt”.

Teaching Assistantship Funding

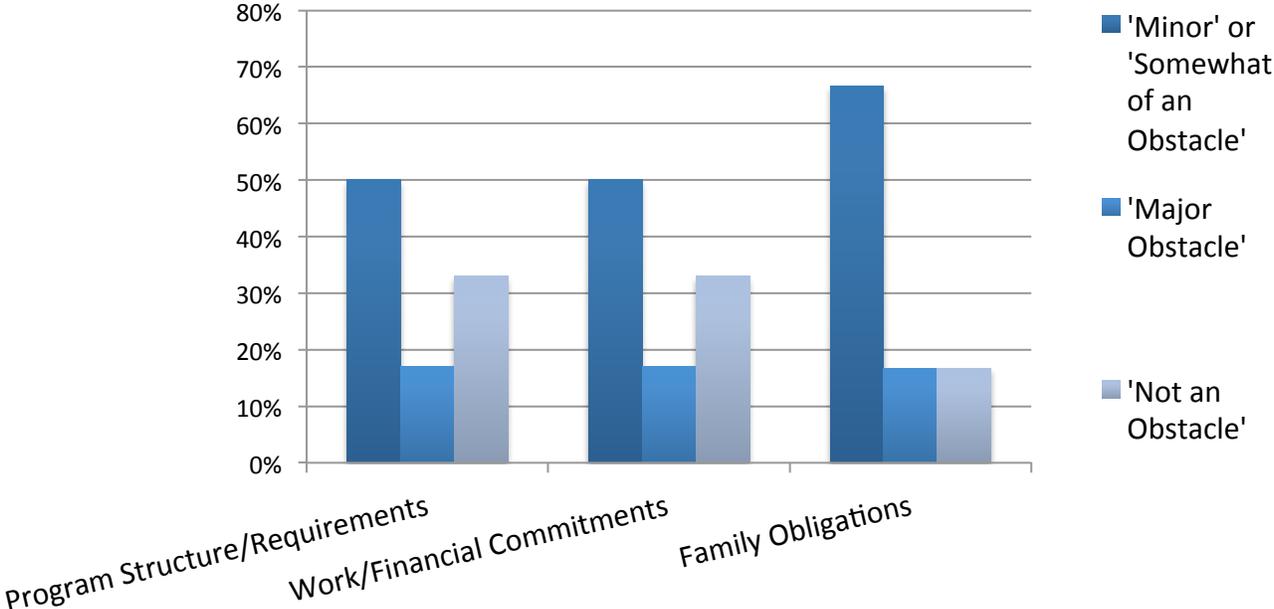


VII. General Assessment

Overall ratings of the academic experience at UW were very high, with 50% of respondents rating their experience as ‘excellent’ and 50% rating it as ‘very good’. At least one respondent reported that program structure and/or requirements, family obligations and work or financial commitments were factors that have been a ‘major obstacle’ to academic success and research.

33% of respondents reported program structure and/or requirements to be ‘somewhat of an obstacle’ and 16.7% reported this as a ‘minor obstacle’. One third did not consider this an obstacle. In contrast, work and financial commitments appeared to be slightly less problematic than program structure. Family obligations were reported by a majority of respondents to be at least a ‘minor obstacle’ to research and success.

Obstacles to Research in the Department



While the majority (66.7%) reported that facilities/space/technology are not problematic, 16.7% reported this as at least a minor obstacle. Dissertation topic/research, faculty availability, and course scheduling were considered ‘minor’ or not obstacles to the majority of respondents.

Overall, 83.3% of respondents reported that they are very likely to complete their degree objective, and 16.7% reported that they are somewhat likely to complete. However, it is worth noting that only half of respondents reported that they would definitely recommend this academic program to prospective students in their field. 16.7% reported ‘maybe’ while 33.3% commented that they would only recommend the program to a prospective student with caveats, such as being textually oriented or if they can secure their own funding. One respondent added that limited funding in the program also limits the number of students who apply and are accepted to the program, which seems to limit diversity in the department.

The majority of respondents reported that the department is not actively pushing them to graduate. While 50% of students anticipate taking seven years to complete their program, 33.3% report taking anywhere from four to five or more years to complete their degrees. Inconsistencies regarding course requirements were mentioned as a potential contribution to the department-wide phenomenon of delayed graduation.

Years to complete Degree at UW:

Response	Percentage (%)
1-2	16.7
4	16.7
5	16.7
7+	50.0

Five respondents listed the following as other universities with competing programs that they had applied to for graduate school:

UC Santa Barbara

University of Oregon

Washington University St. Louis

State University of New York Buffalo

Brown University

University of North Carolina

University of Pittsburgh

Ohio State University

Stanford University

University of California Berkeley

VIII. Conclusion

The themes that emerged throughout this student survey revealed inconsistencies in course requirements that many students feel need to be addressed as they affect academic advising and time to degree completion. Additionally, students felt that there needs to be more diversity in the department and that perhaps an increase of funding and/or inclusion of current students in the application process for prospectives might increase the pool of diverse incoming students.

Overall, students appear to be satisfied with the quality of their program and advising as well as services and facilities. Funding for students continues to be an issue, and students report the need for greater departmental support for Teaching Assistant opportunities. While the greatest obstacle to research was reported as family obligations, program structure or requirements were also reported as an obstacle to success. This may be addressed by the department revising its website and course requirements to be consistent across its programs and communicate those requirements clearly to students.

The quality of instruction and research in the department seems to be satisfying to students; however, the time to degree completion is quite long and could perhaps be addressed by the department alongside efforts to streamline its course requirements.