

GPSS Report
Graduate Program Review
Department of Classics
March 31, 2009

On February 26th, 2009 the University of Washington Graduate & Professional Student Senate had 2 GPSS Senators attend a program review meeting with 20 graduate students in the Department of Classics. The program review was also attended by a peer committee, who facilitated and asked students questions pertaining to their program. This review evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the program from the perspectives of the DOC students. This report summarizes students' feedback for consideration in the Graduate School Council's review of the DOC program. This report also includes the responses from an online catalyst survey, which was completed by 6 students.

Faculty

- Classics graduate students seemed relatively happy in the department. Students gave the faculty high marks on professionalism, mentorship, and availability. The students remarked that the faculty are respectful of students' ideas and that students are treated like junior faculty and future colleagues.
- Faculty was described as helpful in the process of transitioning students to the general examination phase. They said that the faculty encourages students to take the exam when they feel confident and ready. Students also felt that they had adequate time to plan their exam.
- Students feel the faculty are very approachable and accessible.

Community

- Similarly, students indicated that the climate amongst students was warm and collegial. They indicated that students have formed reading groups in the past to support their scholarly endeavors and for fun. Most students were in agreement that students are supportive of one another.

Curriculum

- Students voiced some concerns about the graduate Classics curriculum. Although students voiced that they enjoyed many of the courses they have taken, they highlighted areas in which the department's curriculum could be improved.
- Students wished that they had more course offerings and remarked that there are quarters where there are not enough professors teaching popular courses. Other students remarked that the number of available courses outside of the department counterbalances the lack of courses within the department.
- Students remarked that there are too many course requirements. In conjunction, some students wished that they had more time to engage in independent study.

Advising

- Students indicated that they receive very good advising in the department.
- Students gave faculty high marks on helping them find dissertation topics and being interested in topics that are not necessarily part of the faculty member's core area of inquiry.

- On a related note, students said that the faculty is often open to their ideas and there is adequate scholastic breadth in the program.

Teaching Opportunities

- Students felt comfortable as teaching assistants. They indicated that they are carefully guided through their initial teaching assignments and that they develop good teaching skills. Students indicated that they sometimes spend 5-6 hours in the classroom each quarter.
- Students additionally indicated that they have freedom over what they teach. Students said that though they collaborate with other students and colleagues when teaching the same course but different sections (e.g., Introduction to Latin), they are allowed some freedom in what is taught.
- Students also indicated that some have had the opportunity to teach upper level undergraduate courses during the summer term.

Funding

- Students noted that they would like to see TA pay raised. They believe that increasing pay would also serve to attract more potential graduate students to the program.
- Students raised concerns that funding problems would affect departmental culture and climate, especially should there need to be a switch to competitive funding.
- Students agreed that they receive good support to attend academic conferences.

On the whole, students in the Department of Classics voiced positive aspects of the program. The two major detractions seemed to be curriculum concerns and funding concerns. Students very much appreciated the department's collegial atmosphere, the advising they receive, their opportunities to create their own research and dissertations, and that they could go their own pace while efficiently passing core academic benchmarks.