



The Ph.D. Process: A Student's Guide to Graduate School in the Sciences

By Dale F. Bloom, Jonathan D. Karp, Nicholas Cohen

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The Ph.D. Process offers the essential guidance that students in the biological and physical sciences need to get the most out of their years in graduate school. Drawing upon the insights of numerous current and former graduate students, this book presents a rich portrayal of the intellectual and emotional challenges inherent in becoming a scientist, and offers the informed, practical advice a "best friend" would give about each stage of the graduate school experience. What are the best strategies for applying to a graduate program? How are classes conducted? How should I choose an advisor and a research project? What steps can I take now to make myself more "employable" when I get my degree? What goes on at the oral defense? Through a balanced, thorough examination of issues ranging from lab etiquette to research stress, the authors--each a Ph.D. in the sciences--provide the vital information that will allow students to make informed decisions all along the way to the degree. Headlined sections within each chapter make it fast and easy to look up any subject, while dozens of quotes describing personal experiences in graduate programs from people in diverse scientific fields contribute invaluable real-life expertise. Special attention is also given to the needs of international students.

Read in advance, this book prepares students for each step of the graduate school experience that awaits them. Read during the course of a graduate education, it serves as a handy reference covering virtually all major issues and decisions a doctoral candidate is likely to face. *The Ph.D. Process* is the one book every graduate student in the biological and physical sciences can use to stay a step ahead, from application all the way through graduation.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Graduate school . . . is the only established route to advanced study of the nature of the universe. It culminates in the award of a doctoral degree but requires some advanced and very specialized courses, an 'independent research project,' a thesis or dissertation, passing very intense exams or other requirements, and, last but not least, interactions with other students, faculty, both on and off campus at conferences and other relevant sites. Bloom, Karp, and Cohen have gone into considerable and realistic detail about this 'life experience' and have taken a viewpoint as an advocate of the student. No graduate school catalog I have ever seen has given a list of disclaimers, disclosures, hidden hurdles, barriers, possibilities for disaster, the culture of science and the sociology of scientists, and stress generators, let alone any hints on how to over come any of these problems. This book goes a very long way to helping to fill in those gaps and omissions."-- scientistlifeboat.com

"[T]he most comprehensive guide to date about graduate school in the sciences. . . . The Ph.D. Process marches through all aspects of the grad school experience, from application through dissertation defense, and includes some excellent topics not covered in other books, such as advice to foreign students. . . . In addition, the book includes the voices of graduate students themselves, discussing, and in some cases qualifying, the authors' advice. The combination of authoritative summaries along with anecdotes from students themselves help lend substance to what otherwise might be a daunting litany of do's and don'ts about grad school. The book is organized in a more or less chronological sequence of major events and issues in the grad school process. Interspersed with these subjects are chapters on more strategic and issues-related subjects Together the chapters work both to explain how things work and also how to make things work well for you."--Science's Next Wave

From the Publisher

Oxford University Press: Drawing upon the insights of numerous current and former graduate students, this book present a rich portrayal of the intellectual and emotional challenges inherent in becoming a scientist, and offers the informed, practical advice a "best friend" would give about each stage of the graduate school experience.

From the Author

Graduate school in the sciences is not similar to undergraduate education, where the passing of a sufficient number of courses usually guarantees one a degree; neither is it like medical school or law school, where there is a delineated and set curriculum. Science Ph.D students are actually pretty much on their own--and they will sink or swim depending upon their own interpretation of how the system works.

The purpose of this book is to provide students with some insight into this unusual system. The authors, PhDs themselves, reveal the generally unspoken "rules" of the game. They offer the secrets of survival and success: What should you discuss in your application essay? What types of research advisors should you avoid? What kinds of research projects should you never undertake? How hard do you have to work? Are grades important? What steps should you take now to make yourself employable when you finish? What decisions can make or break your career? How can you network in the scientific community? What goes on at the oral defense, and how can you prepare?

Described also is the daily experience itself: research life, classes, seminars, journal clubs, lab meetings, interactions with peers and professors, qualifying exams, professional meetings, oral exams, dissertation preparation, etc. Anxiety, frustration, and joy-- all normal responses to a grad student's life--are also examined. (In quotes sprinkled throughout the text, numerous past and present grad students relate their individual experiences and emotions during their doctoral training.) A separate chapter is devoted to the special problems of foreign students, strangers to our culture and educational system.

There are many intellectual and emotional challenges inherent to becoming a scientist. This book prepares students for each stage of the experience. They will learn what to expect--socially, psychologically, and academically!

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sheila Lefevre:

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