

Academic Orientation for New 1st Year Graduate Students in Evolutionary Anthropology

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Welcome to the Ph.D. program in Evolutionary Anthropology at Duke University! This document serves as a brief introduction to the key academic aspects of life in the department. Financial, logistical, and IT-related issues are covered in a separate document from Lisa Jones.

- 1) **Academic Requirements:** Information about the academic requirements can be found in our graduate student handbook, [available as a PDF on the departmental website](#). **Note that you are required to complete six core courses during the first four semesters of study at Duke.** This includes two semesters of the Graduate Tutorial, and at least one course selected from four of the following six “core” areas: (1) Evolutionary Theory, (2) Cognition, Behavior & Ecology, (3) Paleontology, (4) Morphology & Physiology, (5) Research Design & Statistics, and (6) Genetics & Genomics. The Graduate Tutorial is offered every spring and taught by the faculty; you should plan to be available to take that course in your first two Spring semesters at Duke. Additional courses should be taken in your area of specialty and minor fields as determined by your committee.
- 2) **Individual Development Plan:** Before the start of the Fall Semester, complete the [“First Year” intellectual development plan \(IDP\) and associated Action Plan for the next academic year](#). This will be revisited at least once during the academic year (typically at the start of spring semester). The advisor and student fill out their sections of the IDP separately, discuss those sections in a follow-up meeting, and jointly outline steps to advance the student’s research and career goals in the Action Plan. Upon completion, the IDP and Action Plan is shared with the DGSA and retained in the graduate student’s records.
- 3) **Supervisory Committee:** Your advisor has worked with the DGS to develop a temporary “supervisory committee” that is available to help you select courses and plan your initial year at Duke. This committee will be replaced by a more permanent Ph.D. committee to oversee your research. **Start planning the transition to a more permanent Ph.D. committee by the end of your first year.** Please talk to your advisor to learn more about the faculty on your supervisory committee and how you can work with them to obtain guidance, including on your planned coursework and transition to a Ph.D. committee.
- 4) **Number of Courses:** Although exceptions occur (e.g. for fieldwork or other opportunities), you should plan on enrolling in 4 courses in your first two semesters at Duke. We normally recommend that at least one of these is an independent study, which will enable you to initiate research with your advisor to start to identify Ph.D. projects.
- 5) **Previous Coursework:** We generally recommend that you take the graduate courses on offer at Duke to fulfill your requirements. However, if you have previous coursework that you would like to have considered for credit toward these requirements, please discuss with your advisor and if you are both in agreement about requesting credit for some previous courses, discuss further with the DGS and your supervisory committee. You will need to provide a completed transcript (post-graduation) to enable the DGS to evaluate your request.
- 6) **Writing Experience I: First year students are also expected to have a writing experience, which is conducted with oversight from their advisor.** This often takes the form of writing a grant, such as an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program application, or work towards an academic product for publication, such as a peer-reviewed journal article. Please discuss this with your advisor early in your first semester.
- 7) **Responsible Conduct of Research:** In addition to the academic requirements in the department, the Graduate School requires that you complete a series of training sessions in the [Responsible Conduct of Research \(RCR\)](#) from the Graduate School. Students in the Non-Medical Sciences are required to

complete 12 hours of such training during their first 4 years of study by attending general Graduate School RCR Forum events (all-day events offered each fall during orientation, GS711) or Departmental RCR Forum events (generally two hours each) (GS712). You will likely attend at least three RCR forums throughout your time at Duke. Check the [schedule of RCR events](#) and emails from the Graduate School to find details on those held during the semester.

- 8) **Teaching Assistantship (TA):** To provide training in teaching skills and the classroom setting, all students are required to serve as TAs for two semesters during their graduate career, or to serve as an Instructor of Record for one course taught at Duke (typically in the summer session). Many of you will serve as a TA throughout your time at Duke. Here are some important notes about TA-ships:
- a. Serving as a TA is an important responsibility, and a great opportunity for you. You are helping to fulfill a critical mission of the department and the university, and you will serve as a point of contact for many of the undergraduate students in the course. You can have a great impact on their learning and experience at Duke! Plan to invest in this as you would any job, and plan to attend all lectures. You may also be responsible for a Discussion Section or Lab. It is critical that you are present for any Sections that are assigned to you.
 - b. Your work as a TA should not exceed 19.9 hours per week. In addition, you should receive standardized feedback from the instructor; they will address a series of questions, with their responses shared with you, aimed at helping you improve your teaching skills.
 - c. Meet regularly – ideally weekly – with the primary instructor to map out the course, discuss any students that are struggling, and develop effective Discussion Section / Lab activities. The level of individual responsibility varies depending on the course, but all TAs are expected to be invested and proactive in the planning of the areas of their responsibility, and should be demonstrating that responsibility throughout.
 - d. Teaching takes lots of planning, and lots of hard and careful work. Identify students who have previously TA'd the course to learn from their experiences, especially with Discussion Sections. Do not wait until the last minute to plan a Discussion Section, and be aware that students need to have timely access to their grades (and that grading takes far more time than you might expect!). Be prepared to meet with students who need help, including by holding your own office hours.
 - e. In the event of academic misconduct, consult with the primary instructor as soon as possible. Please refer to the [Duke Community Standard](#) for more information on expectations of students (including you as a graduate student).
 - f. Please also note that in your role as a TA, you also must adhere to the policies involving sexual harassment, discrimination, and misconduct. Duke takes these issues seriously, as does the department. You can familiarize yourself with these policies at the [Office for Institutional Equity](#). It is essential to behave professionally with students that you are teaching (and all students and staff, for that matter).
 - g. If you have witnessed or experienced concerning behavior from a student, discuss with the professor right away (that is better than trying to deal with a situation on your own). If you prefer, you may also fill out a report through [DukeReach](#), which can be done anonymously.
- 9) **Departmental Seminar:** In addition to your coursework and teaching responsibilities, all graduate students are expected to attend the weekly Evolutionary Anthropology Talk Series (EATS). This is a weekly gathering in which faculty, students, and guests to our department from other universities share their research findings or stimulate discussion around a particular topic. EATS is held on Fridays from 11:45 to 12:45, and food is often provided. To the maximum extent possible, please plan your coursework around EATS, and plan to attend all EATS seminars, even when the topic appears to be outside your immediate areas of interest. Time for questions is given at the end. Try to come up with (and ask) at least one good question for the speaker after every talk. It is great practice, and a way to be more engaged with the talk!

- 10) **Annual Presentation to the Department:** You will be required to give an EATS or other public presentation on a yearly basis (as noted [here](#)). For 1st year students, there is often an opportunity to give a short presentation during one of the fall semester EATS, as a “get to know you” seminar that details your interests and experiences (this is not the “what did I do last summer talks at the first EATS, which does not count toward this requirement). The organizers of the EATS schedule will also make available opportunities for short talks, e.g. to share your recent findings or practice for a talk at a conference.
- 11) **Research Expectations:** From the start of your time at Duke, we expect you to be actively pursuing research opportunities. In this first year, those opportunities could involve finishing research from your undergraduate or gap year experience, or a project with your advisor. You may also find good opportunities for collaborative research projects within your lab group, or in other departmental labs. Please be sure to discuss this important expectation with your advisor, and start to engage in research from the outset of your time at Duke.
- 12) **Lab Policies and Expectations:** We strongly encourage you to have an open discussion with your advisor about lab policies and expectations early and often. Issues to discuss involve fieldwork, authorship, project funding, lab and field safety, expectations regarding email and other communication, and the advisor’s and student’s responsibilities. You should ask whether there are written documents, e.g. in the form of a contract or agreement, and you should set expectations for regular meetings and other mechanisms for receiving feedback and assistance.
- 13) **Other Departmental Events and Activities:** We have a variety of additional community events in which you should plan to participate. These include a weekly Happy Hour on Fridays (non-alcoholic alternatives are provided), a holiday party in December, and additional events based on interests and special visitors. Note, too, that the graduate students typically have regular meetings among themselves; you will receive more information on these meetings from the student organizing them.
- 14) **Mental and Physical Health:** A Ph.D. can be a particularly challenging process, with many bumps in the road to completion, and the sense that one could always be doing more to advance the research. It is important to be aware of this potential for stress, and to take stock of your mental and physical health throughout your Ph.D. career (and to be aware of challenges that others around may be facing). For assistance with mental health issues, please refer to [Counselling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), which has the mission of enhancing “strengths and develop abilities to successfully live, grow and learn”. Exercise and wellness activities are also important; consider joining the gym, and participating in activities there, including group activities and trips off campus that will help you meet others across the university in a social setting. If you have concerns about your own or others’ health or wellbeing, and are not sure where to turn, you may consider filing a report through [DukeReach](#). These reports can be made anonymously. If you experience harassment, discrimination, or find yourself confronted with toxic behavior from anyone affiliated with Duke, the [Graduate School Interactive Reporting Guide](#) can help you find the most appropriate course of action based on your exact situation.
- 15) **Duke Resources:** Become aware of the many resources available to you at Duke: the [Career Center](#), the Grad School’s [Professional Development Resources](#) (including their new tool, [Duke OPTIONS](#)), [graduate student groups](#), the Certificate in College Teaching (and the [Certificate Program](#) more generally), the [Women’s Center](#), and many more!
- 16) **Funding Opportunities:** In your 1st year, start to familiarize yourself with funding options, which are crucial for your research success. Fellowships generally provide a stipend for you, enabling you to have a break from TA duties, while grants are intended to fund research activities. The Graduate School website provides a list of funding opportunities, including both fellowships and grants, available at this [link](#). These and additional sources are available on the departmental webpages, [here](#).
- 17) **Income Taxes:** During any semester in which you are a TA, your income will be subject to tax withholding like any salary, but other types of support may have different rules. Please refer to these

sites for more information: <https://finance.duke.edu/payroll/tax/student>, and <https://gradschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/income-taxes-and-your-stipend.pdf>.

- 18) **Departmental Evaluation of Students:** All graduate students will be required to submit a summary of their academic activities at the end of the spring semester, following the included template (see Appendix). Plan to type up a formal document that addresses each of the requested pieces of information, and share that document with your advisor for feedback before submitting it to the DGS. The faculty will then discuss each student's progress individually and identify any concerns or provide advice. The DGS will provide feedback to the students shortly after this meeting.
- 19) **Service to the Department and University:** Service encompasses volunteer (i.e., non-compensated) time devoted to support the intellectual communities at Duke, including in the department. In the department, we request assistance with a variety of activities, and graduate students have typically provided their time and effort to ensure that these activities are successful. This includes arranging food for EATS, weekly Happy Hour, serving as the graduate student representative at the faculty meetings, and helping to organize the recruitment of graduate students in January. As you become involved in the university, additional service opportunities will emerge, including the possibility to serve on the Graduate and Professional Student Council and volunteer and leadership opportunities in other organizations (such as Women in Science and Engineering). Although not formally required, we do ask you to list your service activities on your yearly review (see #17).
- 20) **Academic Connections Across Duke!** Be aware that a number of other programs exist in which you may find additional academic growth and connection, including the [University Program in Ecology \(UPE\)](#), [Duke Institute for Brain Sciences \(DIBS\)](#), [Duke Global Health \(DGHI\)](#), and [Bass Connections](#). In addition, other departments and schools can offer such connection, including [Biology](#), the [Nicholas School of the Environment](#), and [Psychology & Neuroscience](#). The Biology department, for example, has a regular seminar series, and multiple other topically-focused discussion and seminar series. Get involved, and it will pay off for your research and network of collaborations (and friends) here at Duke!
- 21) **Go to Conferences:** In addition to connections across Duke, remember to branch out to your broader academic community by attending conferences. You will need to figure out the conferences that are right for you, but the American Association of Physical Anthropologists is the most common society with a conference among our faculty (the department typically clears out for the conference every spring). The [Mid-Atlantic Bioanthropology Interest Group](#) has a yearly meeting. Funding is available for travel through the Graduate School website for one conference per year after your preliminary examination (if you are presenting your research at the conference), at this [link](#).

If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact the DGS ([Charles Nunn](#)) or the DGS Assistant ([Elaina Cossin](#)). We are here to help you through any challenges you face, and look forward to seeing how your research develops – and helping it to flourish – in your time at Duke.