

Expectations for 4th Year Graduate Students in Evolutionary Anthropology

Charles Nunn, Director of Graduate Studies

Welcome back to your fourth year in our Ph.D. program! This document serves as a brief introduction to the key academic milestones for your next year.

- 1. Research Expectations:** You should now be entering full-blown research mode, and engaged in a mix of data collection, analysis, and writing. Most of your research effort should focus on projects that will be included in your dissertation. If you have not been doing so already, it is important that you start finishing research projects, including dissertation chapters, and submit them to journals for publication (although these are only guidelines, as different kinds of projects may reach publication milestones sooner than others). This demonstrates that you can complete what you started, and thus will help you land a postdoc or other job. If you are seeking publication of papers that will also appear in your dissertation, be sure to discuss those plans with your committee, and share the drafts to be submitted with committee in time for the members to provide feedback (e.g., two weeks before you plan to submit the manuscripts).
- 2. Funding Awareness:** We guarantee five years of support; thus, at the start of this 4th year, you have two years to complete your dissertation. That may seem like a long time, but as anyone who has completed their dissertation will inform you, it goes much faster than you expect! Without the structure of courses, it is crucial that you develop consistent work habits to stay on track. Now is a good time to become familiar with the requirements for your dissertation at the Departmental level and the Graduate School (see section 9 and Appendix 1 of the [“Requirements For The Ph.D. Degree In Evolutionary Anthropology,”](#) and the [Graduate School](#)). This will help you prepare for a successful defense in your 5th year.
- 3. Committee Meeting:** Given your focus on research, the 4th year is especially important for you to consult with your committee. An important element of this meeting will be to implement the plan in your Dissertation Proposal and notably, discuss any changes that emerge as you conduct the research. Arrange at least one meeting with the full committee in your 4th year, and also reach out to individual members who can provide feedback on different aspects of your research plan and initial writing. Have your Ph.D. advisor email Elaina following the committee meeting so that she can keep track of your compliance with our departmental requirement of a yearly meeting.
- 4. Postdoctoral Research Planning:** Although it may seem far off, in the coming year you will need to start identifying potential postdoc opportunities. Discuss this with your advisor, and take opportunities to connect with potential postdoctoral advisors to let them know your interest. It takes time to set-up postdoctoral funding; getting a head start can increase your chances of success. Plan to attend conferences and workshops that can help you network with faculty who might serve as advisors, and get to know the postdocs and graduate students in those labs to determine whether the lab is a good fit for your interests and approach (and to learn about the mentoring style, community, and funding streams in that lab).

5. **Structure of Your Dissertation:** We strongly recommend that you write up chapters as publishable units. Writing up a long “monograph” that has to later be edited into separate papers will waste time, and is not necessary. You should plan on at least 3 core chapters that reflect scientific findings equivalent to separate research publications, and an Introduction and Discussion / Conclusion chapters. Your advisor and committee may provide additional suggestions relevant to your particular set of projects and goals. At the start of the semester, please review the requirements for your dissertation at the Departmental level and the Graduate School (see section 9 and Appendix 1 of the “[Requirements For The Ph.D. Degree In Evolutionary Anthropology](#),” and the [Graduate School](#)). Throughout this year, keep in touch with Elaina to inform her of your plans so that she can be sure you are completing the many necessary steps towards a successful completion.
6. **Responsible Conduct of Research:** Be sure you are keeping up with the 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). Check the [schedule of RCR events](#) and emails from the Graduate School to find details on those held during the semester.
7. **Teaching Assistantships:** Remember that you are required to gain teaching competency during your time in our program. That can be achieved by serving as an Instructor of Record for a Summer Session course (please consult with Dr. Leslie Digby if that is of interest), or by serving as a Teaching Assistant for two semesters. If you are a Teaching Assistant, please refer to advice provided in the “Academic Orientation for New Graduate Students in Evolutionary Anthropology” (i.e. the equivalent document for 1st years).
8. **Departmental Seminar and Annual Presentation to the Department:** In addition to your coursework and teaching responsibilities, all graduate students are expected to attend the weekly Evolutionary Anthropology Talk Series (EATS), and **to give at least one short or full-length seminar or organize one discussion during the academic year** (as noted [here](#), and note that the yearly “what I did last summer” EATS does not count toward this requirement). 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 far from your immediate areas of interest.
9. **Lab Policies and Expectations:** At the start of the year, review lab policies, and set expectations with your advisor for how often you will meet or otherwise receive feedback. 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.
10. **Resources:** Remain 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!

11. **Funding Opportunities:** Also refresh your knowledge of funding options at Duke and elsewhere, and make a plan for grant applications for the academic year. 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](#).
12. **Departmental Evaluation of Students:** As you plan your year, remember that all graduate students will be required to submit a summary of their academic activities at the end of the spring semester. **In your 4th year, we will be especially looking for evidence that you are (1) successfully funding your dissertation research and (2) starting to submit, and ideally publish, scientific papers related to your dissertation.** You should also be starting to settle into an academic community and scientific society outside of Duke, with poster and oral presentations at meetings of that society.
13. **Service to the Department, University, and Beyond:** Refresh your memory about what service is and how it works by reviewing the ‘Service to the Department and University’ section in the first year document. Continue to contribute to the department via service opportunities, which encompasses volunteer (i.e., non-compensated) time devoted to support our intellectual community. Especially consider more advanced service activities that will help you learn about the life of faculty governance, such as serving as the graduate student representative at the faculty meetings or on the Graduate and Professional Student Council. If you haven’t already done so, consider also service to your non-Duke communities, such as academic societies; in addition to helping you find academic communities, this kind of service can help you network as you search for postdoctoral positions. As we noted in the 3rd year ‘milestones’ document, be aware that doing too much service can detract from your research program, which should be your primary focus. Your job applications will be enhanced by evidence of service, but to only a minor extent. In contrast, research accomplishments are paramount when you enter the job market, so allocate your time judiciously. We do ask you to list your service activities on your yearly review.
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. 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” (<https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/caps>). 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.
15. **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. 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!

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.