

Graduate Study Guidelines

SDSU Department of English and Comparative Literature

Big Picture:

1. Careers in academia can be long ... and people's memories even longer.
2. Be considerate, respectful, and genuine in your interactions with others.

A few nuts and bolts:

1. Read emails thoroughly, paying careful attention to dates and deadlines.
2. Default to formal in addressing other academics unless otherwise indicated.
3. First impressions, both in person and via email, are important.
4. Create a professional email address and signature. Don't claim a status you have not yet earned.
5. Request letters of reference well in advance (3 weeks at least) and offer to provide additional materials. Be sure to send thank you cards afterwards.
6. Request academic supervision from people familiar with your work.

Getting the most out of your program at SDSU:

1. Take advantage of the opportunities a university offers: attend lectures, readings, symposia, and other campus activities; volunteer for internships and offer to help organize events.
2. Attend open office hours with professors and learn about their expertise. Remember that faculty set time aside specifically to meet with students.
3. Your education is not limited to the classroom and being part of a broader intellectual community is your job and privilege. Enjoy your time here.
4. Start considering your culminating experience projects early in the program. You don't need to commit to one—though this can help in planning—but thinking in such terms will help you develop your sense of yourself as a scholar, artist, and educator.
5. Read widely and deeply—not just from the syllabus but from everywhere your curiosity leads you.

Considering a PhD?

1. Be prepared for the time and work that goes into a good application ... and be prepared to repeat the process a second time.
2. Research programs well in advance and identify multiple faculty with whom you wish to work.
3. Be realistic & consider funding sources carefully.
4. Develop a clear sense of who you are as a scholar. You will need to explain this in your letter of application.
5. Prizes, scholarships, and work submitted to academic journals will enhance your application.
6. Don't ever lie on your CV.
7. Get help with your letter of application. The first draft of every letter of application is always awful.
8. Identify professors who can write letters of reference that speak to your strengths as a scholar. Do they know you well? Have you done well in their classes?

Community College Teaching?

1. Learn about teaching opportunities through emails and at information sessions.
2. Many local community colleges have Instructional Assistant programs that will provide you with relevant experience, give you a sense of community college teaching, and introduce you to leadership.
3. SDICCCA Internships available through SDSU are another way to gain experience.
4. "Teaching, teaching, teaching": gain as much experience as possible and focus your letters of application on your successes as a teacher.
5. Learn about the student body at specific colleges. What can you offer that student body?