

## Curricular Resource Center

### FIRe Introduction to Grad School Glossary

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**Assistantship** As a graduate student, part of your funding package may involve an assistantship. This can refer to a teaching assistantship (TA) or research assistantship (RA) or something else. These assistantships are jobs that contribute to your **stipend**.

**Certificate** As a graduate student you may have access to Graduate Certificates in your or other departments. These certificates can provide additional content and professional training for things like Museum Curating or Critical Theory and can be part of your **professional development**.

**Coursework** Coursework refers to the classes you may have to take as a graduate student to train you in a field or profession.

**Dissertation** For many graduate programs you may be required to produce some original research project to complete your degree. Most **Ph.D.** programs require a dissertation which you would spend the last couple years of your program researching and writing with the mentorship of faculty in your department. For some **Master's Degrees**, you may also be required to produce original research, though this may be referred to as a master's thesis.

**Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** A Ph.D. program can be in a wide range of scientific and humanities disciplines. It often entails between 5-7 years of study, involving **coursework** and producing original research with the guidance of a faculty mentor. A Ph.D. can be a **terminal degree** in many fields, especially in academia. It should have at least 5 years of guaranteed funding, including **tuition remission** and a **stipend**.

**Exams** As part of a graduate program you may be required to take exams which can be written or oral tests. These tests allow the

department to track your progress and your mastery of the material you are supposed to learn in your **coursework**.

**Fellowship** As part of your funding for your graduate degree you may have a fellowship of some kind. These can be given automatically by the department or school or they can be ones you apply for (such as the Ford Foundation Fellowship). These may vary in what you would be required to do once you are awarded them, but in general these fellowships replace and are less work than an assistantship. These can provide a **stipend** and give you more time to focus on your **coursework** or **dissertation**.

#### **Graduate Record Examination**

**(G.R.E.)** The G.R.E. is a standardized test required for many graduate program applications. Like the SAT. Think ahead; the exam costs ~\$200 and it takes a few weeks to get Brown to help you get a fee waiver.

**Insurance** As part of your funding package you should receive some package of health and dental insurance. These packages may vary depending on the department.

**Master's Degree (M.A. or M.S.)** A Master's Degree program can be in a wide variety of disciplines and may or may not be a **terminal degree**. Two major types are a Master of Arts (M.A.) or a Master of Science (M.S.). There are also many Master's Degrees in more specific disciplines. A Master's Degree program usually lasts between 1-2 years and may involve an element of either creative or scholarly production. Consider Brown's 5<sup>th</sup> year M.A. and M.S. programs. Funding may be limited depending on school.

**Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.)** Master's of Fine Arts Programs are **Master's Degree**

programs for an artistic or creative discipline and may be a **terminal degree**. Includes things like screenwriting, painting, sculpture, fashion design, nonfiction, new media, etc.

**Master of Public Affairs (M.P.A.)** A Master's of Public Affairs program is a graduate program that provides training in public policy and government administration. Many M.P.A. programs are somewhat like Master of Public Policy and Master of Public Administration programs. May be a **terminal degree** in some policy careers.

**Master of Teaching (M.A.T.)** A Master of Teaching program provides training in education. It may provide teaching practice and professional certification.

**Placement** Placement rates are a way graduate programs talk about the jobs their graduates have gotten. Depending on what you want to do, a program's placement rate may be relatively better or worse, but look out for what sorts of jobs their graduates are getting and how this compares with your own career goals. If you want to become a professor, it is a good sign if the **Ph.D.** program has many graduates who have gotten **tenure-track** positions at colleges.

### **Postbaccalaureate Program**

**(Postbac)** Postbaccalaureate Programs are offered at a range of universities. These are programs through which you can get additional training or **coursework** in a subject. This can make it easier to pursue a Masters or Ph.D. program in a subject you didn't major in as an undergraduate.

### **Professional Development**

Professional Development refers to several different kinds of services and resources your

department and university may provide you to train in the field you are interested in. Can include teaching experience, conferences, publishing, and **certificates**.

**Stipend** A stipend is the money you make as a graduate student. Depending on your funding package your stipend can vary widely between departments, schools, and regions. Consider the relationship between the offered stipend and the cost of living in the area. As a **Ph.D.** student, you should have a stipend of some kind, though funding for other kinds of programs may be limited depending on the school and program. A program may contractually limit having an outside job so be aware of your stipend and how much you need in relation to how many hours you work.

**Tenure** For experienced college professors as well as teachers in primary and secondary school, tenure is a system that provides a permanent, secure appointment. A tenure-track position will eventually lead you to being considered for tenure once certain requirements are met, but these requirements vary by school and department.

**Terminal Degree** Terminal degree is a term for what level of education or degree is considered the highest level needed for a field. In some fields a **M.P.A.** may be needed, whereas to become a professor of history, one would need a **Ph.D.** Some fields may also not require graduate school or may require an alternative professional degree like a Law or Medical degree.

**Tuition Remission** Tuition Remission waives some portion of your tuition. **Ph.D.** programs should have full remission while Master's Degrees may have partial remission.