

# Successfully Navigating the Stages of Doctoral Study

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## Abstract

Students often enter a doctoral program desirous of a research and teaching career, but with little “hands-on” understanding of the demands of such a program. They then find themselves in a program that bears little resemblance to previous degree programs they had successfully completed. Students are usually competent to complete the program and are even highly motivated. However, a key ingredient for success is their ability to manage the program and avoid mistakes that can be detrimental to success. This essay presents a stage model that describes how students experience different challenges as they traverse the stages of exploration, consolidation, engagement and entry. Mistakes that are typically seen in each stage are described, along with guidelines on how to consider managing those mistakes. The essay concludes with a checklist that can be used as an evaluative tool for doctoral students who wish to evaluate how they are really progressing in their doctoral study beyond merely meeting institutional requirements.

**Keywords:** Doctoral Program Doctoral Program Management, Doctoral Program Stages, Doctoral Progress Evaluation, Doctoral Progress Checklist, Doctoral Program Success.

## Introduction

Most doctoral programs inherently have a lack of structure associated with them that coincides with the nature of the knowledge business. Every doctoral student is unique in his or her attitude and ability and, consequently, in the management of their program. While there might be course requirements and program guidelines, the process of developing competent candidates for the doctoral market is highly idiosyncratic for every student. However, students must embody a minimum threshold of motivation and competence for success. Motivation is required in order to be willing and enthusiastic about engaging in the unstructured and often frustrating process of knowledge creation. Competence is required for students to participate at this higher level of learning, which requires efficient knowledge absorption, integration, deployment of tools, and, ultimately, creation of a quality knowledge product. A third often overlooked aspect is the ability

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of students to effectively manage their program by taking proactive measures to prevent “mistakes” from undermining the positive force of motivation and competence.

Faculty members are often asked by doctoral students, “How am I doing in the program?” The faculty member’s response is usually tied to the administrative components of doctoral study:

completion of coursework, on schedule for comprehensive exams, etc. While such responses are necessary in reflecting on the progress of the student with respect to institutional requirements, they provide little insight on how the doctoral student is doing as a budding researcher (or instructor) at their current stage of the program. The latter would be a better predictor of career success than the former. Students must remember that in order to be successful in their chosen doctoral program, they must learn to be effective managers and proactive participants in their evolutionary process through the program.

There are some common “mistakes” students make in their doctoral program that often hinder their ability to manage their progress (Grover, 2006). These mistakes are avoidable when they can be identified and the students can see them within the larger context of the program and the stages through which their program develops. This idea of stages of development in a doctoral program can help students benchmark their progress and circumvent common mistakes. While the pace and acuity of development might vary by student based on their capability, motivation, and ability to manage their program or manage their advisor, the stages generally remain the same. By working with dozens of doctoral students in various capacities and in various stages of their program, I have observed students go through a maturity cycle as they try to hone their research and teaching skills.

Doctoral students are like all seven dwarfs at different stages of their program. At first they are Dopey and Bashful. In the middle, they are usually sick (Sneezy), tired (Sleepy), and irritable (Grumpy). However, in the end, they’re called Doc, and then they are Happy (Azuma, 1997). More formally, I have seen students go through four stages, roughly reflecting the four years of typical doctoral study: The Stage of Exploration, The Stage of Engagement, The Stage of Consolidation, and The Stage of Entry.

Figure 1 approximates student maturation over time within a PhD program. Each stage characterizes how a doctoral student is positioned with respect to knowledge creation within his or her field as well as the specific institution. Each stage is also characterized by greater incidence of certain mistakes that could inhibit progress to the next stage. These mistakes are not mutually exclusive, or possibly even exhaustive, but they can provide guidance on what should be avoided, as well as what ought to be done proactively by doctoral students in managing their education. It should be noted that while these mistakes can be made at any time during doctoral study, the mistakes are presented in the stage when they first need to be realized by the doctoral student. Some mistakes are reiterated at different stages, and the implications of the same mistake could be quite different. For instance, the implications of not being politically astute in stage one (starting the program) are very different from stage three (when setting up a dissertation committee). In general, avoiding the mistake early can reduce adverse implications later. Ignoring the mistake later might jeopardize timely program completion.

Table 1 summarizes the mistakes with respect to their stage. The realization must be in the initial stage the mistake is presented; however, the mistake can be carried throughout other stages. Therefore, the mistake is merged across stages to show how they move throughout the doctoral program. While doctoral education is challenging, motivation and competence can work synergistically to ensure a well managed doctoral education.

Table 1: Managing mistakes across stages

Stage ↓	Mistake →	1) Doctoral Students Are Too Reactive	2) Doctoral Students Do Not Seek Help	3) Doctoral Students Do Not Build an Asset Base	4) Doctoral Students Are Not Politically Astute	5) Doctoral Students Do Not Create Synergy	6) Doctoral Students Do Not Carefully Evaluate Opportunity Costs	7) Doctoral Students Fall into a Lull Period	8) Doctoral Students Do Not Manage their Committee	9) Doctoral Students Do Not Manage Their Advisor	10) Doctoral Students are too Ambitious	11) Doctoral Students do Not Make Appropriate Tradeoffs	12) Doctoral Students Leave too Early
	Stage I: The Stage of Exploration - The first year student	Doctoral students must be proactive and realize they champion their own program.	Doctoral students must realize they can use the faculty resources at their disposal.	Doctoral Students must create their value though the program and cultivate assets to leverage later.	Doctoral Students must set up good faculty relationships and be aware of unfortunate political realities.	Doctoral students must create synergy between projects.	Doctoral students must analyze projects in terms of costs and benefits and end projects that do not add value	Doctoral students must manage the time in-between post-comps and pre-dissertation period.	Doctoral students must be savvy in selecting their committee – to maximize their outcomes.	Doctoral students must manage their advisor in order to maximize productive interactions.	Doctoral students must have a defensible and feasible dissertation.	Doctoral students should plan for the internal and external challenges required for successful transition.	Doctoral students should realize that once they have a job and remove themselves from their dissertation, it is more difficult to finish.
Stage II: The Stage of Engagement - The second year student		<b>Comprehensive Exams or Equivalent</b>											
Stage III: The Stage of Consolidation - the post-comps & dissertation entry student		Doctoral students must realize their access to data, monetary assets available, and apply to grants to aid in the dissertation process.			Doctoral students must choose a committee based on fit and be sure committee members are not leaving or conflicting with each other.						Doctoral students must manage their advisor in order to maximize productive interactions.		
Stage IV: The Stage of Entry - the exiting student													

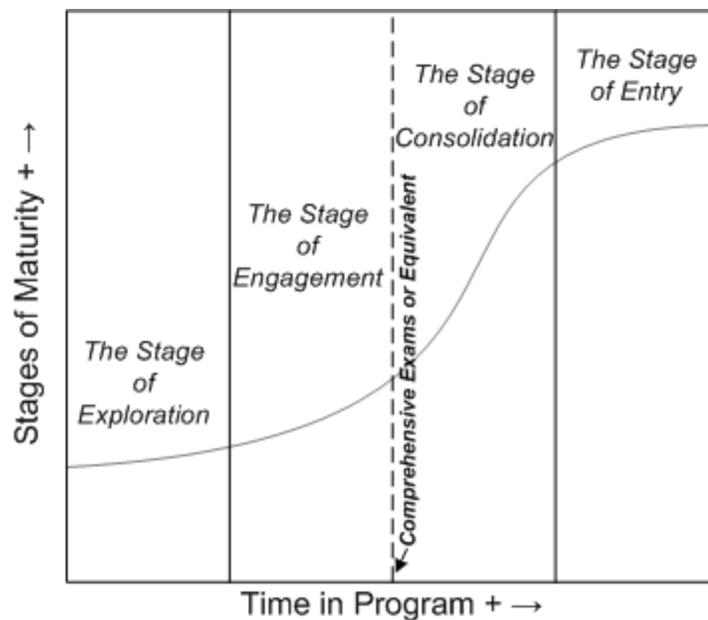


Figure 1: Maturity model of Ph.D. student growth

## Stage I: The Stage of Exploration

*The Stage of Exploration* epitomizes first year students. Despite the plethora of voluminous research many students do when searching for the right program, the pendulum does not swing until they are actually in the program. Here is when they realize that doctoral study is outside the scope of their previous reality from what they envisioned coming from a professional masters program. Here, they listen to senior students tell them how hard they need to work, the battles of the job market, comprehensive exam pressures, and the importance of working on research outside the classroom. Many of these concepts are new to the first year students and they have to battle this noise as they deal with seminars and research articles not written for the common man, and statistical techniques that they never knew existed. This becomes a trying time, and to succeed, they need to take a deep breath and explore, question, and learn about where they are, what they are doing there, and where they are going.

At this point, it is necessary for students to recognize that the nature of a doctoral program is fundamentally different from their other experiences and they need to assume more responsibility for their success. Internalizing this concept requires students to focus on getting a good understanding of the faculty members, student and institutional resources surrounding them, understanding the political landscape, and then proactively trying to position themselves to maximize learning and success. In this stage first year doctoral students must take advantage of the resources available to actively begin molding their program. While failure here may not result in failure in the program, making mistakes early could be costly. Such mistakes could lead the doctoral student into a vicious circle that is difficult to counteract as the program proceeds, resulting in a dismal path of counterproductive results (Masuch, 1985).

The biggest challenge in the Stage of Exploration is *trying to position oneself within the new context*. There are four key negative characteristics students must identify and overcome in order to avoid the most common mistakes: doctoral students are: 1) too reactive; 2) do not seek help; 3) do not build an asset base; and 4) are not politically astute. While these “mistakes” should be recognized in the first stage, they must be considered in all stages in order to maximize the quality and efficacy of results.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Are Too Reactive***

Doctoral students need to recognize as soon as possible that *they* are in charge of their program. It is neither their advisor nor their colleagues, but the student who has to earn the degree and create the foundation for his or her future. This degree is more than just taking a series of courses and checking off a list of boxes. Instead, it forms the fundamental grounding for an academic career. Students who go through the doctoral program in reactive mode to requirements do not milk their doctoral education like students who are proactive. In reactive mode, in the case of a well designed and structured doctoral program, a student still might meet the requirements of the program and be a pretty good candidate in the job market. However, students that proactively, but astutely, leverage their time in the doctoral program tend to be more successful in their careers. Proactive students take the time to build an evolving reference set, do not avoid challenging courses, read copiously, expose their work in conferences, and seek opportunities to work with colleagues and faculty members. Yes, doing these things requires motivation and competence, but it also accelerates the students' maturation process as researchers. In doing so, they command respect in the eyes of their colleagues and mentors.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Do Not Seek Help***

Doctoral students should remember to use the tremendous resources at their disposal. While there is no substitute for perseverance and self-reliance, if students are in a doctoral program with a lot of colleagues and faculty members with expertise, instead of investing inordinate amounts of time in resolving issues with topics and methods themselves, they should turn to the resources available to them. This can not only benefit students by saving them from doing hours of extra work, but also can help them form, or enhance, new connections with colleagues and faculty members, building a relationship base. Even an e-mail to someone whose article uses the same technique can compress the frustration cycle. In a related vein, doctoral students who do seek help should not be afraid of constructive criticism. In fact, they should actively seek it. Sharing and critiquing each other's ideas is the essence of research development (i.e., peer-review). If students surround themselves with high-quality researchers who are excited about their research work, their enthusiasm will rub off. Research can actually be fun!

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Do Not Build an Asset Base***

In their career as researchers, doctoral students will have the opportunity to work with a number of research groups. However, never will they have devoted more time to learning than they do in their doctoral program. Therefore, doctoral students should spend their time in the program engaging in activities that create personal value as a co-author. Relevant questions for a doctoral student are: If I work on a joint research project, what do I bring to the table? Can I cultivate those skills while in the program? For instance, doctoral students often solicit faculty for their expertise in a certain area or methodology or even writing skills. Cultivating these assets while in the doctoral program creates value for joint endeavors down the road. Therefore, doctoral students should assess their assets and how they can leverage "learning" in the program in order to create unique inimitable value for themselves. Students who do not build an asset base tend to be "followers" and cannot sustain the joint research relationships that are so critical for success.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Are Not Politically Astute***

Unlike most masters programs, the doctoral program involves a higher level of dependence on faculty. An unfortunate reality is that the doctoral student must be able to navigate within the political maze that is often present. Therefore, it is important for students to be politically astute when managing their program. Some faculty members tend to be egocentric and parochial, and therefore, students must be conscious of this fact in their dealings with them. In general, students

should be friendly, receptive, and responsive to faculty members. They should consider any unfortunate political realities. They should be professional in their demeanor, be sensitive to intellectual property issues in joint projects, and avoid taking unilateral actions that can create potential conflicts.

## Stage II: The Stage of Engagement

*The Stage of Engagement* is further up the value-added axis. This is exploration with a purpose. Doctoral students begin to have a sense of doctoral study, their position in their institution, and perhaps their chosen profession. This is the stage where students engage with faculty members, with published work, and with research ideas. They also begin to sense their path of success through the program, including the colleagues and faculty members they will need to interact with and a sense of research areas and methods they particularly enjoy. It is still a struggle for many to prioritize because opportunities increase and students straddle the broad view and the more narrow personal view of research.

At this point, the pace of the program picks up and it is necessary for students to begin considering relations with faculty members, evaluating potential opportunities, creating synergies between projects, and to start taking advantage of the resources available to actively begin molding their programs. Since this stage is still prior to comprehensive exams (or the equivalent system in place that qualifies the student for the dissertation stage), the mistakes mentioned earlier are still applicable, but the probability of failure associated with making them increases. For instance, I've observed cases where doctoral students have not cultivated a good working relationship with a faculty member (i.e., by not being responsible about meetings and deadlines), which could eliminate an important option of working with this faculty member in the future. This makes it more difficult to counteract the spiraling vicious circle.

The biggest challenge in the Stage of Engagement is to *navigate the broad view of the field while managing personal research projects*. Here is where two more common mistakes manifest themselves: 1) doctoral students do not create synergy; and 2) doctoral students do not carefully evaluate opportunity costs.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Do Not Create Synergy***

Doctoral programs offer students a variety of opportunities to create pedagogical value. These could be in the form of teaching experiences, course research projects, and individual projects with colleagues or faculty members, or reviews of articles and topics. Many students often take a piecemeal approach to these opportunities, including doing what is practical, expedient, or expected. While it is useful for students to have a breadth of knowledge in the field and create their own "schema" or understanding of key areas and their relationships, it is just as important to start building depth in a particular area. Doctoral students who consciously manage their opportunities, and attempt to create synergy between them, are often successful at homing in on a research area of interest. This is critical to reducing "dead" time later in the program. For instance, creating synergy between course projects that require a research paper can facilitate the creation of better products, enhance in-depth study of literature in an area, help in time management, and possibly get students a head start on a dissertation topic.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Do Not Carefully Evaluate Opportunity Costs***

In general, doctoral students who are noted for their competence and motivation tend to get more demands on their time from their colleagues and faculty. Second year students have already begun to make connections with faculty members and are beginning to realize the workload not

only from courses, but also from optional projects with faculty members. With every opportunity comes corresponding costs that requires students to prioritize. A student cannot say “yes” to every opportunity that comes his or her way because the combined effort needed to complete each project would overload the student and influence counterproductive results, whether it is a research project, review, consulting assignment, or technology seminar. Taking on everything would simply spread the student too thin and distract him or her from moving forward programmatically. Some may even find themselves in the bowels of a project that is not pertinent to their area of interest, but yet they continue to do it. To the extent that students have control over their opportunity set, every opportunity should be evaluated strategically, focusing on how this project creates value to their doctoral education. In some cases political astuteness might be necessary to better manage interpersonal relationships and priorities when it comes to projects.

### **Stage III: The Stage of Consolidation**

*The Stage of Consolidation* is when ideas crystallize. Doctoral students in this stage are more engaged and committed to their research, and the institution is irreversibly committed to the students – particularly if the students pass their comprehensive examinations and are admitted to candidacy. The student at this stage should have a very good sense of his or her field and its structure, and the ability to position research within that structure. The student should be able to traverse up and down between the supra-system (the broad field) and the sub-system (individual research). Dissertation ideas should be developed in this stage, as the personal view of research dominates the latter part of this stage. The students should also develop their level of engagement with the broader profession as they package themselves for the job market. By this stage the student is more comfortable within the program and has worked very hard up to this point. After students pass their comprehensive examinations is the start of the stage where the program makes its turn and begins to head into the final phase of the dissertation and program conclusion.

The biggest challenge in the Stage of Consolidation is to *engage in deep research and establish ties with professionals in the field*. Failure at this stage is fatal in most cases, deterring a student from ever finishing the program. In this stage, the previous mistakes impede progress and compound the vicious circles as they interact with other “mistakes.” Doctoral students that have not been proactive, cultivated good relationships with faculty members, sought help, built some core competencies, managed their time well, and/or created synergy across their projects will have a much harder time developing a research topic and engaging in the profession. Further, students tend to make five more common mistakes important for the post-comprehensive stage: doctoral students 1) fall into a lull; 2) do not carefully select their committee; 3) do not manage their advisor; 4) are too ambitious; and 5) do not seek resources.

#### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Fall into a Lull***

After successfully going through the stress and psychological hurdle of comprehensive exams, students feel relieved and usually take time off. Doctoral students have to be vigilant and avoid the temptations during this relaxation period, by either letting it continue for too long or with losing focus of their goals and priorities within the program. While students should take a well-deserved break, students must be mindful of the program and not lose the hard fought momentum they had prior to their comprehensive exams. The time between post-comps and the dissertation proposal is usually the most poorly managed. In many cases students do not have a dissertation topic or even a dissertation area after comps. Inordinate time then goes into “exploring” dissertation topics and some students even avoid their advisor because they don’t think they can deliver. In contrast, students who have managed their program well by creating synergy and thinking of topics while (or before) studying for comps should quickly home in on their topic and work on

developing it with their advisor. There is no substitute for continuous interaction, even if it is for minor updates.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Do Not Carefully Select their Committee***

This mistake from stage 1 (Stage of Exploration) reiterates the importance of being politically savvy in selecting dissertation committee members. I have witnessed cases where the dissertation got caught up in conflict between two committee members who disliked each other and opposed each others recommendations. The poor student in such cases is caught in the conflict, and at the minimum this causes delays and immense frustration, particularly when there is a weak advisor who does not effectively look out for the best interests of the student. In another case, a student chose a junior faculty member who was focused on tenure and lacked the experience and inclination to provide good advice to the student. Further, the student faced the significant danger that an important member of their committee would not receive tenure or promotion and leave the school, leaving the student in a potentially fatal bind. So, doctoral students must carefully choose their committee members based on the alignment of their members' interests with their own, but also based on experience, quality of advice, stability within the institution, and external recognition. They must also consciously deal with political anomalies, such as faculty members' conflicts that might cause the dissertation to drag on or be pulled in various directions.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Do Not Manage Their Advisor***

Many doctoral students don't recognize the duality of their relationship with their advisor. Despite the student's attempts to choose an advisor who is most supportive, available, knowledgeable, and responsive, there is a diversity of profiles of advisors along these and other dimensions. In some cases, the misfit between the want and availability of the advisor is prevalent. Despite wanting to be available to their students, some advisors are so busy that they cannot be as responsive or available as the student may want. This requires students to actively manage their program and be proactive in dealing with their advisors. They must knowingly strive to maximize the time that their advisor has allocated to be available with them. Doctoral students must enter into meetings prepared with issues, possible solutions, and solicit the advisor's advice in order to efficiently manage the time available. Students should seek advice on major issues, while taking a position on the minor ones. Similarly, if an advisor is trying to push a student in an unwanted direction, the student should present their arguments against that advice cogently, preferably with supporting literature. Students should never hide from their advisor. If there is something amiss, communication with the advisor is a prerequisite to getting it resolved. In the end, most advisors will appreciate the thought and preparation put in by the student, and ultimately, a symbiotic relationship between student and advisor is the most productive one.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Are Too Ambitious***

"The best dissertation is a done (signed) dissertation" is an oft-heard saying. While partially facetious, there is an element of practicality in the statement that needs to be noted. I have often observed competent and motivated students invest a tremendous amount of time in proposing projects that are extremely ambitious, require an elaborate methodology, and include a swamping number of variables. Often, I see my role as an advisor as simply to narrow down their topics into a project that is not only interesting and relevant, but also *defensible and feasible*. Students should remember that the dissertation is a continuation of the learning process, and not necessarily the most relevant or significant project they will ever do. Feasibility, such as being able to complete the project within a reasonable time frame, is as important a criterion as any other. Students should consider their ambitions in terms of costs and benefits. This kind of analysis often sug-

gests that reasonable imperfection is acceptable. After all, doctoral students may pursue their original ambitious research project once they finish their degree.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Do Not Seek Resources***

In many cases the dissertation process requires resources like access to companies, data repositories, and expertise. Planning for these resources in advance can facilitate more productive use of time and reduce the dissipation of energy into resource issues. It is not very useful to work sequentially and develop a research model only to be bogged down in issues of sample access and response rates. So, while advisors often preach that method should follow the research problem, a harsh reality is that both need to be considered in parallel in order to make the process efficient. Also, doctoral students should try to use their personal contact and work environments to facilitate access to a research sample. Additionally, doctoral students should be vigilant regarding available research funding opportunities for doctoral studies. Grants or extra scholarships can help with data collection or travel to doctoral consortiums. Doctoral students must actively engage in finding these assets and formally applying. This is a competitive business; thus, proactive and organized students are more likely to succeed.

## **Stage IV: The Stage of Entry**

Finally, *The Stage of Entry* is the final thrust before the doctoral student formally enters the profession as a peer. Broader notions of career, research stream, and tenure enter the student's consciousness, as do family, location, and job satisfaction. The "light at the end of the tunnel" keeps the student going as the process culminates with a doctoral degree.

The biggest challenge in the Stage of Entry is to *manage the transition as the student has one foot in the home institution and another foot trying to move outside it*. However, often doctoral students do not make appropriate tradeoffs resulting in problems with completion of the dissertation or getting a job. In other cases, the temptation of getting a head start in their career prompts them to leave before their final defense, leading to the last career threatening mistake: doctoral students leave too early. So, the two common mistakes in this stage: doctoral students 1) do not make appropriate tradeoffs and 2) leave too early.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Do Not Make Appropriate Tradeoffs***

The last stage, Stage of Entry, is particularly challenging in terms of time management, and the earlier mistakes of being too reactive, not prioritizing properly, and failing to manage opportunity costs can have dire implications at this stage. Students are dealing with the cumulative effect of projects started during doctoral study that might be closer to completion or in a position where they can (with some effort) make a positive mark on their curricular vita (CV) or resume. The baggage of the dissertation is also key, and making consistent progress with it often amidst vagaries and frustrations of data collection is a necessary condition. At this stage, many students are also engaged in teaching and/or new course preparations – and these commitments are more onerous for inexperienced students. Lastly, the demands of the job market are far from trivial with the need to prepare and mail CV/resumes, research program and teaching statements, conference interviews, on-campus interviews and presentations, as well as the host of coordination costs needed to do this well. Students have a hard time managing these tradeoffs effectively. The unfortunate reality at this stage is that too little emphasis on one aspect (job search) and too much on another (dissertation) could create one kind of problem (failure to get a job) while switching priorities could yield another (failure to complete the dissertation). There is of course no simple solution to this, other than to be proactive, establish priorities, recognize opportunity costs, and balance efforts between job search and completion of the dissertation.

### ***Mistake: Doctoral Students Leave Too Early***

Even though advisors generally discourage doctoral students from leaving before their final dissertation defense, the pressures of getting a head start in their career often takes precedence. I have generally observed that a dissertation with one month of pending work on-site, sometimes takes months or even years off-site. Leaving early also makes the student more susceptible to losing focus and momentum in their program. In the long run, that one month investment can save the student tension and anxiety, as well as the risk of losing continuity of the dissertation process and the interest, or even physical presence of the committee members.

## **Summary and Proposed Checklist**

Competence allows doctoral students to be efficient in knowledge absorption, integration, deployment of tools, and ultimately deliver a quality product. Motivation provides the drive to traverse obstacles in the path of knowledge generation and our knowledge institutions. But, managing doctoral education allows students to navigate and keep control over an unstructured process. Management of the program is the most underemphasized predictor of success in doctoral study; however, together the three form a winning combination.

Although there could be variance in the nature of the programs themselves, the student's acumen and approach, and the alignment between time and stages, the stages described above have been translated into the four years of a typical program. Being mindful of these stages in relation to the possible mistakes that can be made within them will most assuredly lead to the student's success within the program. Students who create synergy, are proactive in their approach, evaluate opportunities carefully, consider political realities, avoid a deep lull period, manage the interaction with their advisor, seek help and criticism of their work, build a particular skill set, temper ambitious projects with reasoned reality, and don't leave the program prematurely tend to be successful. Finally, I would like to add that while the maturity cycle might be complete within the administrative framework of the doctoral program, it is far from complete when one considers that we continue to evolve and learn as we mature as researchers and in our respective careers. Moreover, I believe that the skills students use to successfully traverse the doctoral program will translate to their professional career. The Appendix provides a quick checklist of the four stages that is useful for students to respond to that tricky question – "How am I doing?"

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## **Appendix: Checklist for Doctoral Students at Various Stages of their Program**

### **End of Year 0 (Just Before Entering the Program):**

Are You Motivated to Do This...

Does a research and teaching career appeal to you?

Does the idea of generating and disseminating knowledge excite you?

DIAGNOSTICS - If you answered NO to these, QUIT NOW!

### **End of the Stage of Exploration (Stage I) (usually at the end of the First Year in the Program):**

- Are You Motivated to Do This...
  - Does a research and teaching career appeal to you?
  - Does the idea of generating and disseminating knowledge excite you?
- Are you organizing your program and developing plans of action for each year of doctoral study?
- Do you have an organized way of keeping up with the many articles currently in your field?
- Do you have a sense of research in your area by reading articles in major journals in your field?
- Do you know who the major authors are in your field?
- Can you discuss the variety of research methods, and do you have in-depth knowledge in a couple?
- Are you leaning toward areas that are more exciting to you?
- Are you beginning to develop a local network of faculty and students with whom you think you can collaborate?
- Are you collecting, reviewing, and cataloging current literature in the areas you are interested in?
- Do you know what journals are most likely to accept articles in your area of interest?
- Have you tried to write an original proposal or engage in a research project?

DIAGNOSTICS – Develop work plan to remediate all ‘NO’ Responses within six months.

### **End of the Stage of Engagement (Stage II) (usually at the end of the Second Year in the Program)**

- Are You Motivated to Do This...
  - Does a research and teaching career appeal to you?
  - Does the idea of generating and disseminating knowledge excite you?
- Are you prioritizing your time and managing your various activities well?
- Can you discuss the integration of articles through your schema or mental model of how you view the field?
- Have you completed a research paper for submission to a conference (or a journal)?
- Have you presented your ideas in a group setting?
- Are you getting a good understanding of a variety of research methods and tools?
- Have you established a portfolio of projects with peers and faculty that will lead to both conference presentations and publications?
- Are you converging through your readings and topics on an area that could be the foundation for a dissertation?

DIAGNOSTICS – Develop work plan to remediate all ‘NO’ Responses within six months.

**End of the Stage of Consolidation (Stage III) (usually at the end of the Third Year in the Program):**

- Are You Motivated to Do This...
  - Does a research and teaching career appeal to you?
  - Does the idea of generating and disseminating knowledge excite you?
- Have you passed your comprehensive examinations or equivalent?
- Can you read articles more efficiently and rapidly integrate them into your stable schema.
- Have you had the responsibility for teaching a course?
- Have you presented your ideas at a regional/national conference?
- Have you honed your presentation skills, particularly for the proposal?
- Have you experienced the process of reviewing a manuscript with your submissions?
- Have you reviewed a submission to a conference or a journal?
- Have you developed an idea for your dissertation?
- Have you identified your dissertation chair/committee that is on-board with your topic?
- Are you very comfortable with your proposed methodology for your proposal?
- Have you defended your proposal?
- Have you entered the job market?

DIAGNOSTICS – Develop work plan to remediate all ‘NO’ Responses within six months.

**End of the Stage of Entry (Stage IV) (usually at the end of the Fourth Year in the Program):**

- Are You Motivated to CONTINUE TO Do This...
  - Does a research and teaching career appeal to you?
  - Does the idea of generating and disseminating knowledge excite you?
- Have you developed a set of competencies that you can bring to collaborative efforts?
- Have you attended a national conference in your field?
- Have you got articles accepted in conferences or journals?
- Have you interacted with peers outside your institution that share your interests?
- Have you defended your dissertation?
- Have you structured a research program from your projects and dissertation?
- Have you got a job?

DIAGNOSTICS – Develop work plan to remediate all ‘NO’ Responses within six months.

## Biography



**Varun Grover** is the William S. Lee (Duke Energy) Distinguished Professor of Information Systems at the College of Business & Behavioral Sciences, Clemson University. Previously he was a Business Partnership Foundation Fellow and professor of information systems at the Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina. Dr. Grover has published extensively in the IS field, with over 150 publications in refereed journals. Seven recent articles have ranked him among the top five researchers based on publications in major IS journals over the past decade. He is currently serves as Senior Editor of MIS Quarterly, Journal of the AIS and Database and Associate Editor for JMIS, JOM, IJEC, among others. He is a recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award and Stan Hardy Awards from the Decision Sciences Institute, and has also received awards for his research from PriceWaterhouse Coopers, Association for Information Systems, Academy of Management and Anbar Intelligence. He has also received numerous teaching awards for his courses at the graduate (MBA) and doctoral level. Throughout his career, Dr. Grover has been engaged with the both the administrative and academic aspects of doctoral programs, including working extensively with numerous students and doctoral consortia.