

Point Loma Nazarene University

College of Extended Learning

Graduate Academic Culture

WASC Standards – Graduate Academic Culture

The WASC Standards, Criteria for Review, and Guidelines, specifically 2.2b, related to a graduate academic culture states: "Institutions offering graduate-level programs employ at least one full-time faculty member for each graduate program offered and demonstrate sufficient resources and structures to sustain these programs and create a graduate-level academic culture."

At Point Loma Nazarene University the graduate academic culture is uniquely different from undergraduate academic culture. The literature on a graduate culture provides the following characterizes that form the basis of the PLNU College of Extended Learning graduate culture. A graduate culture:

- Communicates clear expectations for high academic achievement as conveyed to prospective and current students.
- Sets high expectations for all students to aspire and stretch for higher levels of cognitive development.
- Focuses on research and scholarly contributions to the discipline; plans and structures ongoing opportunities for faculty and student collaboration on research and scholarly endeavors.
- Insists that students take an active role in learning and assume a large share of the responsibility for their learning.
- Expects students to explore diverse ideas and think critically about their own values and perspectives.
- Champions infusion of diversity experiences, cross-cultural elements, and diverse perspectives into the graduate curriculum.
- Displays an egalitarian, not authoritarian, approach toward instruction.
- Expects intellectual passion from faculty and students.
- Builds a community of scholars searching for new knowledge and quest for higher learning.
- Exemplifies and transmits a core value system for the responsible conduct of research -- honesty, accuracy, efficiency, and objectivity.

(Council of Graduate Schools, Best Practices in Graduate Education for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2008.)

At Point Loma Nazarene University a graduate culture is developed through some specific learning goals. Graduate students at PLNU shall demonstrate:

- Advanced knowledge, skills, and values appropriate to their discipline.
- Ability to be creative, analytical, and think critically.
- Ability to do research and perform scholarship appropriate to their discipline through primary, print and electronic sources.
- Ability to work as an individual as well as in collaboration with others in contributing to the scholarship of their disciplines, as appropriate.

Faculty Development

At Point Loma Nazarene University the faculty are understood to be a strategic key to the development of a graduate culture. Graduate faculty at PLNU will:

- Participate in an orientation specifically designed for all faculty teaching graduate courses with an emphasis placed on the unique and distinct culture that set it apart from that of undergraduate education.
- Participate in a Semi-annual training related to best practices and recent literature related to graduate education
- Library assistance in developing course materials to aid in research specific to the content.

Student Development

At Point Loma Nazarene University through the College of Extended Learning faculty and staff promote an academic graduate culture for students through:

- Orientations for new graduate students with an emphasis placed on the unique and distinct culture that set it apart from that of undergraduate education.
- Strong student/student interactions and faculty/student interactions – in and outside of classroom through collaborative learning opportunities, team work, and academic support.
- A cohort model for building learning community.
- Rigorous academic standards through readings, assignments, writing, and research -- requiring knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning experiences.
- Program and course learning outcomes that are established and evaluated, with emphasis on creative, analytical and critical creative thinking.
- Research activities that require scholarship and creative work.
- A curriculum that intentionally draws upon the students' real world experiences for class discussion that results in information that can be immediately taken back in to their real world activities.
- Opportunities for out-of-class learning that enable students to:
 - Experience an intentional mentoring of students through connections with practitioner professionals in their field.
 - Experience special class speakers who bring academically sound real world experience to the classroom.
 - Participate in professional/disciplinary organizations and conferences.
 - Share scholarship with other students through public forums.
- Culminating activity (thesis, project, comprehensive examination) for demonstrating academic achievement.

Institutional Organization

At Point Loma Nazarene University there are specific institutional structures designed to support and ensure a graduate academic culture. These structures include:

- Graduate Extended Studies Committee
- Graduate and Professional Directors Council
- Graduate and Professional Administrative Council
- College of Extended Learning Faculty
- Graduate and Professional Studies Admissions
- Graduate and Professional Studies Student Support
 - Includes Academic Support (i.e. Writing support)
- Graduate and Professional Studies Career Services
- Graduate Library Resources
- Office of Instructional Technology
- Office of Assessment (Program Review)
- Office of Institutional Research
- Center for Teaching and Learning