

Data Reporting Brown Bag: How & Why the Graduate School Counts Students?

I. How does the Graduate School categorize students?

At Cornell, graduate study is organized using a “field” structure. Fields are composed of faculty members from one or more departments who come together around a shared intellectual interest, and may draw from different campuses or colleges. *Graduate students are admitted to fields of study.*

By design, graduate study at Cornell is cross-disciplinary and integrative. Students experience considerable flexibility, freedom, and independence in their academic programs. Students take an active role in defining their academic pursuit under the guidance of a faculty committee.

a. *Graduate Field (primarily)*

- i. the unit a prospective student applies, and is admitted, to
- ii. academic plans (i.e., the degree programs) are individually mapped to graduate field
- iii. academic and administrative “home” for each graduate student

b. *Other*

- i. *GS College* – the Graduate School assigns each graduate student into the college associated with the primary appointment of his or her special committee chair (or advisor, for professional master’s students)
- ii. *Degree Type* – the Graduate School administers graduate research (doctoral and master’s) and professional (master’s) degrees
- iii. *Discipline* – the Graduate School organizes fields in four fields of study: Arts & Humanities, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering, and Social Sciences

II. Why do we categorize students as we do?

a. *Internal reasons*; including:

- i. academic flexibility, collaboration and community
- ii. field faculty have jurisdiction over graduate work via the advising relationship or special committee structure
- iii. the “GS college” approach aligns with the need to understand faculty effort
- iv. programming, opportunities, support and services often offered at field level
- v. funding allocations

b. *External reporting*; including:

- i. Council of Graduate Schools
- ii. National Science Foundation
- iii. US News and World Report
- iv. Petersons

Remember:

The answer depends on the question, and context is key--Cornell is large and complex and for all the right reasons, “student” can be counted in myriad ways!