Expectations for Students in the Management Department Doctoral Program

To be submitted for approval of the Department of Management Ph.D. Committee

The Management Department’s Doctoral Program is a research-based program that prepares students for careers in academia. This program has an Organizational Behavior/Human Resource Management (OB/HRM) emphasis. Students are expected to engage in organizational behavior research activities during the course of their program and conduct an OB/HRM dissertation. Opportunities to collaborate with faculty in the areas of strategy and entrepreneurship are also available.

Although students have the freedom to pursue their own research activities, students are expected to collaborate on research projects with the faculty. Together, faculty and students pursue the goal of publications in top-tier research outlets so as to further qualify students to obtain placements at research-oriented universities. Consequently, potential doctoral students should carefully investigate faculty research interests and recent publications to decide whether faculty interests are compatible with their own.

Prospective doctoral students should also examine courses and course topics included in the program and carefully consider whether they fit with topics they are interested in pursuing. If not, the student should apply to other programs where a greater level of fit is perceived.

Students are engaged in research throughout the duration of the program. Required coursework should be completed by the end of the second year. The third and fourth years are focused on the dissertation. Students are encouraged to complete the program in four years, and must complete the program within seven years (note that students on a VCU assistantship have a maximum of four years of funding). The majority of the School’s PhD seminars are offered during the day and students must have the flexibility to attend these classes when they are offered. Students must also be available to meet with faculty during the day to work on joint research projects. Students are also expected to develop their teaching skills while in the program, and to gain teaching experience by teaching classes before earning their degree. This is facilitated by required participation in teaching development programs.

Because PhD programs prepare students to be experts in their field, the reading list for classes is considerably longer and more in-depth than what is normally found in MBA or other Master’s level classes. The primary reading list for doctoral seminars consists of empirical and theoretical research published in scholarly journals. Statistics used in OB/HRM research are highly advanced, making general familiarity with statistics before entering the program highly advantageous.

Importantly, to earn a doctorate requires a substantial time investment and a genuine interest in conducting research. The program is not suited for individuals who are currently employed. Doctoral students typically commit no less than 40 hours per week and often 60 or more hours per week. Students are also expected to travel to attend relevant academic conferences (e.g., Academy of Management, Southern Management Association, Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology).