

The Cultural Studies PhD Program at george mason university

An Assessment of Program Productivity, Placement, and Successes

The Cultural Studies Program conducted a program review during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 academic years. The following findings are drawn from data collected in Fall 2008.

1. Research Productivity – Current Students and Alumni¹

The gold standard for scholarly research in cultural studies is the refereed monograph or original edited volume. GMU's Cultural Studies PhD program has had notable success in encouraging graduate students to publish rigorous and engaging peer-reviewed books as well as articles in the field's top journals.

Scholarly Books (refereed):

Program graduates	10
Current students	5

Peer-reviewed articles and book chapters

Total articles and chapters:	79
% of current students with article(s)	40%
% of graduates with article(s)	73%

2. Engagement with the Field of Cultural Studies

Our department culture encourages students to present their work within the larger field. Our CS students have always presented their work at a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary conferences around the world.

Conference presentations

Total # of presentations, current students and graduates	252
% of current students with at least one presentation	97%
% of graduates with at least one presentation	73%

In addition, our doctoral students have played a crucial role in organizing scholarly events and conferences here at Mason, including an annual student-initiated conference, held in the Fall, the annual Visual Cultures Symposium held each Spring semester, as well as numerous other events organized throughout the year by the Cultural Studies faculty-student colloquium. For the most recent events, see our program website at <http://culturalstudies.gmu.edu/>

3. Engagement with Institutions Outside the University – Grants and Fellowships

An increasing number of students, both current and former, are applying for – and winning – outside-the-university support for their research and teaching interests.

Total number of grants and fellowships won (students and graduates):	32
% of current students who have won a fellowship or grant:	13%
% of graduates who have won a fellowship or grant:	45%

4. Teaching Experience – Current Students and Alumni

Gaining teaching experience—particularly as the primary instructor—is often crucial to finding a tenure-track appointment upon graduation. Most of George Mason’s CS students gain this experience, often by teaching their own courses in our partner-departments around the university. Taken together, current and former students have taught at total of 113 stand-alone courses while studying at Mason. Our student surveys have found that more than half of our current students (16 of 30, or 53%) and a large majority of our graduates (8 of 11, or 73%) taught at least one stand-alone course during their studies with us.

5. Alumni Survey – Cultural Studies Program

Arguably the most important measure of a program’s success is the experience of the program’s alumni. Most of our program’s graduates have moved into academic positions—most often in tenure-track positions or their equivalent (54% approx). Other graduates have most into the private sector, as political and cultural advocates, media executives, and full-time researchers.

Last year, the Office of Institutional Assessment conducted a survey of our 20 doctoral graduates. Of these, 13 graduates replied (for a response rate of 65%). Here are some of the survey’s most important findings:

Do you agree that the skills and concepts you learned from the Cultural Studies doctoral program have prepared you well for your work outside the university?

Strongly Agree and Agree	83%
Strongly Disagree or Disagree	8%

Given your training and degree, how would you describe your job?

Appropriate for my degree	77%
Inappropriate for my degree	23%

How would you rate the Cultural Studies % of alumni responding

doctoral program's contribution to your...

"excellent" or "good"

Research skills	92%
Writing skills	100%
In-depth knowledge of the field	77%
Oral communication skills	84%

¹To generate data on research and conference paper productivity, we collected Curriculum Vitae from graduates (11) and from current students (19). We also drew data from students' online CVs, when available (11, for a total of 30 current students). We analyzed these CVs to establish trends for employment, scholarly publications, and other forms of professional activity. Because we were unable to collect CVs from 100% of alumni and students, the resulting numbers probably undercount program productivity.