

## **Exit Interview Recommendations**

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**Motivation:** Exit interviews are an important opportunity to learn where your program can improve and to leave alumni with positive feelings about their experience. Interviews should be conducted with graduate students leaving your program early, as well as those graduating with their intended degree. In fact, we often learn the most by interviewing graduate students who are leaving early.

### **Implementation:**

- It is recommended that exit interviews be conducted as a conversation rather than through an electronic survey. This creates a more meaningful experience for the student and allows you to clarify or gather more detail if needed.
- For large programs, it may be prohibitive to interview every student exiting the program. In these situations, we recommend focusing on students exiting the program early and a subsample of those graduating with their intended degree.
- Consider setting a time limit on the exit interviews in order to be respectful of your students' time as well as to make exit interviews feasible for the person responsible for conducting them.
- Programs are encouraged to collect data across five areas: content knowledge, skills, community, attitudes, and behaviors. Below we provide some example questions within each area. In order to make exit interviews feasible from a time investment perspective, consider asking just one question per area. You may increase the overall coverage of data collected over time by asking students in more depth about just a subset of the areas or a different question set for each student within each area.

### **Example Exit Interview Questions:**

#### Content Knowledge

- What was the most (positively or negatively) influential course or activity in the first year of your program in terms of influencing future decisions about your graduate career (e.g., future course selections, activities, research, creativity, aspirations)?
- What course or content knowledge from your program is most important to you?
- What type of course or content knowledge do you think our program is missing?



### Skills

- Which are the most important special skills/knowledge you gained directly from this program?
- Which skills — that you developed outside of the program — are most valuable to you?
- Are there additional skills that you wish you had been able to develop but were unable to because opportunities were not available?

### Community

- Which, if any, program activities did you participate in (e.g., seminars, social events)?
- Did you participate in CSU activities more broadly? If so, which ones (e.g., Professional development seminars, CSU Writes)?
- What contributed most to your sense of community with peers/faculty/mentors within and outside the program?
- Do you have specific suggestions about what the program can do to improve the sense of community for students?

### Attitudes

- Why did you choose this program?
- What single experience in this program was your most positive?
- What single experience in this program was your most negative?
- What are the primary strengths of this program?
- What are the primary weaknesses of this program?
- If you had it to do over, would you still obtain your degree through this program?

### Behavior

- What are your future plans?
- Did this program help solidify your career plans? Modify them? Challenge them?
- Were you satisfied with the guidance you received from your advisor/this program/CSU regarding post-graduate opportunities?
- How can this program continue to support you in the next few years?