Becoming a Ph.D.

A Quick Guide to Starting Well and Finishing Strong

For Doctoral Students

at the

Graduate School of
International Development

NAGOYA UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

Beginning the doctoral program comes with great anticipation: the prospect of earning the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree – the highest academic accomplishment and symbol of intellectual maturity. The excitement could be more when the opportunity is courtesy of a fully funded fellowship and at a university in a different country. The Ph.D. student looks forward not only to starting the course but also to learning new cultures, seeing fascinating landmarks, making new friends, and creating mutually beneficial networks. However, most Ph.D. students will realize that the excitement is short-lived. The reason is simple: earning the Ph.D. qualification is a solemn and arduous undertaking, one that requires utmost devotion and minimum distractions.

The extent of devotion underscores the value of a Ph.D. (the holder of the qualification), whether in academia or industry. In academia, the Ph.D. is deemed knowledgeable enough in a specific discipline to instruct others and produce new Ph.Ds. In industry, holders of the degree drive innovation and change. Importantly, a Ph.D., by training, is critical, analytical, and never accepts things on face value. Therefore, to produce Ph.Ds worthy of the honor, universities demand thoroughness from the student and supervising professors. Unlike the Master's degree earned mostly by course work and research, the Ph.D. honor is usually earned by research only (with a series of oral presentations on the research). The research-based organization of the doctoral program aims to groom the student into a competent, independent researcher. Worthy of note, the Ph.D. research is expected to be innovative, making a dent on the literature in the discipline. For this reason, inadequacies overlooked at the Master's level are not tolerated in the Ph.D. program.

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The GSID Student Handbook is an invaluable guide to your Ph.D. journey. It contains the administrative requirements that, when not complied with, can delay

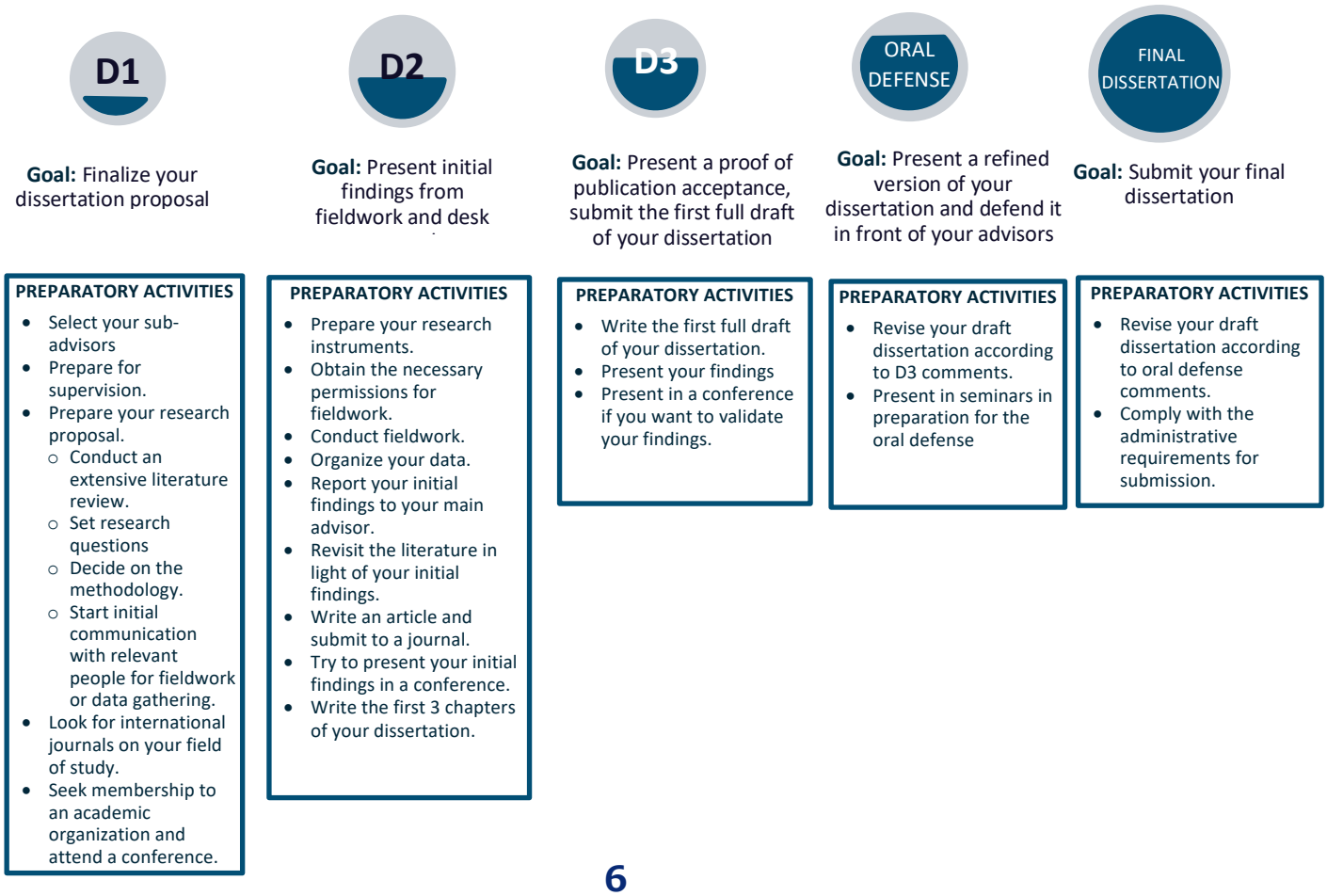
your graduation by a semester or more. However, your accomplishment and satisfaction as a Ph.D. will not rest on having complied with the minimum requirements set in the GSID Handbook but on having pursued a serious scholarship with the mentorship of your advisors, the contribution of your peers, and the validation by scholars in your field even outside GSID.

During the academic life in GSID, students will most likely encounter hardships that will slow down their progress. Stress and anxiety about the research and the future, isolation, financial troubles, or problems with motivation, are issues that are often overlooked. Additionally, adapting to life in Japan while undertaking such a difficult endeavor might cause extra stress and depression for newcomers and already-adapted people alike. Unfortunately, there is no mention of these issues or how students can deal with the pressure.

In an effort to support Ph.D. students in GSID, this guide will also address some common issues, in both technical and psychological nature, and offer valuable tips to lessen their burden as much as possible. The bits and pieces of wisdom and practical tips offered stem from the lived experiences of those who walked the same path before you. There is no doubt that each path to Ph.D. is unique. We have different capacities and the personal challenges we face vary. These notwithstanding, we believe that there are more similarities than differences, as we play by the same administrative rules and move in a similar academic environment. There is the common saying that one only knows when to begin the Ph.D. program but not when it will be completed. It is an acknowledgment that many factors come to play in determining the success or failure of an attempt to become a Ph.D. Ultimately, however, the hope is that by sharing what we have done and reflecting on what we should have done, you can tread this path more successfully than we did.

Overview

GSID's Ph.D. Program is marked by milestones to help you pace yourself. Each stage before the submission of the final dissertation culminates in a presentation corresponding to the goals of each stage. Ideally, D1 is accomplished in your first year, D2 in your second year, and D3, Oral Defense, and Final Dissertation in your third year. A common misconception of students starting this program is that each stage (D1, D2, D3) corresponds to one year. That is not the case, since after the D3 presentation students need to pass an Oral Defense as well, and the D3 presentation must take place at least six months before graduation, if the student wants to graduate within 3 years. From this alone, it is easy to see that the third year is quite congested. If possible, try to finish your D1 and D2 presentations as soon as possible to give you extra time. The toughest hurdle to overcome is the time between after your D2 presentation and the Oral Defense. Having some room to breathe will definitely be beneficial.



As you move on each major stage, the list gets shorter leading to the final dissertation. This does not mean, however, that it gets easier. Writing always takes more time than you think it would, your motivation may dwindle, and your advisors' expectations get higher as they begin to grasp the entirety of your research findings and their implications. This guide is an attempt to assist you through it.

The majority of GSID students find it hard to follow this structure time-wise, as technical issues or, simply, life may get in the way. It is good to take several preparatory steps for each year, which are mentioned in the next section, and which will prevent you from underestimating the enormity of the workload. While the Ph.D. degree tests your ability to produce new knowledge and contribute to the academic community, it mostly tests your mental health and resilience. The majority of successful graduates have these things in common: perseverance and tenacity.

Section 1: A timeline of the D1, D2, D3 stages

Starting Well: The D1 Period

Your first year as a D1 student will, in most regards, be your easiest year with the most creative freedom you can experience during your Ph.D. studies. Initially, you might feel a bit lost as you are trying to find a clear direction. Luckily, you do not have to "solve the puzzle" of your research in detail at this stage yet.

The key to surviving this period is to approach your initial research proposal as a flexible idea that is most likely going to change several times, even after your D1 presentation. Be flexible and open-minded. To know your direction, you have to know yourself and your surroundings, both physically and metaphorically. To get clear about who you are and what your research is about, you need to collect different kinds of information. You can do so by conducting a thorough literature review, observing professors' and students' behavioral patterns at GSID, taking a look at their research, or noting the tone and niche topics of journals that interest you. Even discovering your favorite place to study can be a valuable discovery to help you focus.

A D1 presentation is the culmination of your first year in the Ph.D. Program. It summarizes all your progress in your first year and prepares you to embark on fieldwork. If you come with a scholarship that allows you to spend an extra year or semester as a research student, you have an edge in starting well. If you don't have that extra time, however, the best time to start is always today.

Below are the most important steps to take during your D1 year.

1. Select your Sub-Advisors

As a doctoral student, you are in the final phase of academic adolescence. Helping you transition to academic adulthood are your main and sub-advisors who, as earlier mentioned, constitute your dissertation committee. To move to each major stage in your doctoral program, you must earn the approval of all three advisors.

Before beginning the doctoral program, a student will have been accepted at least provisionally by a professor willing to serve as the main advisor. Students are often unsure if it is they, the main advisor or the graduate school that will select the sub-advisors.

It is the student's responsibility to find the right picks for sub-advisors. However, this must be done carefully and tactfully. It is strongly advised that you consult your main advisor about completing your dissertation committee. Your main advisor will want to ensure that the sub-advisors are colleagues with sufficient expertise in your field, can supervise your kind of research, are accessible, and reliable. Your advisors have their own strengths and weaknesses. They may also come from different research traditions. Complemented with your own strengths and weaknesses, this synergy is invaluable to your research. Be strategic about selecting your advisors in this regard.

Once you have decided, your main advisor will ask you to make a formal request to the target sub-advisors. If one or both of them decline your request, inform your main advisor and continue the search together. Below are the roles of advisors in your becoming a Ph.D.

1.1 Main Advisor

The main advisor has the overall responsibility to ensure that you learn, abide by the university and graduate school's regulations, conduct your research ethically, and complete the doctoral program on time. Other responsibilities include:

- To discuss and review your work to ensure it is relevant to accomplishing your research goals.
- To put you back on track if you veer off the research goals.
- To ensure that you are aware of the general literature and are up to date with the latest perspectives.
- To discuss significant findings of your research and opportunities for publishing.
- To ensure that you have opportunities to present your work internally (and if possible, externally).
- To conduct the mandatory evaluation of your performance.
- To contact sub-advisors if anything threatens your research and early graduation.
- To make all communication between you and your sub-advisors smooth along the way.
- To ensure that you submit all required documents before and after presentations.

1.2 Sub-advisors

Sub-advisors also ensure that you receive guidance to complete your research and graduate on time. They ensure that you observe the regulations and meet ethical demands in research. Other responsibilities include:

- To ensure that you are aware of the general literature and are up to date with the latest perspectives.
- To ensure that you submit all required documents before and after presentations.
- To make themselves available for your presentations.
- To provide useful criticisms of your presentations, articles, books, and dissertation in good time.
- To stay informed about your progress and render advice.

Your advisors are available for consultation as the need arises. However, you should give them sufficient prior notice. Also, be discretionary about what kind of discussion to take to your sub-advisors. As mentioned earlier, issues regarding significant changes with your research or threats to your graduating on time should be transmitted to sub-advisors by your main advisor.

2. Prepare for Supervision

You will have been accepted into GSID after an assessment of your capacity to conduct doctoral research and whether your research proposal falls within the remit of GSID. Acceptance into the program, however, does not indicate total endorsement of your competence or the strength of your proposal. You should create room for improvement. You should also expect minor to significant (including overall) change to your proposal as you begin the course.

Bear in mind that the initial proposal might have written without the input of your advisors who are to guide you through the research—this may vary according to your prior status. Their input will be necessary and invaluable. Therefore, by accepting to be supervised, you should be willing to be supervised.

A crucial thing to note is that, as a rule, professors in GSID do not micromanage students' research. They only render their expertise acquired through years of experience. It is for this reason that they are called 'advisors'. You therefore have to pace yourself. You can do this better if you know yourself.

2.1 Know Yourself

Knowing yourself is knowing your motivations, habits, strengths, and weaknesses. At the peak of stress and pressure, it is not unusual for Ph.D. students to question why they are pursuing the degree in the first place. While it is true that you need a compelling reason to embark on this journey, the reasons you started may be different from the reasons why you continue. A Ph.D. is not a sprint. It is a marathon.

One thing that you should know most about is your attitude to writing. The final output, after all, is a written work. This should be emphasized enough: Writing takes more time than you think it would. You need to plan for this on better days to cope with the bad days. If you are the type of person who has the habit of planning

ahead, good for you. However, if you are a procrastinator, be mindful of deadlines. To a procrastinator, a deadline works wonders. It forces your mind to focus and to decide on the issues in your research that you have been mulling over. The following are the ways that worked for other procrastinators that you may want to try:

- Volunteer for an early schedule of seminar presentations. There is no such thing as ready. Aim for high quality given your best effort and limitations. Even those who submit their final dissertation feel like there are more left undone. This is the nature of the research process.
- Do not wait for your main advisor to give you deadlines. Promise him/her a date of submission and keep it. Your main advisor may sometimes be hesitant to pressure you. If you let him/her know the assistance that you need, s/he may be willing to hold you accountable to the deadlines that you committed.
- Set a daily writing goal. Writing 500 words a day due at a constant time every day can give you a sense of accomplishment and encourage you to go on. In difficult times, you may ask a fellow Ph.D. student to hold each other accountable to this goal.
- Arrange for a consultation schedule with your main advisor or sub-advisors. Knowing that you have to discuss your progress can push you to organize your thoughts. Your advisors can also help you process your ideas.

2.2 Know your Advisors

In the process of consulting with their advisors, some Ph.D. students get confused at the feedback they receive. The longer this drags on, the more delays are incurred. Although they may ask for further explanation, there are various reasons why students hesitate. One way around this is to know your advisors. It is not required but you will benefit greatly in this regard if you read the papers published by your advisors. The more you read their papers, the easier it will be for you to understand their comments and suggestions on your own research work. As much as you can, attend their seminar classes, the doctoral presentations of fellow students, and observe their line of questioning and how they comment. Each advisor comes from a different field which may have different research traditions. Understanding this in your pre-D1 period can help you along the way.

Your seniors (senpai) are a good source of information about your advisors' working style. How fast each advisor can read your work and give you feedback varies. Some require a month while others can give feedback in one to two weeks. This is not within your control and this is something you should adjust to. Better yet, ask your advisor how early you should submit each output before a major presentation to give him/her adequate time in preparing for substantive feedback.

Another crucial and often generalizable advice is a good anticipation. Professors have as busy schedules as others, and most doctoral activities have a lapse of months to take the next step. These conditions naturally cause miscommunication, potentially a surprise in both parts if regular (let's say, weekly) contact is missing. If your advisors don't foretell a deadline or envisioned schedule, you need to be who keeps them updated of upcoming events. This will also encourage your advisors to reserve time and give a fast response.

Pitfall: Having three different advisors, you may often receive conflicting feedback that keeps you stuck. How do you handle conflicting points of view?

Solution: You might want to please all of your advisors. However, in the end, advisors' feedback is just a well-researched and factual *suggestion* and not an order. It is up to you to decide which direction you want to take. If you can logically argue why an advisor's feedback is conflicting with your view, it is perfectly acceptable to do so. In fact, it will help make your argument more robust, since this might be a counter-argument against which you have to defend your research. Your advisors are there to advise you. Treat their feedback with respect and do not ignore it, but keep in mind that it is just advice.

Tip: Find (sub)advisors that closely match your research interest, and which also match each other as closely as possible, in order to avoid conflicting perspectives.

3. Improve your Research Proposal

Your research proposal is the main requirement for D1 presentation. It may have passed through an entrance exam. However, it did so with the premise that it will certainly be revised. Consider it as that. Attachment to your ideas this early can prevent you from improving it and might make supervision difficult.

3.1 Conduct an Extensive Literature Review

The first step to revising is by conducting a more thorough literature review. Literature review is composed of three parts: exploration, reading, and outputting. A thorough exploration should precede your reading as the first reading can influence your mind in a non-systematic way. Nagoya University Library supplies rich resource, including institutional license to useful databases and e-journals. It is also recommendable to make an output in your favorite style each time after reading a document. Have a talk with your advisors and students also helps to clarify your understanding. Since your reading will extend several years and mountainous volume, leave always your footprints along the way will support your work process in later periods.

When doing the literature review, a practical approach is to read at least one article per day. You may choose to start with a broad knowledge of your topic and narrow down to details or start with the details and widen your scope as you go along. Whatever the approach, do not lose sight of the goals: To critically review what has been done and see what more needs to be done. A critical review means that you need to interact with the material and not just highlight what seem to support your ideas. This is daunting. As a beginner, you may be bothered by your inexperience and question your right to question the work of researchers ahead of you. It happens to the best of us, and it takes time to be comfortable. Some practical tips to get started:

- For each article you read, write the research questions, the methodology used, the most interesting idea, and the ideas that you do not understand.

- For a synthesis of the articles that you read in a week, summarize ideas that appear repeatedly in different articles, as well as the unique ideas.
- Take note of the important theoretical keywords in each article. If an article is of interest to you, try searching literature that contains those keywords, in order to become more specific.

Remember that you need to contribute to the literature. You will not be able to pinpoint your contribution if you do not take literature review seriously and systematically.

The literature review can be exhausting and confusing. You will be able to accumulate hundreds of scholarly materials in the course of your Ph.D. To prepare ahead, learn to use a literature referencing database. There are a lot of free downloadable options. Examples include Mendeley and Zotero. Their integration with Microsoft Word will save you time in referencing.

3.2 Set your Research Questions

Your research questions will be the starting point of your research. Your initial research questions can be refined as you appreciate your contribution to the literature. The research questions should be informed by the gaps in the literature or a possible reconceptualization of the research problem you are working on. Like the rest of your paper, this can still change after your data gathering. However, setting one now sets the scope of your research, which helps you decide on your methodology, and prepares you for fieldwork.

Your research questions should be as intriguing as possible. “How” questions are mostly used to explain a process of how something works, influences, or interacts. This kind of questions, while informative and able to support your ideas, and which you will inevitably use to collect information in your field, do not necessarily produce valuable knowledge at the Ph.D. level. Your questions need to go beyond the

question of “how” to answer “what” or “why” a puzzle exists, knowing “how” something happens. What is the meaning behind *how* something works?

3.3 Decide on the Methodology

Unlike a master’s thesis, a dissertation’s methodology draws more scrutiny. Pay attention to the methodology used by the authors of the research papers that you read. Over time, you will get an idea of the variety of approaches applicable to your research topic, as well as possible methodological insights from different fields examining a similar phenomenon. If there are opportunities for workshops or trainings on research methodology, grab them. It is better to have more options in case you change your mind about your research questions.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some students found quantitative methodologies helpful, as the data could be obtained online in the face of travel restrictions that obstructed the conduct of fieldwork. During that time, GSID offered many workshops on how to conduct a quantitative analysis. If time permits, learn about both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as you never know what can help you in the future.

3.4. Start Initial Contact with Informants for Fieldwork

With your research questions and tentative methodology, you can already start contacting possible sources of information for fieldwork. This will help you further refine the scope of your research as you begin to see what is possible. Your proposal will also be judged through the feasibility of answering your research questions given the methodology and fieldwork that you have in mind. You can never be too early to start this process.

Pitfall: You may want to create a perfect proposal and research questions before you start contacting informants for your fieldwork. However, it is possible that your research questions cannot be answered through your fieldwork due to unobserved

variables or feasibility issues. Your informants may object to your research questions or give you information that makes your questions trivial. You will end up wasting more time thinking of new research questions after conducting fieldwork. In this case, starting early with a preliminary fieldwork and a "pilot" study can help you avert these issues.

4. Prepare for D1 Presentation

The presentations are not mere rituals. Some students had to redo a presentation that was under par, thereby setting them back by months. You should prepare to avoid a repeat. If you were enrolled in April, know that an academic session for you ends in March of the next year. For an October enrollee, it ends in September. It is advised to fulfill the requirements to complete D1 no later than ten months into the first academic session. Some former students accomplished this task in the first six months**.**

Do not delay your D1 presentation because you feel you are not ready. Some students wasted two years without doing their D1 presentation, as a manifestation of fear of unpreparedness or failure. The D1 presentation is in some ways the easiest, so do not worry. You do not have to be too detailed in your explanations of your theoretical framework. You are not attempting to answer your research questions, but you are informing your supervisors of a *clear* way in which you plan to answer your *clear* questions during your D2 and D3.

To pass D1, your advisors expect you to:

- Justify the novelty of your research (the new contribution to the body of knowledge in the field).
- Show the theoretical (and if applicable, policy) significance of your research.
- Articulate the research objectives, questions, and the reliability of the method of data collection.

- Demonstrate the strategy of the data collection plan including its rationale and feasibility.
- Show clearly, your plan for completing the doctoral course.

Consult your main advisor and the student handbook for documents to submit before and after D1. After completing the D1 presentation, you have to draft a Q&A sheet in the format designated by the graduate school (main advisor will inform the detail) and obtain approval of all advisors.

The Q&A sheet is a document in which you transcribe your advisors' questions during your D1 presentation and how you answered or plan to answer. The purpose of the document is to help you remember what the issues with your research are at every stage. You should treat this document as a to-do list to which you can come back any time in order to remind yourself what you need to work on. Oftentimes, your advisors will allow you to record your D presentations, so that you have the audio afterwards from which you can transcribe. Make sure to get their permission before you start recording. Even if you videorecord the whole session, it is advisable to take note of the discussion and respond to the questions and comments spontaneously. If available, don't forget to ask your advisors to share written pieces of comments. You can share the MS Word version of the submitted documents for this purpose.

Once approved, you should send it to your main advisor notifying the final date of approval so that she/he can post it in a digital archive, to which all professors of the GSID have access. The whole interaction should preferably be completed within a week afterward. The same applies to D2 and D3 presentations.

5. Plan for a Publication

Although journal publication becomes a more realistic task after you obtain major findings after analysis, it is advisable to start planning for a publication as early as

possible. You will definitely need a journal publication before D3 presentation and in your future career. Review process usually takes time. Furthermore, you need to envision what academic contribution is expected from your research, or in other words, “what product you wish to sell.”
See section 7 in next Chapter for further detail.

6. Attend Outside Forums, Join an Academic Organization

Consult your advisor on academic organization/s that you may seek membership with. Most academic organizations do not allow non-members to present. You may pay an amount for membership, but that is usually discounted for students. Try to attend a conference even if you cannot present yet. This is a good learning opportunity to observe how presentations are done, who are working on the same topic as yours, and how the feedback process usually goes.
See section 8 in next Chapter for further detail.

Thanks to the expansion of webinar platforms, online session series, which don’t require a membership, are gaining popularity. Explore your field and attend those platforms to seek for perspectives from wider public on your work, and networking. Due to the economic advantage of online platforms, big conferences are not necessarily the best location to get most valuable opinions.

7. Network and build your community

One of the most important aspects of pursuing an academic career is to have a wide network. Many academic positions or collaboration opportunities are given through informal connections, word of mouth, or communities. It is important to start building your own community as soon as possible, if you are interested in an academic career. You can connect with people you meet at conferences, contact authors in your field of research, connect with people on social media platforms such as LinkedIn and follow their projects, keep in touch with your previous supervisors, or even get in contact with NGOs, civil organizations, or other institutions in your

field. You never know what valuable information or opportunities you can receive through them. If you nurture these connections early on, you might also get a head-start later on when looking for job opportunities.

Staying on Track: The D2 Period

At this stage, you have received your advisors' approval to go ahead with your fieldwork. Based on the initial contacts made for fieldwork, you need to organize for an actual one. The following are the activities you can expect in preparation for your D2 presentation. These are not necessarily sequential. Some activities may need to overlap depending on the progress of your preparations. Keep in mind that a badly planned fieldwork will not only cost you time and financial resources. It may also substantially delay your work.

1. Finalize your Research Instruments

Whether it is a survey form or interview questions, ensure that your instruments can answer your research questions. It would also be best if you can do a field test. Try these instruments with respondents who have a similar profile as your actual research respondents and check whether your questions are understood in the way that you intended. Consult your advisor before you use or send them out.

By either inductive or deductive research types, the timing to determine your hypothesis (tentative argument) may differ. Regardless, never go to fieldwork without any strategy tailor-made for collecting necessary and sufficient information for your argument. If possible, draft tentative hypotheses and a concept paper specifying predictable concerns and founding reasonings before data collection. A fieldwork with weak planning can waste your time and money.

2. Obtain the Necessary Permissions for Fieldwork

Aside from permission from your advisor and respondents, it is important to check if there are protocols observed in the locality of your choice. In some localities, going directly to your respondents without a courtesy call to local authorities is a breach of protocol. Respecting these is important not only for data gathering but also for your safety. If anticipated, consider a recommendation letter from your main advisor in a good advance to make a smooth landing in the field.

In GSID, an ethics committee has been created in 2022. This committee can evaluate, confirm, and certify that your interview questions do not pose any ethical issues to your respondents and that it is safe to proceed with your interviews for both you and your interviewees. Sometimes, especially organizations and institutions might require you to show such a certificate before conducting any kind of fieldwork, so make sure you plan some time ahead to go through this evaluation.

Going abroad for fieldwork also requires permission with the GSID administration. Check the Student Handbook or inquire with the GSID office regarding online forms that need to be filled out. Your scholarship may also have regulations on the maximum length of time you can spend outside Japan. Neglecting these may cost you a month's worth of scholarship. It is also advisable to get a travel insurance, especially when you will be in an unfamiliar country or region. There are also countries where you would need vaccinations against local diseases. Check travel advisories.

3. Conduct Thorough Fieldwork

Unless you have funding for fieldwork, you will have to provide financial resources to collect data. In case you are experiencing financial constraints, you may consider applying cost-effective methods to collect information. In today's digitally interconnected world, there are many online tools you can utilize. For example,

you may use Google forms or Qualtrics instead of contacting a surveying company in case you are drafting a survey, and you can distribute it using social media advertisement tools such as Facebook and Instagram Ads. You can also use Zoom or other video calling applications to conduct interviews for your qualitative research. These approaches were extremely useful to students and researchers all over the world that had to conduct fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic. Make sure you know the strengths and limitations of such approaches and how they may affect your research.

Depending on your research design or future adjustments to your research questions, you may need to do another fieldwork or would need additional data from the same group of respondents. If you promised them anonymity, respect that. If you promised to update them on the findings of your research, get their contact details. Maintain a good relationship and ensure that there is a way to contact them again.

4. Organize your Data

Ideally, you already planned for data analysis in the course of developing your research methodology. If you neglected to do this, you may be overwhelmed by a mountain of data that you do not know how to begin organizing. This happens especially in a case study research where multiple sources of data are considered.

For interviews, note that you would need a transcription. This takes up so much of a researcher's time. If you can find a transcriptionist that you can trust to keep the anonymity of the data, consider having them transcribed. This will give you more time to think and analyze. Documents that are digitized including interview transcripts and field notes can be qualitatively analyzed using commercially available analysis software like NVivo or Atlas.ti to name a few. They may cost you in license fees. However, you can take advantage of student discounts.

In case you are conducting a survey and you want to analyze your data quantitatively, you may use the distribution time to learn a statistical software tool, brush up your knowledge of statistics, or think about what code you need to use to analyze your data. You might also want to observe how your respondents answer to your questions in order to fix potential blind-spots in the early stages that you were unable to foresee. In any case, do not remain idle during the data collection time.

5. Report your Initial Findings to your Advisor

Consult your main advisor on your initial findings. It is best done early so that decisions can be made if there is a need for additional data or your research questions need to be redirected.

6. Revisit the Literature in Light of your Initial Findings

At this point when you already have initial findings, revisit the literature. Reading the literature before data gathering and after initial analysis provide different insights. Note the portion of your findings that the literature has and has not predicted. These can help you appreciate better your possible contribution to the literature.

7. Write your Journal Article for Submission

Publishing articles is a recurring task in the life of a scholar that stimulates debate and advancement of scientific knowledge. The more articles one has published, the more credible, capable, and contributing they look. If you are looking to establish an academic career after your Ph.D., publications are one of the most important criteria for finding a position. Most universities will assess the number and quality of major publications, including the journal reputation, citation scores, thematic importance, etc., during their recruitment process.

Failing to publish early is one factor for Ph.D. programs stretching beyond the standard duration. Remember that without a peer-reviewed academic publication (an article or a book) on your research, or proof that one of both has been accepted for publication, you cannot proceed to hold D3 presentation. Note also, that publishing is a long and challenging process. According to former students, the average time spent waiting for and responding to reviewers' queries was six months. For some, it lasted a year. This early, you should be observing where scholars in your field are publishing. Check their websites and note the following for reference:

- **Scope.** No matter how excellent your paper is, if it is out of scope, the possibility of rejection is high. The journal's main research focus should closely match yours, so make sure to choose an appropriate journal.
- **Audience.** When you write a paper, keep the journal's audience and their expertise in mind. Is it a regional or international journal? If you submit to an international journal with a Japanese case study, for example, do not expect the editors and the audience to know about Japanese systems. If that's the case, you need to use space to explain the context and the merits of selecting the case.
- **Duration of the review process.** For reputable journals, the review process may take anywhere from six months to one year. In principle, most journals indicate how long their review process takes, along with their rejection rate. Information on this can help you decide which journal to submit to and pace yourself accordingly. If the duration is not indicated on the website, contact the editor of the journal, and ask for information.
- **Nature of the journal.** There are predatory journals that ask for payment when you submit for review and promise a turnaround of as fast as two weeks. This kind of journals are not peer-reviewed and should be avoided. The only payment acceptable is when you opt to publish open access. One way to distinguish a fake from a mainstream journal is to check whether it is listed in reputable databases, such as World of Science (WoS) or SCOPUS.

For a few selective journals, Nagoya University provides financial assistance to cover Article Processing Cost (APC). Check Nagoya University Library website for the further detail.

Indeed, you will need a full-fledged strategy for a journal publication. You should know how to "sell" your academic product to a distinctive audience, which is an academic community. Journal editors will check all and every item in the following list before passing your manuscript to the reviewers.

- **Contribution.** Your manuscript must clearly contribute to an academic community. Unclear, misplaced, or undefendable contribution can cause a desk rejection, that means not passing to reviewers.
- **"Surprise".** In the case of high-reputation journals, editors may request an innovative, not trivial, finding or discussion from your manuscript. In other words, you should frame your argument in the most appealing way having the most updated discussion in the research field in mind.
- **Academic standard.** Poorly-written texts, typos, grammatical mistakes, incomprehensible illustrations, and missing information can be the reason to reject your publication.
- **Editors' guidelines.** Make sure you read through the editors' guidelines before you submit. This process can take an unnecessarily long time if your submission does not meet editorial criteria such as word count, reference style, or justifying positions and margins of the text. Editors are very strict about these rules.

Desk rejection might not be the worst case. On some occasions, editors recommend you submit your manuscript to other journals due to audience mismatch. Also, it is worth stressing that some of these criteria can be substantially improved by conference or seminar presentations. You are also encouraged to help other

researchers with constructive comments during any academic discussion and interactions. Please also keep in mind that time is precious to everyone.

Following the editor's approval, your manuscript may pass over to reviewers. Across journals, the number of reviewers may range between two to four or more. General review results are: Acceptance, Rewrite and Resubmit (minor revision), Rewrite and Resubmit (major revision), Reject. It is usually the editors' competence to give the overall judgment following the reviewers' suggestions. When you receive anything but rejection, you should prioritize the revision at the top of any other (academic) duties. You should keep track record of all revisions and craft a very detailed and respectful response letter in addition to the revised manuscript. In the letter, you should list every comment and respond to each one of them in detail. When you reply to a comment, start by thanking the reviewer individually (i.e., "I thank Reviewer 1 for this suggestion"). It is possible to counter a reviewer's comment if you can logically (and politely) justify why you are rejecting it, but don't get argumentative (i.e., "I thank Reviewer 2 for their insight and I understand why they would reach this conclusion. However, ..."). Ideally, you try to end the discussion by satisfying your reviewers, not provoking further interaction. Always keep in mind that reviewers (and sometimes reviewers) are non-paid volunteers who commit to contribute to anything but academic society.

Your article can be one or a couple of chapters of your dissertation. Therefore, it is possible to publish multiple articles if you have multiple chapters that can be turned into journal publications. A critical review of literature can also be a journal publication. If you are confident that the literature review you prepared for D1 presentation is outstanding, you should consider publishing the key findings before fieldwork. Remember that an article needs to have all its components: introduction, literature review, hypotheses, methodology, findings, and conclusion. Publishing a chapter of your dissertation should not be misinterpreted as being able to "copy-paste" one chapter. Although you can reuse data and argument, you

need to rewrite your previous works substantially to fit into the bigger discussion and avoid self-plagiarism.

If you are short on time or not confident that your article can be accepted (fast) by a reputable, international journal, you might also consider publishing to GSID's own journal, the *Forum of Development Studies*. It is not necessarily easier to publish there, as many students failed multiple times. However, desk rejection is less likely the case for this journal. Furthermore, the review process tends to take less time—possibly within two month after receipt, which significantly speeds up the process.

8. Try to Present at a Conference

Attending a conference is a great opportunity to be exposed to a variety of perspectives in your field of research and possibly listen to pioneering, unpublished research. You may also get to know distinguished scholars in your field personally and build a great network that boosts your reputation. Presenting your ideas at a conference also allows you to receive feedback from your peers and perfect your manuscript you plan to submit for publication.

It is not easy to find information on conferences and call-for-papers. Generally, a single source of information on upcoming conferences does not exist. You should closely follow the activities of organizations, companies, or institutions in your field, subscribe to their mailing list, or research reputable scholars and past conferences they have attended. Many scholars also share information on social media, so make sure you connect with them. Note that many big conferences close their call for papers 6-9 months before the event.

As with journals, there are also predatory conferences that ask for high registration fees, boast high acceptance rates of abstracts and manuscripts (usually without undergoing a screening process), and mention famous keynote speakers that they supposedly invited. While these events actually exist, they are

usually disappointing to researchers and do not help in advancing one's career or stimulate significant academic debate. A good way to tell fake from legitimate conferences apart is doing research on the organizer and sponsors, scrutinizing the conference's website, noting the focus of this year's topic (if it's too broad, it's probably fake), and considering the registration fee.

There are basically two types of conference participation: paper or poster. A paper presentation is performed by researchers who present their latest research, and their abstracts are usually grouped into a thematic session by the organizers of the conference. A poster presentation is designed for research presentation with a poster which tends to be a big single paper of A0 size, accompanied by presenters standing next to the poster and engage interactively with audience. Although a paper presentation is admitted for research projects with tangible outcomes—higher and "completed" quality—and a poster one is for research ideas, this is not always the case. A poster presentation may encourage casual and direct conversation with conference participants.

The highest value of presenting your article manuscript at a conference, seminar, or workshop is to receive feedback on your research project from experts in your field, which enable you to identify publication strategy, defendable arguments, and potential weaknesses. Another merit is to introduce yourself and your research to scholars in your field that may inform you of similar research projects, connect you to the network of like-minded people, and become potential co-authors in the future. A track record of conference attendances is also desired by institutions looking to hire researchers and professors in the future.

9. Prepare for your D2 Presentation

At D2 presentation, you share the findings of the fieldwork with your advisors as an analytical chapter. In the case you don't employ field data collection, some substantive analytical discussion is expected by this step. They expect you to:

- Show that you addressed the major concerns they raised during your D1 presentation.
- Show that the empirical data is relevant to the research objectives and questions.
- Show whether the data validates or invalidates pre-data collection assumptions with academic rigor.
- Identify possible data gaps in literature and plans to fill the gaps.
- Indicate if you will refocus aspects of your research.

At this stage, expect your advisors to be more critical of your work. The reason is that you have never-before-seen data. They will probe to see whether the data is sufficient and adequately answer the research questions. They may demand more data should they identify any additional data need. Consult your main advisor and the student handbook for required documents before and after D2.

It would help to practice presenting in your seminar classes before your D2 presentation. This is to prevent any major misunderstanding between you and your advisors regarding the current progress of your research and what they can expect during your D2 presentation. Some problems may also be avoided if you foresee them early, gauging from the feedback of your classmates in the seminar.

Finish Strong: On the Road to D3

If everything is going smoothly, you are by now awaiting the result of your journal publication. The agony of waiting can be allayed by writing the remaining chapters of your dissertation.

This is easier said than done. The period from submitting the journal publication until completing the D3 presentation is probably the most difficult time for students. This is because stress of article revisions or delays in publication meet the daunting task of writing your full dissertation draft as a requirement to hold your D3 presentation. You will find your time split between revising your journal publication and writing your dissertation draft. Your article revision should take precedence over your dissertation draft, since the first is required to proceed.

Furthermore, revising your article will also help with the revision of your dissertation draft and can save some time.

1. Write your First Full Draft

By now most students are already exhausted. When overwhelmed, take some days or a week off and then return. Be mindful that excessively long breaks can make it hard to get back in the frame. Some students also find that presenting in a conference at this stage increases their motivation. Hearing feedback from other scholars – which for sure will not be all negative – gives a boost in confidence.

There will be days when you will wait for motivation before you write. It will not come before you write. Rather, it will come when you start writing. Sharing your ideas whether orally or in writing to your fellow Ph.D. students may also give you unexpected insights. Remember that though it is only you who can write your dissertation, you do not have a monopoly of good ideas. They can come from anyone you share it with, even from those who are outside your field.

Motivations aside, the following will help you in completing your first full draft:

- Revisit your literature review in light of your findings.
- Refine your research questions.
- Write a tentative conclusion.
- Focus on the discussion chapter of your dissertation. What do your findings mean and how do they answer your research questions? This is essentially the major theoretical contribution of your argument that brings everything together.

2. Prepare for D3 Presentation

Until any future changes, to graduate in March, you must pass D3 by the end of October or the end of April if you plan to graduate in September of the third academic session. As mentioned before, this means that, ideally, between your D2

and D3 presentation there are only six months (one semester). Within those six months, you are required to get accepted for publication in a journal and write your first full dissertation draft. This is extremely ambitious if you have not yet cleared the issues presented during your D1 and D2. This is why it is advisable to either submit your journal publication as early as possible, fix any important issues and get clear about your research before having your D2, or try having your D1 and D2 as early as possible. The harder you work at the beginning, the more time you will have for preparing your D3 presentation.

However, the D3 presentation does not require your dissertation draft to be perfect, since it is not the final version yet. You will be required to change major parts after you pass your D3, and the quality of your final draft and argument will be evaluated in a Preliminary Screening before you get accepted to have your Oral Defense. In other words, you still have time to perfect your final dissertation after your D3 presentation.

Before D3 presentation, ensure to organize your research into a tentative dissertation. At the presentation, your advisors expect to be convinced that:

- You have addressed the major concerns they raised during your D2 presentation.
- You have considerably or satisfactorily answered the research questions with available data.
- Your argument is coherent, and you can organize your dissertation into logically connected chapters.
- You have demonstrated the relevance of your research to the discipline.

Expect more critical interrogation from your advisors. They are likely to request that you strengthen aspects of the research. If all three agree that despite any need for strengthening your argument you passed D3, you will proceed to develop the dissertation, and your status changes to ‘Ph.D. candidate’ (to be precise, there is no official definition for this concept in GSID as a comprehensive exam is not

introduced). Consult your main advisor and the student handbook for documents to submit before and after D3.

A good way to prepare is to present in all your seminar classes. This is also an efficient way to update and receive feedback from your main advisor and sub-advisors, as well as gather insights based on the feedback from your audience. Every presentation can help you improve and sharpen your arguments. If there is an opportunity to present in a conference, you may do that too.

Oral Defense: Earn the Honor

When you submit your final draft, your dissertation will first go through a Preliminary Examination. The Preliminary Examination will be organized by your advisors (that means you don't participate in it) and will take place between the last two weeks of December and the first week of January if you submitted your dissertation manuscript in December (the schedule differs depending on the submission period). During this time, your advisors will decide whether your dissertation is worth going through an Oral Defense. Some students have failed at this step and were denied the chance to hold their Oral Defense, because their dissertation still had major issues. Make sure you draft your dissertation as perfectly as possible, having fixed the major issues that were raised during your D3 presentation. If you were asked for a substantive revision during the D3 presentation or afterward, it is highly recommendable to contact your main and sub advisors to make sure you addressed all concerns before ensuing to this step. You should be aware that your manuscript for the Preliminary Examination should have a complete and persuasive quality; "preliminary" doesn't mean the manuscript can be revised later.

If you pass the Preliminary Examination, you will be asked to choose the date and time to hold your Oral Defense, according to your advisors' availability. Your Oral

Defense will be held at some point between late-January to mid-February for the March graduation, or late-July to mid-August for the September graduation.

Do not approach the Oral Defense with complacency. By this time the doctorate is within grasp, but you must strive to put a firm hold around it. To qualify for Oral Defense, you must submit your dissertation by the designated day in December if you aim to graduate in March, or in June if you intend to graduate in September, depending on the period of your admission. At this examination, you will defend your research before your advisors who expect you to:

- Show how you addressed all the concerns they raised during your D3 presentation.
- Show how the research questions have been answered.
- Show that you have organized your argument coherently, and your dissertation logically.
- You have clearly articulated the implications of your research for the discipline (and maybe policy).
- Point out opportunities for future research in furtherance of your line of study.

Your advisors will listen keenly and raise carefully crafted questions in anticipation of equally carefully framed responses. They will assess the depth of your knowledge in the discipline. Based on your overall performance, they will determine if you have attained the degree of expertise sufficient to be awarded the Ph.D. honor and inducted into their intellectual circle. In simple terms, they must be convinced that you are ripe to be called a colleague. If you pass the Oral Defense, you are a Ph.D. awaiting degree conferment. Ensure to consult your main advisor and the administrative office regarding documents to submit before and after the Oral Defense.

Final Dissertation

After the oral defense, you need to address the comments and concerns raised in your oral defense through your final dissertation. Do not be disheartened. Receiving points for improvement even at this stage is quite normal. At the end of it all, you will be glad that you did.

Aside from the ideas in your dissertation, this is when formatting and administrative matters will take up much of your time. GSID has detailed instructions on the formatting, the attachments that will come with your final dissertation, and the due dates. You will be informed of these in advance. Be extra careful in these requirements. They may be small, but they can trip you up and cause considerable stress to you and your main advisor if you are not careful.

After you submit your dissertation on the due date, the GSID committee will review it and send you further corrections if needed. After addressing them, the GSID faculty will deliberate and put them to a vote. A one-third majority will lead you to finally be confirmed graduating. Should your future employer need a document confirming that you will earn your degree in March, this is the time when GSID can release it.

There will be another submission of the final dissertation. This will be the last. From here on, you can just wait for the graduation ceremony and probably sleep longer if you prefer.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What happens if I cannot find suitable sub-advisors in GSID?**
   Depending on your area of interest and the nature of your research, you may not find all two sub-advisors in GSID. In such a situation, you can have ones from another graduate school within Nagoya University, although this usually takes a costlier process as non-GSID affiliates are not always committed to the issues in GSID. Again, let your main advisor support you with finding the right external pick. You should check with your main advisor if the regulations also allow students to approach a professor from another university where all internal options have failed.

2. **What do I do if an advisor does not support my ideas?**
   An advisor might fiercely oppose your ideas, such as how you intend to proceed with your research, what and where you want to publish, an aspect of, or the overall claim of your research, etc. It could be your main advisor or a sub-advisor who disagrees. Usually, they will provide a reason for disagreeing and offer alternative ideas. It is advised that you consider their point of view on its merits. They might differ from a position of experience or in keeping with their obligation to ensure you adhere to the rules governing the doctoral program. They are expected to defend your work before faculty, so would want things done accordingly to minimize opposition from faculty.

   Except at the final voting in a Faculty meeting—which will take place after Oral Defense when a two-against-one vote in your favor is sufficient to earn the degree, you need the approval of all three advisors to pass D1-D3 presentations as well as Oral Defense. It is for this reason that a doctoral student will find negotiation skills inevitable in reaching a mutually satisfying compromise with all three advisors. Where no reason is given for rejecting your ideas, and no alternatives are suggested, endeavor to approach the advisor for an explanation to ensure it is not a case of miscommunication.

Seminar presentations allow you to share your ideas with your peers to get their feedback. It is also helpful to run your ideas by your senior colleagues and ask for frank criticisms. Their feedback could help you realize what you are doing wrong so you can make an informed decision.

3. **What should I do when I no longer have smooth working relations with an advisor?**

   A worst-case scenario is when there is a complete breakdown of understanding between a doctoral student and an advisor. Several factors could lead to such a situation: the student or advisor is uncompromising; the advisor feels that their suggestions are not taken seriously by the student; the research has become unrecognizable to the one the advisor had agreed to co-supervise; the student demonstrates lack of devotion, etc. It could also be for no expressed reason. When this happens, the advisor might ask to be removed from the dissertation committee. Again, negotiation is advised. But if all fails, the student must seek a replacement. If it is the main advisor who opts out, that may be extremely consequential for the student's progress, unless a sub-advisor already familiar with the research agrees to step up to the main advisor role.

4. **What if an advisor is no longer able to supervise my research?**

   This might occur due to unforeseen circumstances such as when an advisor retires from service, is down to a debilitating mental or physical condition, takes up a job elsewhere, etc. It will no doubt, have a huge impact on the student and the likelihood of completing the program on schedule. The peculiarity of the situation will determine the course of action to follow. If it is a sub-advisor, the main advisor should ordinarily initiate the protocol for getting a replacement. If it is the main advisor, the student should contact the students' counselor in GSID for what to do.

5. **How should I deal with journal article decision delays?**

   Your D3 presentation is upcoming, yet the decision on your journal article is still hanging. You responded to the reviewers' comments on time and expecting an acceptance. However, the reply is taking so long. If the period of review promised by the journal editor has passed, you can politely write a follow up email. Some

Ph.D. students were sent an email of acceptance – pending actual publication - after explaining that they would need one as a requirement for graduation. Sending a follow up email when the set duration of review has not yet passed, however, may just be replied with an advice to wait.

6. **What should I do if I get delayed in any of the critical requirements – D presentations or publication – and I am sure that I can no longer graduate on time?**

   As soon as you foresee that you will no longer graduate on time, the first thing to do is inform your main advisor. S/he will be able to check if your understanding of the requirements is correct, or if there is still a way to prevent it from happening. In case your advisor agrees that there is no possibility to graduate on time given your situation, you have two options:

   - **File a leave of absence (LOA).** The GSID Office will be able to give accurate advice on when to do this and what the procedures are. The advantage of this option is that you do not have to pay for tuition fee. If you are an international student on a student visa, being on LOA means your visa will expire soon and you have to leave Japan unless you change to another visa. Another disadvantage of this option is that while you are away, you are no longer the priority of your advisor. If you opt for LOA, make sure you inform your advisor on when you plan to come back. NEVER go on LOA without informing your main advisor. It goes without saying that this is disrespectful, but there were students in the past who filed for LOA without informing their main advisor. Be also aware that scholarships may disable to acquire LOA during the expected regular period of enrollment.

   - **Remain enrolled until you finish.** In this option, there will be no visa consequences. You simply need to apply for extension. As you remain a student, just continue working towards completion. The disadvantage of this option, however, is you need to pay for tuition fee. Once you go past your third year, you lose some privileges. If you are on scholarship, you now need to pay for tuition fee on your own. You may be allowed to apply for a discount, but the chance of getting it is slim. Though not always available, there are scholarships

that you may be able to apply for. Make sure to consult the International Student Advisor of GSID for scholarship options. You may also inquire with your advisors for available positions as research assistant or teaching assistant. While working part-time outside the university allows you to earn more, being within the university minimizes the distraction. You still need to continue writing, after all.

While not finishing on time is stressful, this is not the end of the world. There are ways to maximize your prolonged stay in GSID. When you finish writing your dissertation and you are just waiting for the comments from your advisors, you may write an additional journal article, apply for an internship, fellowship, or a job. Or better yet, be happy at the thought that you have more time to reconsider your plans in life. Each setback presents an opportunity.

7. When should I begin making post-Ph.D. career moves?

If you are not holding on to a job, or you hope to make a switch to another job after your Ph.D. program, it is best to begin job-hunting before the completion of the program. The ideal time to start sending out job applications is the beginning of the third year of the doctoral course. But four to six months before graduation might still put you ahead of others in your position. Thankfully, employers targeting Ph.Ds. welcome applicants about to obtain the degree by the start date of the job. The recruitment process for postdoctoral researchers and tenured employees usually lasts months or even a year, thus allowing prospective Ph.Ds. to be considered. However, beginning a year to graduation will depend on whether you are certain to complete the course on schedule. Due to uncertainty, often over delays with having a publication to proceed to hold D3 presentation, some doctoral students were compelled to wait until after graduation.

For students who may be unable to secure a career position before graduation, the post-Ph.D. phase could cause apprehension. If you will opt for an academic career, use the post-Ph.D. period to increase your publications or apply as lecturer to universities in order to gain teaching experience. Applying for fellowships and

maintaining membership to academic organizations may also help you find opportunities.

If your target employment is with international organizations, try to get internships while you are in your Ph.D. This counts as a work experience. You may also apply for consultancy contracts post-Ph.D. to improve your chances. GSID offers various career seminars and training for employment with international organizations. These will help you strategize on your post-Ph.D. career.

With your training and qualification as a Ph.D., you can also go into independent practice.

Section 2:
Navigating the Ph.D. life in Japan

1. Introduction

For both experienced and new researchers, conducting research is an ambitious endeavor that can take unexpected twists and turns. Doing a Ph.D. is not a straight line: your planned timeline will not always go according to schedule, and funding issues, rejection, or criticism will decrease your motivation at times. Moreover, there is no single blueprint for all universities worldwide. Each country's academic institutions follow different patterns and etiquette. Additionally, conducting research in Japan can also be challenging for non-Japanese people that are not accustomed to these norms. This section will provide some tips for studying in Japan, and at Nagoya University specifically.

2. Motivation: Why Did You Start your Ph.D.?

The most common question doctoral students in GSID ask themselves is whether it was a wise decision to start a Ph.D. degree. This question inevitably pops up around the D2 year, when students meet a lot of obstacles while trying to give concrete shape to their research. According to recent studies, over the past three decades, stable rates of 40%-

50% of students worldwide quit their doctoral studies. Unfortunately, not much attention is given to this.

Your motivation will largely depend on why you decided to pursue a Ph.D. degree. Knowing yourself and what you want to achieve within academia is your foundation upon which you build your academic career. So, before you start your Ph.D. journey, be clear about why you are pursuing a Ph.D. degree and what goals you want to accomplish. When you feel stuck, taking a few days off and reminding yourself why you started is totally acceptable and nothing to feel guilty about.

Common situations that can decrease your motivation are:

- **No progress or feeling stuck.** You might experience writer's block, trouble interpreting your data, or too lost in literature review. The best thing to do is to step away from your research for a few days. Don't force it.
- **Criticism.** You will receive a lot of criticism from your advisors, seminar mates, and experts in your field. Sometimes it may feel like your efforts never produce significant results, or that revisions are endless. However, constructive criticism can help you increase the quality of your research and enhance your skills. It is a positive thing that shows other researchers are interested enough in your research to give you feedback.
- **Imposter syndrome.** Feeling like an imposter stems from a doubt in one's skills and talents, and a constant fear of being exposed as a fraud. It is natural to feel small in front of researchers who have years of experience and knowledge. However, it is a privilege to be around experts and you can learn a lot. Young researchers should not be afraid to fail and are encouraged to participate in conferences and share their results.
- **Isolation.** A researcher's life can be quite isolating. It takes many hours behind closed doors and working at your desk to complete your research. While other people around you may have a more active social life than you, feeling lonely can take a toll on your mental health. Make sure you incorporate some free time in your schedule, especially on weekends, and try to make friends inside *and* outside of academia.

3. Time Management

There are too many tasks a researcher has to complete, and sometimes you may have multiple projects and articles to work on simultaneously. Including part-time work and other everyday life errands, your schedule might become very busy. In order not to stretch yourself too thin, you need to create a detailed and organized plan.

If you don't have a schedule book, it is recommended to start one during your Ph.D. studies. Put a date on the calendar and plan your daily, weekly, monthly research goals in such a way, so that you can meet that deadline. Break down your writing process into chapters, and each chapter into ideas, keywords, or literature to elaborate on. The same goes for conducting interviews and interpreting data. Break them down as detailed as possible, so that you have small tasks which you can complete in a day. If you mark all other tasks outside of your research life in your calendar as well, you will get a realistic view of when you will be able to meet your deadlines. You will not always complete everything on time, but you will have steady progress which gets you closer to the finish line every week.

If you are working part-time additionally to your research, the best way to manage your time is to make sure that you reserve specific days only for your part-time work and other days only for research. Do not attempt to combine them or do everything in a day. You will most likely be too tired after work to focus on a strenuous task such as critical thinking.

4. Follow the Rules

Japan is notorious for its disciplined, organized society and complex bureaucracy. From the minute you land in Japan, you will face a lot of paperwork and get introduced to a myriad of rules you have to follow. Try your best to get accustomed to this way of life. Make sure to meet deadlines for applications, assignments, or bills, and try to be on time. Read carefully through guidelines and requirements well before the deadline of any application, and if you have a question, ask the responsible offices well in advance. Japan is not the country to decide things on a whim, and informal favors usually do not work here.

You should follow these rules when meeting and conversing with your academic advisors as well. Be on time to class and consultations. Some classes in GSID are deducting points for arriving late.

5. Visa Status

If you are a foreigner in Japan, one of the most important things you have to take care of throughout your stay in Japan is your visa status. When you first arrive in Japan, you are already sponsored by Nagoya University and possess a student visa for the official duration of the degree you are pursuing. In the case of a Ph.D., that is 3 years. If you want to keep being a student at Nagoya University or keep receiving your scholarship stipend, you have to make sure that you keep this status.

You should keep the following rules in mind:

- **Part-time work on a student visa.** With a student visa, you are allowed to work up until 28-hours per week part-time. Be careful when you sign contracts for work, and also about what kind of part-time work you are doing. Students are not allowed to engage in any adult entertainment business (i.e.: host/hostess), or gambling business – you are not even allowed to wash dishes at such places. If you would like to work part-time, you have to get permission from the Immigration Bureau, by submitting an "Application for Permission to Engage in Activity Other than That Permitted under the Status of Residence Previously Granted". Note that if you work as a TA or RA at Nagoya University, you do not need to obtain permission to work.
- **Renewing your student visa.** If you extend your study time over the official period of 3 years, you will have to renew your student visa at the Immigration Bureau before it expires. You should initiate this process as soon as three months before the expiration date. Even though the GSID office will probably remind you of this in due time, it is good to keep it in mind. You have to visit the Bureau twice: once for the application, and once for collecting your new residence card when it is ready. Make sure to have all your documents, application forms, and pictures

ready. For more information, you should read through the instructions on the Immigration Bureau's official website.

- **The "ABD" status.** When you pass your D3 presentation and all that remains is to write your final dissertation and pass your Oral Defense, you are eligible to apply for the ABD ("Anything-but-dissertation") status. This will mean that you will technically not be a Nagoya University student anymore. This has its perks, as you are not required to pay any tuition fees anymore. However, this also means that your student visa is no longer valid. If you cannot change your visa status to a working or any other type of visa, you are not allowed to stay in Japan. So, before you decide to apply for ABD with the intention of staying in Japan, make sure that you have secured a way to obtain a visa. Perhaps, it is of merit to stay on the student visa and pay the tuition fees, so that you do not have to worry about whether you can stay in Japan or not until graduation.

6. Tuition fees

Depending on your scholarship, you might be exempted from paying tuition fees for as long as you are a recipient. When your scholarship term expires, you are required to pay these tuition fees to the university. Tuition fees amount to ¥267,000 per semester for graduate school students (including GSID).

There is an option to apply for tuition fee exemption. If the graduate school evaluates your circumstance as unable to adequately finance yourself, you may be qualified to receive the exemption. It is not guaranteed that you will receive it, and many applicants have failed to do so. Make sure that you submit all the documents by the deadline, which is usually before the start of the semester (i.e., mid-March for the Spring semester).

7. Japanese language

You might think that learning Japanese is not your priority, and what is most important is to finish your research on time. It is easy to dismiss the thought of studying Japanese if you are a GSID student. In GSID, lectures, seminars, and consultations are conducted in English. In fact, the Japanese government is pushing more and more universities to offer programs exclusively in English as part of their efforts to attract foreign scholars. Many

international GSID students graduate without speaking a word in Japanese. This is acceptable, if you are here to only study and return to your country.

If you plan to stay in Japan after graduation and you do not speak sufficient Japanese (at least N3 level, but usually the mostly-required N2 level), you will find it difficult to find an academic (or corporate) position. Unfortunately, working at universities requires you to at least understand enough Japanese to participate in faculty meetings or write reports. The university offers free Japanese language courses every semester. If time permits, consider taking these courses. Since you are required to show proof of your language skills if you are seeking a job, you may consider taking the official JLPT exams that are held twice a year (July and December). Learning Japanese will also allow you to communicate easier with Japanese people, and it might open new doors to learning their culture.

8. Japanese academia

Doctoral degrees at Japanese universities differ in some aspects from those at U.S. or European universities. For example, Ph.D. students in some countries abroad are usually being paid during their studies. This is not the case in Japan, where the doctoral students still need to finance their studies by themselves, or with the help of a scholarship.

Another peculiarity to the Japanese system is that the doctoral degree usually lasts 3 years instead of 4+ years outside of Japan, mainly due to the fact that Ph.D. students are not expected or given the opportunity to teach and supervise Master's students' theses, contrary to their counterparts abroad. In some ways, this puts Japanese university graduates in a disadvantaged position, as they will graduate with no teaching or supervising experience. Many Postdoc and academic positions ask for teaching evaluations during their recruitment process, which you will not have. So, when you study in Japan, try to find part-time work as a lecturer while studying, in order to make sure you get the experience you need.

Pursuing a Ph.D. degree is not widespread in Japan. The majority of Japanese university graduates enter the corporate world after graduating from their Undergraduate degree, although the Master's degree is becoming more popular nowadays. It is widely assumed that those who pursue a Ph.D. degree are aspiring to stay within academia. You might be

in great demand after completing your Ph.D. studies, especially if you are able to speak both English and Japanese and have a good track of publications.

9. Conclusion

It takes a lot of mental effort and tenacity to complete a doctoral degree. Long hours and countless revisions will be met with possible rejection. If you are certain of your path and do not give up, you can definitely make it to the finish line. One of the most important takeaways is that you need to be proactive, initiate many projects on your own, and create your own opportunities when you study in Japan. Your teaching and research experience will largely depend on you. Meeting your own deadlines, planning every stage of the degree, as well as making concrete plans for the future, are all characteristics of academic and personal life in Japan. However, if you prepare as much as possible, you can enjoy the process. Enjoy your Ph.D. journey at GSID!