2013 Doctoral Student Exit Survey

Highlights

The following highlights are based on data collected from the 2013 MIT Doctoral Student Exit Survey. 444 graduating doctoral students responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 76%. The survey asked graduating doctoral students about their experiences at MIT, financial support and debt, activities while in graduate school, plans after graduation, and their job search. A full report of overall frequencies follows the highlights presented below.

Overall Satisfaction

- 58% of respondents said they were Very Satisfied with being a graduate student at MIT; 91% said Somewhat or Very Satisfied
- 63% of respondents said they would Definitely select MIT were they to start their doctoral career again, with an additional 25% saying they would Probably select MIT.

86% of respondents rated the quality of their overall academic experience Very good or Excellent.
• Among the areas in which respondents received advice from their advisors, advice on their dissertation research was the most often reported as Very helpful. Advice on nonacademic career options was the most likely to be reported as Not at all helpful.

Climate and Obstacles
• 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “the intellectual climate of my program is positive;” 80% agreed with the statement “the social climate of my program is positive.”
• 45% of respondents reported that the availability of the faculty was either a major or minor obstacle to their academic progress. 36% of respondents reported that family obligations were an obstacle to academic progress.

Financial Support & Debt
• The most common source of financial support for respondents was a research assistantship, with 93% listing it as a source.
• 86% of respondents reported that they will have no debt directly related to their graduate education when they receive their doctoral degree, and 78% of respondents will have no undergraduate debt.
• Of the 14% who reported having debt, the mean amount of graduate debt was approximately $25,000.

Professional Development and Future Plans
• 81% of respondents were a TA at some point in their graduate studies, and 90% of those who were a TA found the experience somewhat or very helpful for professional development.
• 91% of respondents were an RA during their time at MIT, and 96% of those who were an RA found the experience helpful for professional development.
• 44% of respondents planned to stay in Massachusetts. The most popular non-US post-graduation destination was Singapore, followed by France.
• 44% of respondents planned to do a postdoc or further training in the year after graduation, and an additional 52% planned on being employed in non-postdoc positions.
• 45% of respondents planned to work or train at a university, medical school, or US-university-affiliated research institute. 33% planned to work in industry.
• Of those who planned to be employed following graduation, 45% of respondents said they found their job through networking, followed by 40% who applied directly to the employer and 22% who found the job through contacts in their department (respondents could choose more than one method).
• The mean salary of those with employment plans after graduation was approximately $81,000.