

Marketing Department

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Ph.D. program?

The Ph.D. program in Marketing at Smeal is designed to train and develop top scholars. Our program has a research emphasis: we are training students to develop into leading researchers and scholars who will develop and disseminate marketing knowledge. We work closely with our Ph.D. students to develop their research abilities, and our goal is to help students place at top academic institutions that emphasize research. In other words, the purpose is to make more of us – university professors who teach and engage in academic research!

How will I spend my time in the program?

In the first two years of the program, students typically complete their coursework requirements. You will take a set of required Ph.D. courses offered by the Marketing Department (e.g., marketing research, consumer behavior, marketing management, marketing models), designed to ensure that all students have breadth in marketing as a discipline. You will also take courses for greater depth in your area of interest (i.e., behavioral, managerial, quant). These courses may be offered by Marketing (e.g., advanced consumer behavior) or by related disciplines (e.g., economics, statistics, psychology).

In addition to coursework, you will begin to engage in research with faculty. You may come to the program with strongly established research interests, or your research interests may emerge naturally during your coursework and other interactions with faculty. In the Summer of your first year, you will be expected to complete a “candidacy” exam. For the candidacy exam, you will conduct research under faculty guidance and write and present a paper to the Marketing faculty. In the Summer of your second year, you will be expected to complete a “comprehensive” exam. Again, you will conduct research under faculty guidance and write and present a paper to the marketing faculty. In many cases, one or both of these papers build and lead naturally to a dissertation topic.

Following successful completion of coursework and exams, your third and subsequent years will be devoted primarily to research. You will develop a dissertation proposal (typically later in the third or fourth year), defend this proposal to your dissertation committee, and then continue to work on and ultimately complete and defend your dissertation by the end of the fifth year. Along the way, you may also become engaged in other research projects with various faculty, and you are likely to have multiple ongoing projects and papers.

All of this research output is intended for publication in top-tier academic journals (e.g., Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Consumer Research, Marketing Science, Journal of Marketing). In addition, high-quality research publications are expected at the top research institutions where you will seek positions as business professors. Typically, you apply for these positions in the fourth year of the Ph.D. program. Interviews will take place at American Marketing Association's conference in the Summer, followed by campus visits at interested schools during the fifth year.

Who will I work with?

Ph.D. students will get to know the faculty early on in the program (e.g., via coursework, the rotational RA system, presentations and seminars, and informal interaction). You will discover our faculty research interests and identify topics of mutual interest, and research itself will naturally emerge from that process. During the first year in the program, the Ph.D. coordinator will serve as your adviser until you develop working relationships with various faculty. Most students naturally identify a faculty member who serves as their adviser when writing the candidacy paper during the Summer of the first year. Eventually, this adviser relationship is formalized when you establish a committee when developing the comprehensive paper of your second year.

It is helpful to learn about our faculty and their research interests before joining a doctoral program. We describe the core areas of marketing and our faculty on the Ph.D. website, and you can also refer to the Marketing Department website for faculty websites, papers, and so on.

What does it take to get admitted to the program?

The admission committee is made up of marketing faculty and typically considers the following:

- GMAT/GRE/TOEFL scores
- GPA, grades and coursework at previous academic institutions
- CV/Resume
- Letters of recommendation
- Your statement of purpose
- Prior work experience, when relevant

You are also encouraged to submit an example of your work (e.g., a research paper), especially if you have a previous related academic background.

Although applicants must have an undergraduate degree (or higher) to apply to the program, having a degree in marketing is not required. Our Ph.D. program draws students from a variety of educational backgrounds (engineering, sciences, math/statistics, arts, etc.). In addition, we draw students from the United States and around the world. To learn more, please visit our Application and Admission Page.

What kind of financial support is offered to Ph.D. students?

Students who are admitted to the Ph.D. program in marketing receive financial support in the form of a tuition waiver and a monthly graduate assistant stipend that is guaranteed for five years, conditional upon satisfactory progress in the program. The stipend is sufficient to meet normal costs of living such as accommodations, food, and so on. Details of funding vary somewhat from year to year and across students and so specific questions about financial support should be directed to the Ph.D. office.

Students who receive assistantships are expected to work as research assistants (colloquially known as RAs) for faculty members. Students normally rotate among faculty, and both students and faculty

are asked for their input to best match faculty and students. The RA system provides faculty and students with an opportunity to work together that frequently leads to research publications. Ph.D. students are also expected to teach twice during the program (usually in their fourth or fifth year, in lieu of RA work). Smeal provides teacher training and faculty serve as mentors, and this teaching experience helps prepare you for your teaching role as a business professor.

In addition to the graduate assistantship stipend, Ph.D. students can also apply for additional funds for research purposes as follows:

1. Research Centers (e.g., Institute for the Study of Business Markets, Center for Sports Business & Research) often provide funding for research conducted by doctoral students that are relevant to the center's purpose. Students in our program with research developed along these lines apply with a research proposal that is then evaluated for funding by the center. For example, funding for dissertation research in the area of business-to-business marketing may be obtained by submitting proposals to ISBM. Outstanding proposals may receive a fellowship (for up to a five-year period) from ISBM with an amount up to \$10,000 in addition to the standard graduate assistantship awarded at the university.
2. Smeal has a research grants program specifically for doctoral students. Ph.d. students can apply with a short research proposal requesting funds for specific research needs. Proposals are usually evaluated twice yearly.
3. The Ph.D. office has a program to provide students with funds for travel to major conferences (e.g., Marketing Science, ACR, SCP). Additional funds from the Marketing Department may also be available. Ph.D. students normally need to have a paper accepted for presentation at the conference in order to qualify for funding. This funding is also available for students selected to attend the American Marketing Association Doctoral Consortium, the Haring Symposium, and the doctoral consortiums associated with the major marketing conferences (Association for Consumer Research, Public Policy & Marketing, Marketing Science).
4. The marketing field also has various opportunities for seeking research funds, including dissertation competitions (e.g., AMA), Marketing Science Institute research funds, and so on. Faculty will advise students on these opportunities based on fit with their research.

When assessing your financial needs and evaluating funding across programs, students should keep in mind the relatively low cost of living in State College, PA. Compared to other universities, you will find State College an attractive (and relatively cheap!) place to live... yet another reason to love Penn State and Happy Valley!

How much does it cost to live in State College?

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Why is it called Happy Valley?

The State College area is sometimes called the "Happy Valley". According to various rankings, State College is one of the "50 Smart Places to Live" in the USA (Kiplinger.com), the #1 safest small city in America (Sperling's Best Places), one of the top-10 smaller metro areas in which to start a career or business (Forbes), and the #1 "single" city (CNN Money). Rankings aside, State College is a classic American college town, featuring great football and other college athletics, and a lively downtown with restaurants and bars for students. It is also within easy reach of areas of great natural beauty, from Tussey Mountain and its ski hill to State Parks like Whipple Dam and Black Moshannon. State College and environs are very student-friendly and family-friendly... and all of the above (and much more) is what puts the happy in our valley!

For further info about our area:

- <http://www.statecollege.com/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_College,_Pennsylvania