

# Top 5 Areas for Improvement for the UVa Graduate Astronomy Program

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# Areas for Improvement

- Classes
- Teaching/TAing
- Evaluation (including quals)
- Research
- Misc.

Based on feedback from the astronomy department  
faculty and graduate students

# Classes

- Spread classes out (but financial considerations?)
- Get rid of 3<sup>rd</sup> class (but loss of breadth?)
- Always offer optional 3<sup>rd</sup> astronomy class
  - Topical seminar class
- Evaluate syllabi for overlaps, gaps
- 836 Educational seminar required
- General astrophysics and/or “physics for astronomers course”

# Teaching and TA

- As discussed in previous 836 course, more teaching-oriented TA duties (already in the works)
  - Shift to discussion session duties, but with what time commitment?
- Required or strongly encouraged to teach a summer course during graduate career
- Evaluate and define support TA role

# Evaluation

- Evaluate goals of the qualifying exams, and see if they meet these goals
- Communicate these goals to the students
- Ensure consistent, relevant qualifiers
- Only require passing each qual once
- Yearly evaluations

# Research

- Encourage multiple advisors during graduate career (seperate masters and PhD projects)
- One specialized (department funded?) conference
- One required talk per year
  - Examples: 836, symposium, TUNA, etc.

# Miscellany

- Increased interaction with and recruiting of undergraduates
- Evaluation of the department by the student upon graduation

# Summary

- Classes
  - requirements, redundancies, general ed
- Teaching/ TAing
  - job emphasis, summer course
- Evaluation
  - qualifiers consistent, yearly eval
- Research
  - multiple topics, conference, talks
- Misc.
  - undergrads, eval



# Discussion Highlights

- Classes: may not be enough professors at this time to address some issues, and students are encouraged to take classes outside dept.
- Piedmont Valley Community College for possible teaching experience
- Qualifier is seen as a two-part test, not two separate tests; give back results?
- Yearly evaluations of all students are done, but need to check consistency of these
- Computational class?
- Improve NRAO ties; resurrect journal club?