What PhD students really want

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The road to becoming an astronomer is exciting, but often fraught with danger and conflicting messages. A PhD student is inundated with catch-phrases such as “publish or perish” and “it’s not about the quantity, but the quality of work”. How do we know which advice to follow? How can we publish copious amounts of quality work in only three years so as to maximize our success in the future? How do we even know what “good quality” really is? With only a short time to prepare ourselves for the big wide world of Astronomy, what is the best way for a PhD student to maximize their research and ultimately maximize their success as a real astronomer?

The PhD students of today are the astronomers of tomorrow. It is only by encouraging and creating a positive work environment for astronomers from a PhD level that we can thrive and improve. Here I present the results of a survey of current PhD students and newly initiated post-docs on what they believe are the best ways of maximizing their success in science.