Professional Student’s Strategy for Perpetual Funding at CMU

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Year 1: Pass 2 courses, ignore advisor. Get "work harder" letter.

Year 2: Pass 3 courses, spin exciting fantasy about the impact of the work you might do. Advisor gets excited. Get "we hope your topic works out" letter.

Year 3: Pass 1 course, fail 1 course, write some code. Get "your research looks promising, but pass some courses" letter.

Year 4: Fall: Teach; claim teaching took all your time. Get "OK, now time to do your research" letter.
Spring: Pass 1 course, fail 1 course, fiddle with code. Get "N-1" letter.

Year 5: Change advisors and area. Pass 1 course. Get "well, it will take a while to get up to speed in new area" letter.

Year 6: Serve on admissions committee. Get "Thanks for serving, but it's time to buckle down" letter.

Year 7: Create confusion about advisors. No advisor -> no Black Friday letter in Fall. This is discovered in spring; another N-1 letter.

Year 8: Your cat dies. The resulting personal anguish impedes progress. Get "well, one more time" letter.


Year 10: Fall: Hack on advisor's demo. Get "Thanks, but propose next semester" letter.
Spring: Advisor on leave. Forgets to send letter to Black Friday meeting.

Year 11: Experiments invalidate thesis topic. Get "better luck with next topic" letter.

Year 12: 5 PM day before Black Friday - 60 pages of text to advisor saying it's draft of new thesis proposal. Get "we look forward to your thesis proposal next semester" letter.

1really expert students also fail one course