

Dissertation Completion Enrollment

A Handbook and Guidelines for Graduate Students

I. Introduction and Overview.

Enrolled Ph.D. students who have not completed their degree within their department's normal program period (either four or five years, as specified by the department and the Graduate School) have the opportunity to be enrolled for up to two additional years in Dissertation Completion Enrollment (DCE) status. Eligible students apply for this status during the annual reenrollment process in the last year of their program of study, and must be approved for DCE status by their department and the Graduate School Office based on criteria for satisfactory academic progress. DCE status is confirmed *via* e-mail from the Graduate School to the student, after which the student can electronically accept reenrollment in this status. Students in DCE status are fully and formally enrolled graduate students, working full-time to complete degree requirements. DCE students may be enrolled as regular (in residence) or *In Absentia* students (pursuing their work away from Princeton). In both cases, a marginal-cost tuition and the mandatory Student Health Plan fee will be charged. In academic year 2006-07, these combined charges will total \$4,500.

If students do not choose DCE status, they will enter Enrollment Terminated/Degree Candidacy Continues (ET/DCC) status.

II. Benefits.

DCE status carries most of the current benefits of enrolled student status. These are:

- Continued coverage under the Student Health Plan and access to the University Health Services and its resources; ability to purchase dependent and family coverage, and dental and vision plans.
- Deferment of current and prior student loans; ability to borrow additional funds or take out new loans.
- For international students, continuation on standard student and student exchange visitor visa status.
- Receive certain types of University financial support (where available), including fellowships, assistantships in instruction and research, and departmental and program fellowships (see Financial Aid section below).
- Continued student access and borrowing privileges in the University Library system; ability to sign up for carrel space.
- Regular student ID card, and spouse/partner ID card according to established guidelines.
- Regular graduate student e-mail, Internet, and computer accounts.
- Participation in graduate housing draw, on the basis of year-of-study priorities (for regular but not *In Absentia* students).
- Use of athletic facilities.
- On-campus parking privileges according to established priorities for enrolled students.
- Use of the Career Services office.
- Eligible to be a Member of the House at the Graduate College.

(A table comparing benefits for DCC, ET/DCC, and DCE statuses is on page 10.)

DCE status **does not** include the following benefits:

- Enrollment in courses, including participating in course exchange programs (DCE students must be working full time on completing their dissertation).
- Appointment as a part-time Lecturer (see Financial Aid section below).
- Nomination for Graduate School academic-year honorific fellowships, travel grants, or summer funding.

III. Enrollment Options.

DCE. Students may first choose this status in the last year of their regular academic program and it may then be held continuously for up to two years. DCE status ends when the student successfully completes and defends the dissertation, when the student chooses not to apply for reenrollment, when the department does not recommend the student for reenrollment, or when the two-year period of DCE eligibility expires. Non-graduating students leaving DCE status will be given ET/DCC status, with the benefits outlined below.

Once having left DCE status, the student cannot apply to return to DCE status; enrollment in DCE status must be continuous, beginning immediately after the department's regular program length has ended, up to the two-year limit.

In Absentia. DCE students may be *In Absentia* if they are working full time on degree requirements but not at the University, and are present on campus less than a majority of days per week for an academic term or year. Tuition will be charged to DCE students in this status, and students planning to go *In Absentia* are encouraged to apply for appropriate outside fellowships. Students *In Absentia* are not eligible for University housing or appointment as assistants in instruction. They still must register each year in order to be enrolled.

Leave of Absence. Leaves of Absence will not normally be granted to students in DCE status. In the rare case of extreme or exceptional personal circumstances, the Graduate School's Academic Affairs office should be consulted to determine if a leave is appropriate.

ET/DCC. If students beyond their department's regular program length are not in DCE status and have not graduated, they will be given ET/DCC status. ET/DCC is an unenrolled status in which students are ineligible for the student benefits that come with formal enrollment. For ET/DCC students, library access and student borrowing privileges (for those in Princeton or the vicinity), and e-mail and computer account access will continue for a period of five years beyond the date of the General Examination. Students who choose ET/DCC status may be appointed as part-time Lecturers through the Dean of the Faculty's Office.

IV. Financial Aid.

Students going into DCE status for the first time should stay in close contact with their departments about the various sources of financial support available to them, and the likely timing of when such resources can be confirmed. Arranging for DCE funding for a term or a year may take some weeks or months to resolve, and students should plan on spending time to attend to these details during the last year of their department's regular program period.

University Fellowships. DCE graduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences generally will not be eligible to receive University Fellowship support. Exceptions include those students who during their department's regular program period held qualifying external (non-Princeton) fellowships, or had full departmental funding for a year while *In Absentia*. In these two cases, students are eligible to preserve their University Fellowship during the first DCE year. For example, students who (a) took one year *In Absentia* with support primarily from departmental or external sources, or (b) held a multi-year external fellowship that paid the bulk of their stipend and a significant portion of their tuition while the student was either in residence or *In Absentia*, and where in the past the Graduate School would have granted an extension to their program length, we will provide one year of DCE funding. This funding will consist of the DCE tuition plus the student's normal academic-year stipend. In no event will two years of DCE funding be provided even if multiple awards were made.

For the upcoming academic year (2006-07), we will implement this policy even for students whose stipend while *In Absentia* was supplemented through University funds (e.g. their external grant, such as a DAAD, was "topped-up" through University fellowship funds). Beginning next year, we will preserve only a term of University fellowship for DCE if University funds (of less than half the stipend) have been used to supplement an external grant while in absentia. Please be aware of this fact when you decide whether to ask for supplemental funds while in absentia.

Only students within their regular academic program period may be nominated for and hold Graduate School honorific fellowships (e.g., Whiting Fellowships in the Humanities; Jacobus, Dodd, or Wallace Fellowships).

Assistantships. DCE students may be appointed as assistants in instruction and assistants in research. DCE AI's may be appointed full time or part time, and both stipend and marginal-cost tuition will be paid according to the policy now in place (i.e., full-time AI appointments will pay the post-Generals stipend plus full marginal-cost tuition; half-time AI appointments will pay half the post-generals stipend plus half of the marginal-cost tuition; etc.). Any tuition cost not covered by the assistantship will be billed to the student. Students entering DCE status who want to teach should indicate this to their departments as soon as possible, understanding that departments may not be able to commit AI hours until late in the summer or even very early in the academic year.

Pre-doctoral Research Assistant appointments (mainly in the science and engineering disciplines) will no longer be available. Instead, students in DCE status will be appointed as AR's. The same rules will apply as with assistantships in instruction (i.e., full-time AR appointments will pay the post-Generals stipend plus full marginal-cost tuition; half-time AR appointments will pay half the post-generals stipend plus half of the marginal-cost tuition; etc.). Any tuition cost not covered through the assistantship will be billed to the student. Where research funds are available, departments should recommend students for DCE status and appoint them as AR's; they should not be hired as casual-hourly employees.

Departmental and Program Financial Support. Departments and programs that have the resources to provide fellowship support to DCE students are encouraged to do so. Support may be full or partial (e.g., tuition only; tuition and stipend; one term; one year). Where such support is available, departments should develop a fair and transparent process for awarding the funds.

Outside Fellowships. Students considering DCE status should seek and apply for any and all external funding for which they are eligible. Students should look closely to see if the outside award will pay all or a part of the marginal-cost tuition required for DCE status. In cases where the fellowship pays stipend or maintenance only, or just a part of the marginal-cost tuition, the student may need to find other sources of funding (see suggestions below). Students are encouraged to collaborate with different funding sources in order to support themselves (e.g. a partial external grant plus a partial departmental grant plus a partial AI appointment might suffice to fully support a student).

Employment. DCE students can work, either on or off campus, according to established guidelines for student employment and, for international students, according to the rules and procedures of the Bureau of Homeland Security. In no event can a student work more than 20 hours each week including any AI and/or AR appointments (doing so would violate legal and visa matters which secure certain rights for enrolled students). In all cases, students must keep in mind that the purpose of DCE status is the timely completion of the Ph.D. dissertation.

Self Support/Borrowing. In the event that University or external financial support cannot be obtained, graduate students should consider education loans, private student loans, or family resources. In the event of uncertainty, students are advised to opt into DCE status during the Spring reenrollment period and to continue seeing funds from all available sources. Should no option for funding present itself, the student can exercise his/her option to withdraw from DCE status prior to the start of the Fall term without penalty (it will be much more difficult to opt into DCE status in the Fall if funding is secured at a late date).

V. International Students.

Because DCE status is a fully registered student status, international graduate students who are approved for this status will have their student visa status (F's or J's) extended. Once a student has accepted reenrollment and registered for the Fall term, their information will be updated in the SEVIS system, as at present. International students will face the same requirements as those in the normal program period, e.g., annual registration, reporting changes of address, approval of travel and reentry documents, certification of financial support, etc. International students will be eligible for the same kinds of financial support during DCE status as any other DCE student, and subject to the same limitations (e.g., no more than 20 hours of work per week total) whether as an AI, AR, or other approved on-campus employment.

DCE students will continue to work with the Visa Services Office as usual. Completion of the dissertation and of the Final Public Oral Examination will, as now, constitute the completion of the student's academic program.

International students who choose not to reenroll in DCE status will be given ET/DCC status and are subject to existing rules and regulations. That is, if they want to work in their field, they must apply in a timely fashion and be approved for Optional Practical Training (OPT, for F-1 visa holders) or Academic Training (AT, for J-visa holders). If not, they must prepare to leave the country 60 days after the termination of their enrollment.

VI. Eligibility and the Reenrollment Process.

Doctoral students in the final year of their regular academic program period are eligible to apply for DCE status. In addition, **for the 2005-06 academic year only**, students who began DCC status on 9/1/05 and will have spent the whole of 2005-06 in DCC status are eligible for one year of DCE status; those who entered DCC status on 2/1/06 are eligible for three terms of DCE status. Students whose year of DCC status ends 2/1/06 will not be eligible for DCE status.

The reenrollment process for graduate students will begin March 15, 2006. At that time, the reenrollment application will be open to regular, *In Absentia*, and DCC students (as above), and students currently on Leave of Absence. DCE will be a new status choice in a look-up table, while DCC status will disappear. It is to the advantage of eligible students – and they are strongly encouraged – to apply for DCE status for the academic year, even if they do not have assurances of financial support. This gives the students eligibility for the housing draw, parking, and other student benefits that would be denied if the student declines enrollment. It is important to remember that one can withdraw from DCE status prior to the beginning of the Fall term without penalty. It is also important to remember that one cannot opt out of DCE status and then be eligible for it at a later date.

Once students submit their reenrollment application, it will be reviewed by their principal advisor and then by the department (director of graduate studies), who will make a recommendation to the Graduate School on the basis of the student's academic progress. As now, a student applying for reenrollment may find that the department does not recommend it, or recommends reenrollment for only one term. The Graduate School's Academic Affairs office will review the recommendations, approve as appropriate, and the student will receive a reenrollment letter electronically confirming DCE status; students accept DCE reenrollment electronically as well. Once they have done so, they will be able to register online via the SCORE system in early September for the new academic year.

VII. Conclusion.

The purpose of Dissertation Completion Enrollment status is contained in its name. In establishing this fully enrolled student status (available for no more than two years beyond a doctoral student's regular program length), the Graduate School's intent is to increase the number of students who finish their Ph.D.'s in a timely manner. DCE status seeks to accomplish this by providing students with a full set of regular student benefits and privileges so that they can remain "in the system," so as to have access to the resources and remain under the guidance and mentorship of their advisors, dissertation committees, and departments.

Frequently Asked Questions

As a DCE student, will I have a regular graduate student I.D.? What about a spouse, domestic partner, or kin I.D.?

Yes, on both counts. Because you will be regularly enrolled, your student I.D. (and that of your spouse or domestic partner) will continue to be valid and will be updated in the usual way.

I'm in a humanities department and have been promised an additional year of reenrollment based on my winning a one-year study abroad fellowship. What's going to happen to my enrollment and my final year of funding?

The Graduate School will not extend your regular program length, but you will be eligible for DCE enrollment with one year of full University fellowship funding.

How do I become DCE? What's the process? How will I know I'm DCE?

In the Spring term of the final regular year in your Ph.D. program, you will go through the online reenrollment application process. There you should indicate that you are applying for DCE status, fill out the rest of the application and submit it. As now, your advisor will make a recommendation to the department and the department, if it approves your reenrollment as a DCE student, will forward their recommendation to the Graduate School Office. You will then get a reenrollment letter via e-mail, confirming your status and stating any financial support that has been confirmed. You will need to accept DCE reenrollment electronically in order to be able to register in September via the SCORE system.

What happens after the first year of DCE status?

Same as above. Unless you graduate, you will be eligible for one more year of DCE enrollment.

Should I apply for DCE a term at a time, so I can assess my finances?

Unless you are confident that you will graduate at the conclusion of the Fall term, you should apply for DCE status for the entire year. If, on the other hand, you intend to defend your dissertation prior to the end of the term, or you do not require enrollment status for more than one term, then by all means apply for DCE enrollment for just one term.

What if I graduate in the middle of a term while I'm in DCE status? What happens to the tuition charge and any fellowship stipend I'm receiving?

The current tuition-entitlement schedule that determines the tuition charges for a student leaving the University in the middle of a term will be followed:

For 3 weeks or less	– charged 20% tuition
For 3 – 6 weeks	– charged 40% tuition
For 6 – 8 weeks	– charged 60% tuition
For 8 – 10 weeks	– charged 80% tuition
For 10 weeks or more	– charged 100% tuition

Your University support will cease at the time that you defend your dissertation or leave the University, with two exceptions:

1. If you defend in the Fall term after December 31, but do not leave or take a job, your final payment will be for the month of January (the final month of the Fall term).

2. If you defend in the Spring term after April 30, but do not leave or take a job, your final payment will be for May and June (the final two months of the Spring term).

Is my department obligated to recommend me for DCE status?

No. Your department will recommend you for DCE status only if you are continuing to make satisfactory progress on your dissertation research and writing. The department may set certain academic goals for students to meet in order to qualify for DCE reenrollment: e.g., one or more dissertation chapters drafted or completed, certain experiments completed, etc.

I'll be DCE next year but want to take a course through the Princeton/Rutgers exchange. Will I be allowed to?

No. DCE status does not allow students to take additional coursework, either at Princeton or at other schools with which we have course exchange arrangements (e.g., Rutgers, IUDC, etc.). DCE students are expected to be working full time on dissertation completion.

If I'm DCE and a part-time AI, what will my support be like?

As now, a partial AI appointment will pay the appropriate fraction (according to the size of the appointment) of the post-Generals stipend and the marginal-cost tuition. If you hold a half-AI appointment over two terms, you would receive, at 2005-06 rates, \$10,800 in salary and have \$2,250 of the marginal-cost tuition paid. In this case, a portion of your salary would be withheld by Student Accounts to pay the remaining tuition fee, and you would receive a net salary of \$8,550; the effect of a half-time AI appointment is full tuition plus \$8,550 salary.

I can't afford DCE status. What are my options?

If you have truly exhausted all financial support options within your department and relevant programs, as well as from outside sources, then you have three options: (1) use your own financial resources; (2) take out a student loan through the Graduate School's Office of Student Life; or (3) enter Enrollment Terminated/Degree Candidacy Continues (ET/DCC) status. In ET/DCC status you are not required to pay tuition and will have only the limited benefits provided to those in ET/DCC students. These benefits consist of Library access and borrowing privileges, plus e-mail and computer account access for up to five years beyond the time of your general examination.

I don't have any support lined up for the Fall term after my regular program length is up, but I might be able to get some teaching in the Spring term. Can I be ET/DCC and not have to pay tuition in the Fall term, and DCE in the Spring when I think I'll have some support?

No. DCE status requires continuous enrollment; you must remain enrolled through the Fall term and into the Spring. You are best advised to keep trying to arrange Fall term support with your department or program, or, failing that, borrow money in order to pay for DCE status. Alternatively, you can opt for ET/DCC status and be eligible to teach as a part-time lecturer in the Spring term.

What happens to my health care coverage when I'm DCE?

Nothing; regardless of whether your department, program, or you are paying the marginal-cost tuition of \$4,500, it includes \$1,000 for the Student Health Plan, and access to the University Health Services.

And my family/dependents? What about them?

As is the case now, you can purchase dependents' health care coverage *via* University Health Services.

Is paying for the Student Health Plan portion of the marginal-cost tuition mandatory?

Yes, just as it is a mandatory part of tuition and fees while you're enrolled during your regular program length.

Am I eligible for housing when I'm DCE?

Yes. You may participate in the graduate student housing draw according to the existing by-year-of-study priorities.

May I renew my lease on my University apartment?

Yes, if you are successful in the housing draw.

May DCE students continue to participate in the Graduate Student Government?

Yes, and like all other regularly enrolled students, you will be charged the annual fee.

Can I retain membership in the Debasement Bar at the GC?

Yes, by paying the dues, as now.

Can I use Career Services?

Yes.

Athletic facilities?

Yes.

Frequently Asked Questions from International students.

As an international student, I'm concerned about my student visa. What will happen to it, and me, if I become DCE?

Nothing will change. You will be reenrolled as a full-time student, and your student visa will be extended for the period of DCE. Your relationship to the Visa Services Office with respect to visa matters would stay exactly the same as it is now.

If I'm an international student and go ET/DCC, what happens then?

The same as happens now. You will no longer be enrolled, and Visa Services will certify your end of enrollment in the SEVIS system. If you want to work in your field, either at Princeton or elsewhere, you will need to be approved for Optional Practical Training or Academic Training in order to stay in this country. If you are not approved for OPT or AT, and do not have a job offer from a firm that is willing to sponsor a work visa for you, you will be required to leave the country after 60 days.

Can I be ET/DCC and teach?

Yes, but you must apply for and receive work permission either as Optional Practical Training or Academic Training before the beginning of the new academic year. In this event, you would apply to be a lecturer through the Dean of Faculty's Office (rather than as an AI).

I plan to be DCE for the coming year and my department has said they will continue to support me. What if I finish earlier than the end of the academic year?

As is the case now, your academic program ends when you have successfully defended your dissertation, and so does your DCE status. If you defend in, say, February or March and you need to work, then you must apply for OPT (if an F-1 student) or AT (if a J-1 student). Keep in mind that it normally takes 8-12 weeks to receive OPT approval. You might inquire whether your advisor is willing and able to appoint you as a post-doc for the remainder of the year.

Can I get a new visa stamp while I'm in DCE status?

Yes. You would simply present your DCE reenrollment letter to the consulate or embassy officials. If you are not receiving financial support, or only partial aid, from Princeton, you should take bank statements or other supporting documents with you to prove that you can support yourself during DCE.

Can I travel?

Yes, you are still eligible for travel signatures from the Visa Services Office, since you will be a fully registered graduate student.