

# Dissertation Completion Enrollment A Handbook for Graduate Students (Revised March 2017)

## 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 regular year of their program of study, and must be approved for DCE status by their department and the Graduate School based on criteria for satisfactory academic progress.

DCE status was instituted to help students finish the Ph.D. by allowing them to remain in an enrolled status while they finish their degree requirements. To qualify for DCE status, students must at the time of reenrollment move directly into DCE status when their period of regular enrollment ends. Doctoral students in the humanities and social sciences must have drafted or written a portion of the dissertation and be actively engaged in research and writing, while doctoral students in the sciences and engineering must be making progress in their research and/or preparing to write up their dissertation results.

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* (pursuing their work away from Princeton). In both cases, a marginal-cost tuition and the mandatory Student Health Plan fee will be charged. **Students who enter DCE status are themselves responsible for determining how the charge will be covered.**

Students who do not move to DCE status may with the department's approval enter Enrollment Terminated/Degree Candidacy Continues (ET/DCC) status.

## II. Benefits

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

- Continued coverage under the Student Health Plan and access to University Health Services and its resources; ability to purchase dependent and family coverage, and dental and vision plans.
- Deferral of current and prior student loans; ability to borrow additional funds or take out new loans.
- For international students, eligibility for extension of F and J student immigration status.
- 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 campus resources geared toward degree completion and career preparation and placement (e.g. Career Services, McGraw Center, and Princeton Writing Program).
- Eligibility to be a Member of the House at the Graduate College.

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). DCE students are eligible to enroll in Writing Program courses and McGraw Center pedagogy courses with approval of the Graduate School.
- Appointment as a part-time Lecturer (see Financial Aid section below).

(A table comparing benefits for ET/DCC and DCE statuses is on page 11.)

### III. Enrollment Options

**DCE.** Students who have not completed their degree within their department's normal program period may choose this status and have the opportunity to continue their enrollment for up to two years, with approval by the student's adviser or advisers and the department.

DCE status ends when:

- the student successfully completes and defends the dissertation,
- the student chooses not to apply for reenrollment,
- the department does not recommend the student for reenrollment,
- the two-year period of DCE eligibility expires,
- the student no longer has funding to pay the DCE charge.

Non-graduating students leaving DCE status may 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 continuously follow the last term of regular enrollment, 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 and need to use educational resources not available at Princeton, and are present on campus less than a majority of days per week for an academic term or year. Tuition will still 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 complete academic year sign-in in order to be considered 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, Academic Affairs in the Graduate School should be consulted to determine if a leave is appropriate. (International students granted a Leave of Absence are no longer eligible for student immigration status due to their enrollment being terminated. Those approved for a leave may not remain in the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status and must either depart the U.S. within 15 days of the effective date of the leave or take action to change to a different immigration category.)

**Enrollment Terminated, Degree Candidacy Continues (ET/DCC).** If students beyond their department's regular program length are not in DCE status and have not graduated, they may with the department's approval 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, computer and library privileges (for those in Princeton or the vicinity) will continue for up to one year after entering ET/DCC status. Students in ET/DCC status retain access to [TigerHub](#) in order to submit their advanced degree application and FPO Request, update bio-demographic data, request a transcript, etc. Students who choose ET/DCC status may be appointed as part-time Lecturers through the Office of the Dean of the Faculty.

#### **IV. Financial Support**

Students in dissertation completion enrollment (DCE) status are not guaranteed University support (in contrast to students in regular enrollment), Students are encouraged to seek out and apply for external funding and/or work with their departments to obtain a research grant or partial teaching appointment.

There are, however, five instances in which students in DCE status receive guaranteed support while in DCE status. These are 1) students who were granted an extra term of enrollment and support while in their defined program length, per the terms of the Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation Policy; 2) students in the humanities and social sciences who banked a year of funding for use in their first year of DCE status because they used a qualifying external fellowship during their defined program length; 3) students accepted into the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in the Humanities at Princeton (IHUM) who received an additional year of fellowship support for use in their sixth year of study; 4) students who are nominated for and receive one of the Graduate School honorific fellowships, which may be held in the first year of DCE status; 5) students in the humanities and social sciences who are selected for a Dean's Completion Fellowship/PGRA appointment (which guarantees fellowship funding in the fall term of the sixth year and provides continued support in the spring if the student completes the FPO by the end of the fall term).

In addition to the provisions above, there is a tuition grant program for students in DCE status. To qualify for a tuition grant, students must meet one of the following two criteria:

- Hold an AI appointment for at least 2 hours (1/3 time), with eligibility determined on a per term basis. (For example, a 2 hour AI in the fall term would qualify for a tuition grant for that term only. A 2 hour AI for both terms would provide a tuition grant for the full academic year.)
- Hold an external fellowship with a stipend that is at least 60% of either the University Fellowship stipend rate or the AR stipend rate (both calculated on a 10-month basis). If eligible, the student receives a tuition grant covering the full DCE tuition expense for the academic year.

**Assistantships in Instruction.** Students in regular and DCE enrollment who serve as AIs during the term in which they complete the Final Public Oral should work with their departments to schedule the Final Public Oral at a time that ensures that they remain enrolled through the end of the term. Only enrolled students are eligible to serve as AIs.

**Employment.** DCE students can work, either on or off campus, according to the established student employment policy and, for international students, according to the F-1 or J-1 immigration regulations. Even when employment is approved by the student's adviser(s), in no case should a student receiving full support, either through AI, AR, or departmental funds, work more over the course of a semester or the summer than an average of 10 additional hours per week (which may include teaching at most one course at another institution). 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 seeking funds from all available sources. Should no option for funding present itself, the student can exercise the option to withdraw from DCE status prior to the start of the fall term without penalty. (As noted above, however, holding DCE status must be continuous from one's enrollment in the regular five-year Ph.D. program; once in unenrolled status, it is impossible to re-enroll in DCE status.)

All enrolled students on self-support are billed for required tuition and fees (and any other appropriate charges) monthly beginning in September. If a student ends their DCE enrollment prior to the end of a term, the required tuition and fees are prorated accordingly.

## V. International Students

International students in DCE status are full-time, fully registered students, and therefore eligible to extend their I-20/DS-2019s. Once their I-20/DS-2019 has been extended, their appearance in immigration records is the same as it was during their period of regular enrollment. International students in DCE status also have the same requirements as they had previously, such as annual registration (including reporting changes of address through [TigerHub](#)), eligibility for travel signatures, and immigration documents for dependents.

International students are eligible for the same kinds of financial support during DCE status as any other student in that status, and subject to the same limitations (e.g., no more than 20 hours of work per week) whether as an AI, AR, or other approved on-campus employment.

Upon approval of DCE status by the Graduate School, an international student will be eligible to apply for an extension of the I-20/DS-2019 to the Davis International Center (Davis IC). If the student will be fully supported by their academic department, the student will need to provide the reenrollment reply form indicating adequate funding or a letter from the department indicating full or partial tuition coverage and the amount of the stipend. If the student will NOT be supported by the department (or will only be partially supported) the student will need to submit additional proof of funding. For more information about acceptable financial documentation, please consult the Davis IC [website](#). Upon receipt of this documentation, Davis IC will extend the I-20 or DS-2019 for the DCE period. Please note that while Davis IC can extend a student's stay in the U.S., a new visa stamp can only be obtained at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad. For all questions regarding I-20/DS-2019 extension and other related immigration questions, please consult with an international student adviser at Davis IC.

Completion of the dissertation and of the Final Public Oral Examination will normally constitute the completion of the student's academic program.

International students who choose not to reenroll in DCE status may be given ET/DCC status and are subject to existing rules and regulations. That is, international students in ET/DCC status are eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT, for F-1 visa holders) or, with an offer of employment, a J-1 student may apply for Academic Training (AT). The immigration status of international students in ET/DCC status who do not apply for OPT or AT will expire at the end of the prescribed grace period that follows termination of enrollment, i.e., 60 days for F-1 students and 30 days for J-1 students. Students who plan to apply for a change of status to a different category (H-1B, B-2, F-2, J-2, J-1, etc.) must do so no later than the end of the grace period.

## **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. The reenrollment process for graduate students begins April 17, 2017. At that time, the reenrollment application will be open to regular, *In Absentia*, and DCE students (as above). 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 adviser or advisers 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. A

student applying for reenrollment may find that the department does not recommend it, or recommends reenrollment for only one term. Academic Affairs in the Graduate School 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 complete academic year sign-in online via [TigerHub](#) in early September for the new academic year.

## **VII. Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation Policy: Additional Term of Funding and Enrollment**

For those eligible students who prospectively have requested and received part 2 of the Childbirth Accommodation or Adoption benefit, one additional term or terms of support (determined by the number of children) will be available beyond the normal length of the academic program, provided that progress to that point has been satisfactory. This will extend the standard two years of DCE and is applied per child. A parent who gives birth to or adopts twins, for example, would have one additional year (two terms, one term per child) of DCE enrollment.

During their DCE enrollment period, eligible students will receive one term of financial support per eligible child. If no other DCE funding is present (external or university), this childbirth accommodation funding will be paid in the first term or terms of DCE. If other funding is available, the childbirth accommodation funding will be paid after other funding options are exhausted. The accommodation begins with the extended enrollment status (DCE).

## **VIII. 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 was to increase the number of students who finish their Ph.Ds. DCE status seeks to accomplish this by providing students who are making satisfactory progress with a set of regular student benefits and privileges so that they can continue to have access to the resources and remain under the guidance and mentorship of their advisers, 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 but you must request a new validation sticker from the TigerCard Office. It will not be automatically sent to you.

*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 adviser 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. 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 [TigerHub](#). If you are an international student, you will also need to work with the Davis International Center to extend your student immigration status and documents.

*What are the criteria or qualifications for being DCE?*

Students in the humanities and social sciences should have written or drafted at least one chapter of their dissertation (more if possible or if required by the department) and be actively engaged in research and *writing* the dissertation. Students in the natural sciences and engineering should be making good progress in their research, according their adviser's or committee's timetable, or be writing up their results for the dissertation.

*What happens after the first year of DCE status?*

Same as above. Unless you graduate, and assuming you have made adequate progress on your dissertation, you will be eligible for one more year of DCE enrollment.

*What if I defend 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?*

You may remain in DCE status until the first of the month following your defense. If you are taking up a job or a post-doc or some non-student appointment at Princeton right after your defense, then your DCE status ends the day of the defense. Tuition and health fee charges are prorated based on your enrollment dates. One-tenth of the DCE tuition and fees cost is assessed for each month of enrollment.

*If I teach as an AI while I'm in DCE, is my tuition paid for me?*

If you teach for two hours or more per semester, the full DCE tuition for that term will be covered by the teaching appointment. If you teach for just one AI hour (or don't teach at all), and you don't have any other form of support towards tuition, then you will be billed for DCE tuition.

Students in DCE status appointed as AIs generally time their dissertation defense to come at the end of the semester to ensure they are enrolled (and therefore eligible to be AIs) for the full

semester. Your University support as an AI 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 Princeton 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 Princeton 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 should 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?*

If you teach two or more hours per term on an AI assignment, the AI will cover the full marginal cost tuition of the term and provide the appropriate pro-rated AI salary. A full AI (a six-hour appointment) of course would provide both the tuition and a full salary for that term.

*I can't afford DCE status, and I didn't receive any other form of DCE support. 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) request a student loan through Finance and Administration in the Graduate School; 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 and computer privileges for up to one year after entering ET/DCC status.

*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?*



It stays in place. Regardless of whether your department, program, or you are paying the marginal-cost tuition which includes the Student Health Plan, you continue to be covered under the SHP and have access to 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 DCE students continue to participate in the Graduate Student Government?*

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

*Can I retain House Non-Resident Membership at the Graduate College?*

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 immigration status. How will becoming DCE affect it?*

Nothing will change. Because DCE status is a full-time, fully registered student status, once you are approved for this status you will be eligible to have your student immigration status (F or J) extended. You would be reenrolled as a full-time student and your immigration document (I-20 or DS-2019) would be extended, provided that sufficient funding (tuition, living expenses, and expenses for dependents) can be demonstrated, for the period of DCE status. Your relationship to the Davis International Center with respect to immigration matters would stay exactly the same as it is now.

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

Because ET/DCC is not a full-time, fully registered student status, you are not eligible to have your student immigration status extended unless you apply for OPT (F-1 students) or AT (J-1 students with an offer of employment). If you do not apply for OPT or AT, your student immigration status will expire at the end of the prescribed grace period that follows termination of enrollment, i.e., 60 days for F-1 students; 30 days for J-1 students. Additionally, if you plan to apply for a change of status to a different category (H-1B, B-2, F-2, J-2, J-1, etc.) you must do so no later than the end of the grace period.

*Can I be ET/DCC and teach?*

Yes, but you must apply for and receive work permission either as OPT or AT before the beginning of the new academic year. In this event, you would apply to be a lecturer through the Office of the Dean of the Faculty (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?*

For students in DCE status, when you successfully defend your dissertation, you have completed your program and your enrolled student status ends the first of the month after you defend. If you go right from your defense to a job, or are hired by Princeton University, then your enrolled status ends the day after your FPO.

*Is there anything different about travel outside of the U.S. while I'm in DCE status?*

No. Because DCE status is a full-time, fully registered student status, once your student immigration status and documents (I-20/DS-2019) are extended, you will follow the same procedures for travel as you did previously. That is, the new I-20 or DS-2019 will be signed for travel, and this document (along with supporting financial documentation, i.e., reenrollment reply, bank statements, etc.) can be used to enter the U.S. or to apply for an F or J visa (if necessary) at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad.

## Benefits for Post Program Length Statuses

Benefit	ET/DCC	DCE (two years max.)
Enrolled Status	No	Yes
I.D. card type	Staff if employed	Student
Spouse/Partner/Kin I.D. card type	Staff dependent if employed	Student dependent
Access to University Health Services	None	Full
Health Plan Coverage [SHP=Student Health Plan, SB=Staff Benefits]	SB if employed half-time	SHP
Dependents' health care coverage	SB if employed half-time	SHP at cost
Dental and vision plans	SB if employed half-time	At cost
Library and computer privileges	For up to one year after entering status	Student
Library carrel	No	According to priority
Building Access	No	Yes
Extension of student visa (F-1 or J-1)	No	Two years (max.)
Eligibility for student housing	No	According to priority
Eligibility to borrow/student loans	No	Yes
Student loan deferral	No	Yes
Use of athletic facilities	At staff fees if employed	Yes
Dining points program	No	Yes
Eligible for on-campus employment	Yes	Yes
Eligible for assistantships (AI,AR)	No	Yes
Eligible for part-time Lectureship	Yes	No
Use of Career Services Office	No	Yes
Parking options	If employed	Student
Participation in GSG, membership in GC	As for DCE during first year of ET/DCC status	Annual fee for GSG; house dues for GC