Dissertation Completion Enrollment
A Handbook for Graduate Students
(Revised March 2014)

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. In academic year 2014-15, these combined charges will total $5,060. In most cases the Graduate School does not cover this charge through fellowship; students who enter DCE status are themselves responsible for determining how the charge will be covered.

Students who do not choose DCE status normally 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.
- Deferment 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 the Career Services office.
• 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 center courses with approval of the Graduate School.
• Appointment as a part-time Lecturer (see Financial Aid section below).
• Nomination for Graduate School academic-year honorific fellowships (normally, but see exception below).

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

III. Enrollment Options.
DCE. Students may choose this status in the last year of their regular academic program, and it may then be held continuously 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,
• when the student chooses not to apply for reenrollment,
• when the department does not recommend the student for reenrollment,
• when the two-year period of DCE eligibility expires,
• when the student no longer has funding to pay the DCE charge.

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 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 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 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 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 and computer 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 SCORE 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 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 spring term of the last year of their department’s regular program period.

**Graduate School** policies with respect to the funding of graduate students in DCE status may be found at: [https://www.princeton.edu/gradschool/financial/policies/](https://www.princeton.edu/gradschool/financial/policies/)

Of note, students in Architecture, Humanities, Social Sciences and Woodrow Wilson School are eligible for a year of University Fellowship support in their first year only of DCE status if they held a qualifying external award.

**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 and/or stipend for 1 term or 1 year). Where such support is available, departments should develop a fair and transparent process for awarding the funds.

Full-time Assistantship-in-Research (AR) appointments or Assistantships-in-Instruction (AI) appointments of at least 2 hours (1/3 time) provide full tuition benefit during the appointment period if needed.

**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 for 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).

Non-Princeton fellowships that provide at least 60% of the prevailing University Fellowship rate
for the 10-month academic year qualify for complementary tuition from the Graduate School as
needed.

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 support a student fully).

**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 SCORE), 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, you will be eligible to apply for an extension of your I-20/DS-2019 to the Davis International Center (Davis IC). If you will be fully supported by your academic department, you will need to provide your reenrollment reply form indicating adequate funding or a letter from your department indicating full or partial tuition coverage and the amount of your stipend. If you will NOT be supported by your department (or you will only be partially supported) you 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 your international student adviser at Davis IC.

Completion of the dissertation and of the Final Public Oral Examination will, as now, normally 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, 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 March 14, 2014. 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 the SCORE system 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 is to increase the number of students who finish their Ph.D.s. 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 and will be updated in the usual way.

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 the SCORE system. 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) 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.

Should I apply for DCE a term at a time, so I can assess my finances?
Unless you and your adviser or committee are very confident that you will graduate at the conclusion of the fall term, you should apply for DCE status for the entire academic year. If, on the other hand, you intend to defend your dissertation prior to the end of the fall 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 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 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), then you will be billed for DCE 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 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).

If I choose to apply for one term of DCE, but don’t finish, what is the process to reapply for DCE status for a second term?

You and your adviser should contact the director of graduate studies to request that he/she recommend a second term of DCE enrollment to Academic Affairs in the Graduate School. This should be done at least two weeks before the end of the term in which you are enrolled as a DCE student. If this is approved, your enrollment status will be extended, and all relevant offices will be contacted.

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. 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 of $5,060, which includes $1,900 for 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 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 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 Dean of the Faculty 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?

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

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