

**The University of Michigan**  
**Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies**  
**Proposal for a Continuous Enrollment Requirement for Ph.D. Students**

The cornerstone of doctoral education is the close connection between students and faculty that allows students to master the complex skills of scholarship. These connections are most likely to succeed when students pursue graduate study without interruption. Research in higher education<sup>1</sup> shows that continuous full-time pursuit of doctoral study makes it more likely that students will make steady progress, complete their degrees, and complete more quickly.

The great majority of the major research institutions in the Association of American Universities (AAU) require students in Ph.D. programs to register continuously until the completion of their degrees, although the University of Michigan does not have such a requirement. The Dean and the Executive Board of the Rackham Graduate School are now discussing the adoption of a continuous enrollment requirement for Ph.D. students, to become effective in the Fall Term 2010.

The primary purpose of this proposed requirement is to align the University's policies with our educational goals – to provide Ph.D. students with an intellectually stimulating environment in which they have opportunities to master their disciplines and conduct independent research and scholarship, and a graduate program that encourages progress in a timely way toward completion of doctoral studies. By asking students to register continuously, we also ensure that students retain official student status throughout their doctoral student career, and ensure that the full array of University student services and resources are available to Ph.D. students throughout their term of study.

Because our goal is educational and not financial, we propose to reduce candidacy tuition rates. Our proposal is to reduce candidacy tuition rates to a level that generates the same amount of tuition revenue with the new requirement in place as would have been the case with the prior registration requirements. The intent is to keep the cost of tuition for an average student under the new rules exactly the same as the cost of tuition under existing policies.

Proposed Registration Requirements:

Once admitted to a Ph.D. program, students must register every fall and winter term until their degree is awarded, unless a formal leave of absence has been granted.

Students who do not register in a fall or winter term are presumed to have withdrawn from their program and will have to apply for readmission if they desire to return to their studies.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Nettles, M. and C. Millett, 2006. Three magic letters: Getting to Ph.D., Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, p. 171-174.

With continuous enrollment, Ph.D. students have year-round “active” status until the degree is conferred, and have access to University services and resources in the summer even when not registered.

Implementation:

The new registration requirement would be announced and adopted in Spring/Summer 2008 to be effective for all Ph.D. students in Fall Term 2010. A number of other policies, as detailed below, will need to change at the same time so that our policies are aligned in support of the goals of continuous enrollment. The two-year window prior to implementation provides current students an opportunity to finish their degrees under the current rules, if they choose. It provides planning time for programs to restructure their internal procedures and aid awards to accommodate the increased registrations and reduced tuition rates resulting from the new requirement. Finally, it provides sufficient time for administrative areas to make the necessary systems and documentation changes.

Tuition rate change:

Concurrent with the effective date of the new registration requirements, candidacy tuition rates would be lowered in proportion to the expected increase in registrations, so that the implementation of the continuous enrollment requirement will be revenue-neutral. With this change, the total tuition cost for the average student would be the same under the new rules as it would have been with the current practices.

Required Fee Totals:

The implementation of a continuous enrollment requirement makes it unnecessary to impose required fee totals. Therefore, the Required Fee Total policy will be eliminated at the implementation of the continuous enrollment requirement.

Leaves of absence:

Official Leaves of Absence would be available for Ph.D. students. Leaves would be granted for limited reasons (childbirth, serious illness or death of an immediate family member, serious personal illness, military duty) and for a limited duration of up to a year. Such leaves could be renewed in rare circumstances for up to two additional years. In addition, with the approval of their program, Ph.D. students would be allowed to take a one-term personal leave of absence for reasons other than those listed above one-time during their Ph.D. studies.

Leave status is not appropriate and will not be granted to students who intend to work on their degree studies during the period of leave. Most University services and resources available to registered students will not be available to students on leave, and students on leave could not be employed in student positions or receive fellowship funding. However, students on leave will continue to have library privileges and University email service.

Students returning to active status at the conclusion of a leave of absence are not required to apply for readmission. Students who do not return to active status at the conclusion of a leave are presumed to have withdrawn and must apply for readmission if they later desire to return as an active student.

Detached study:

Students maintain continuous registration even when they are located remote from Ann Arbor in a fall or winter term for programmatic reasons. Registration while on “detached study” confirms students’ status as active University of Michigan Ph.D. students, and is necessary to enable their use and access of the University’s services and resources either remotely or during visits to Ann Arbor.

Dissertation Research/Writing status:

Ph.D. students would not be eligible for Dissertation Research/Writing status, since they will be registered every fall and winter term.

Registrations after defense:

Students have a twelve month period in which to complete all degree requirements after they defend their dissertation. Students will be required to register fall and winter terms until they have fulfilled all degree requirements, if they have not completed them by the term in which they defend.

Services and resources available to “Active” students:

Registration would not be required in the summer terms unless a student elects courses, takes preliminary exams, or defends the dissertation. Students who were registered in the Winter Term would have an official status as an “active” student in the summer, and would have access to the same resources and services available to registered students (UHS, Recreational Sports, CAPS, Student Affairs offices, Library, Basic Computing Package, and the like). Active status in the summer is very important to Ph.D. students and is warranted by the nature of full-time Ph.D. study where students are expected to devote their full attention to their program year-round.

Dual Program Registrations when one is not a Rackham program:

Registrations in the non-Rackham program of a dual degree program satisfy the Rackham continuous enrollment requirement.

Status of individuals who withdraw due to non-registration:

Once withdrawn, individuals are not active students and cannot avail themselves of any of the services and resources provided to our students. For example, they cannot be

employed by the University in student positions (GSI, GSSA, GSRA or student temporary jobs) and would not be provided the Basic Computing Package. If they choose to participate in any services offered by the University to the general public, their participation would be at the same rate charged to non-affiliated individuals.

Readmission:

Students who are not on official leave and who don't register continuously are withdrawn and must apply for readmission. Readmission is not guaranteed, and students will need to demonstrate evidence of their seriousness of intent to complete the degree. Any financial commitments from an earlier period of enrollment expire at withdrawal so readmitted students return without carry-over funding guarantees.

A financial penalty exists to discourage casual withdrawal and readmission. The penalty depends on the number of terms between the student's last registration and the first term of readmission. The assessed penalty is an amount equal to one-half of the candidacy rate for each term missed to a maximum of four times the candidacy rate, based on the tuition rate in effect at the time of readmission (the maximum penalty is reached after 8 missed terms).

To ensure that withdrawn terms are not used to avoid registration requirements, there is a minimum enrollment period after readmission. Students who are readmitted must be enrolled for at least two full terms before degree completion. The earliest a defense could occur would be in the second term after readmission.

	Current Practice	Continuous Enrollment
Registration	<p>Any semester when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Courses are elected</li> <li>*Preliminary exam is taken</li> <li>*Dissertation Defended</li> <li>*GSI, GSSA, or GSRA appointment (Fall or Winter)</li> </ul> <p>Programs can add other registration requirements.</p> <p>Pre-candidates register for the appropriate credit hour loads for the courses elected, when they register. Candidates register for a minimum of 8 hours and can elect one course in addition to their 995 election.</p>	<p>Every Fall and Winter semester, from matriculation through completion of all degree requirements.</p> <p>The continuous enrollment requirement is satisfied with any credit hour load for pre-candidates; however program or appointment status may impose registration conditions. Candidates, whether full- or part-time students, will register for a minimum of 8 hours as they do now and remain entitled to elect one course in addition to the 995 election.</p> <p>The appropriate full- or half-term summer registration is required if electing or auditing courses, taking preliminary exam, defending dissertation.</p>
Stopping out	<p>Pre-candidates Considered withdrawn if not registered by the third week of a term after not having been registered for three full terms prior to that.</p> <p>Candidates Considered active until program notifies Rackham otherwise</p>	<p>Students will be withdrawn effective that term if not registered for a Fall or a Winter semester. Late registrations within a term, as allowed currently, satisfy the continuous enrollment requirement. Retroactive registrations will not be allowed and will not satisfy the continuous enrollment requirement.</p>
Tuition	<p>Differential rates by school. General rate approximately:</p> <p>Pre-Candidate rate <math>\approx</math> \$32,000 (Non-resident) Candidate rate <math>\approx</math> \$10,500</p>	<p>Pre-candidacy rates would be unchanged. Candidacy rates would be lowered in proportion to the projected increase in registrations. Total tuition revenue would be the same with the new rates and registration rules as under the existing rates and practice.</p>

	Current Policy	Continuous Enrollment
Required Fee Totals	36 for candidacy 68 for the Ph.D. With a reduction of 18 with a relevant non-Rackham masters degree	Eliminated
Residency	18 hours of Rackham courses elected in a Rackham registration  We also require: UM candidacy UM dissertation committee rules UM dissertation defense process	No change
Detached Study	For masters and doctoral students who are not enrolled for courses or directed research, but who are working toward completion of the degree as a primary activity.	Ph.D. students who are working remotely would be registered.  We acknowledge that in some programs, there are programmatic requirements for students to be remote from Ann Arbor while working on their research. Although these students may be remote from campus, they are not detached since registration will be required, and those students will have access to the University's resources and services.
Dissertation Research/Writing	For full-time doctoral candidates who are not enrolled but who are actively engaged in dissertation research and writing on a full-time basis.	Rackham Ph.D. students would not be eligible for this status

	Current Policy	Continuous Enrollment
Full-time student status	<p>Registered for 8 credit hours in a full term (or 6 credit hours with a 25% or greater GSA appointment), or 4 credit hours in a half-term</p> <p>Ph.D. students are considered full-time for programmatic purposes at 8 credit hours in a full term; full-time tuition rates are based on a 9 credit hour load, with the part-time tuition schedule applied for registrations at less than 9 credit hours.</p>	<p>Students are considered to be full-time in their programs while registered continuously (with our fall and winter terms requirements), unless specifically admitted to a part-time program and registering as a part-time student. Students who are in a full-time doctoral program in the pre-candidacy stage still may register in some terms for less than a full-time credit hour load.</p> <p>International students still will need to adhere to governmental regulations covering their registration status.</p> <p>The definition for a full-time credit hour load for tuition and programmatic purposes will be the same.</p>
Part-time student	Registered for less than a full-time load.	Admitted as a part-time student to a part-time program.
Leave of Absence for medical, parental, family medical emergency, or military service	No formal policy, looks like a stopping-out period	<p>Leaves of absence granted for limited reasons and limited periods of time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Serious medical condition of student</li> <li>*Parental (Childbirth or adoption)</li> <li>* Family emergency related to illness or death (care-giving occasioned by serious medical condition of immediate family member or death of immediate family member)</li> <li>*Military duty</li> </ul> <p>Granted a term at a time for a duration of one year. Can be renewed for an additional year or two in rare circumstances.</p> <p>Program and Rackham must approve, appropriate documentation must accompany leave application</p>

	Current Policy	Continuous Enrollment
Personal Leave of Absence	No formal policy, looks like a stopping-out period	Students can elect to take a one-term personal leave of absence for any reason one time during their Ph.D. studies. Program and Rackham must approve.
Readmission	No fee for an application for readmission, department makes the decision (as it does with all admission decisions)	*No guarantees on readmission once student withdraws *Original funding commitments expire at withdrawal; no guarantee of funding at return *Financial penalty assessed upon return equal to one-half the prevailing candidacy rate for each fall or winter term missed up to a maximum of 4 times the current semester rate. *Readmitted students must enroll for two full terms before completing degree.
Preliminary Exam	Students must be registered in the term in which they take their preliminary exams, and it must be a Rackham registration.  Some students may take the prelim and achieve candidacy status in the same term. Students who register for a fall or winter term as a pre-candidate and who take prelims in the first two weeks of that fall or winter term, and who have completed all other candidacy requirements, will be advanced to candidacy in that same term.	No change
Advance to candidacy	Advance to Candidacy is the milestone that triggers the change in tuition assessment to the candidacy rate. The Advanced to Candidacy term is the first term in which a student is eligible to register as a candidate.	No change

	Current Policy	Continuous Enrollment
Grace periods for completion of degree requirements	Students must be registered in the term in which they defend their dissertation. There is a grace period that runs into the first month of the next term that allows time to complete all degree requirements without an additional term of registration.	<p>The deadlines and grace periods will be changed to fall within the same term. Defense will need to occur at least 2 weeks before a term ends, and students will have until the last day of a term to complete degree requirements. Students who schedule their defense later in the term will do so with the understanding that if all requirements are not completed by the last regular business day before the start of the next semester, they will need to register in the subsequent term.</p> <p>Any activity that occurs in the break period between semesters is considered part of the preceding term, as long as the activity is fully completed (and filed, if necessary) by the last regular business day before the start of the next term.</p>
Registrations after defense	<p>Students who do not complete all requirements in the term of defense and its grace period need to register for one additional term at the time they do complete the degree requirements, registering with candidate status at the standard candidacy rate.</p> <p>Candidates must submit final revisions to Rackham OARD within a year of the date of the defense.</p>	Students who do not complete degree requirements in the term of defense will need to register in a subsequent term for filing of degree requirements. Candidates must submit final revisions within a year of the date of defense, and would need to register in all fall or winter terms until they complete the requirements.
Active status	No official student status in semesters when a student is not registered, even over the summer. Some campus resources and services are available to non-registered students and some aren't.	Students who register in the fall and winter semesters will have active status year-round until they complete degree requirements. University resources and services should be consistent throughout the year, recognizing of course the academic calendar and the implications it has for the use of faculty or program resources.

	Current Policy	Continuous Enrollment
Time limits	<p><b>Candidacy</b> Students are expected to achieve candidacy within 3 years of matriculation.</p> <p><b>Degree</b> Students are expected to complete the degree within 5 years of reaching candidacy, within no more than a total of 7 years after their first registration in the doctoral program.</p>	No change
Dual program registrations	Students who are in dual programs where one of the programs is not a Rackham program, can register either in one of the programs or in both. Only credits elected in a Rackham registration satisfy Required Fee Totals or the coursework residency requirement, but programs can choose to accept courses taken in the other program in fulfillment of Rackham program requirements.	<p>No change</p> <p>Registrations in either program satisfy the requirement for continuous enrollment.</p>