

Policy for timely completion of degrees by doctoral students

Completion of doctoral degrees in a reasonable period of time is one of many factors that characterize the responsible conduct of both mentors and mentees. The School of Graduate Studies contributes to this effort in many ways, including: offering opportunities for professional development, advising programs on goals and requirements, facilitating the sharing of guidelines for responsible conduct by mentors and mentees, and providing advice and assistance in cases of students who are encountering special situations or obstacles. The School of Graduate Studies will also act as an advocate for degree completion by identifying and reporting to the university any identified obstacles to completion of the degree due to policies or to lack of appropriate resources.

Another way that SGS contributes to earning of degrees in a reasonable period of time is by monitoring the progress of students who have been enrolled in their graduate programs for more than 6 years. SGS will work with programs and with students to identify and remove obstacles to progress, and to assist in the formulation of realistic and achievable timelines that allow students to achieve their learning and professional goals. In cases where the efforts of SGS and the programs do not succeed, procedures to terminate enrollment may be invoked.

This document describes the SGS policies regarding time to completion of the doctoral degree:

1. **WHO IS AFFECTED:** Each spring semester the School of Graduate Studies compiles a list of students in their 7th year or later of full time study beginning with the first enrollment in the program. “First enrollment” is defined by the start of the accumulation of credits at Rutgers that will count toward the doctoral degree. Semesters of approved leaves of absence, and (for students not admitted to candidacy) semesters registering for “matriculation continued” (maximum 2 semesters) do not count toward the accumulated time. Students and programs will be reminded that a formal Extension of Time (EOT) request will need to be completed (see point #3), and approved, by the start of the following fall semester in order for the student to remain in good standing and be permitted to register (students intending to file for October degrees need not request an EOT). It is the responsibility of the student to initiate the request for an EOT.
2. **LENGTH OF THE EXTENSION:** Extensions are granted for a period of 1 year, ending in August of the following academic year. Thus, if a student files for an EOT in May of year 6, and the request is approved, the EOT is granted until August of year 7. In the event the degree is not completed when the EOT expires, students have the option to file again for an EOT, subject to the restrictions in point #4 below.
3. **HOW TO REQUEST AN EXTENSION:** The EOT request is made by using the form available on the SGS website. SGS asks for detailed information about the student’s progress, and a summary of the plan for completion of the degree, including a detailed timeline. Requests are subject to approval by the program’s Graduate Director. Completed forms indicating approval or denial by the Graduate Director must be submitted according to the instructions on

the form. Approvals by the Graduate Director and by SGS are needed in order to remove any blocks on registration.

4. **CRITERIA FOR GRANTING EOT REQUESTS:** The deans of the School of Graduate Studies will look for convincing evidence that: (a) the student, the faculty mentors, and the program have agreed on a realistic plan and timetable for degree completion, (b) the supporting infrastructure is available within the program so that the plan may be completed, and (c) any obstacles to degree completion have been or are being addressed. Evidence of a realistic plan may include a written proposal for the dissertation that has been approved by the thesis committee. In some cases SGS may ask for additional information from the student or the program. Requests for EOTs from students who are entering year 8 or later, who have received repeated EOTs, will be given very close scrutiny. SGS is aware that the program faculty and the individual student share responsibility for creating an environment where the student can accomplish the goals stated in the plan for completion of the degree. SGS deans may also initiate discussions with programs for the purpose of evaluating the requirements, mentoring practices, and admission processes should it be the case that a large proportion of students are requiring EOTs.

5. **DENIAL OF EOT:** In the event the program director decides not to approve the EOT, the program may request to SGS that the enrollment be terminated. In the event that the deans of the School of Graduate Studies decide not to approve the extension, enrollment may be terminated.

6. **APPEALS:** Students may appeal the decision to terminate enrollment in accordance with the formal appeals process in the bylaws of the graduate program and the bylaws of the School of Graduate Studies.

Approved by the Executive Committee of the School of Graduate Studies, December 17, 2018