



POLICY ON MAXIMUM REGISTRATION FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Authorization: Senate
Effective: May 30, 2011

To: Senate, on the recommendation of the Board of Graduate Studies
Subject: POLICY ON MAXIMUM REGISTRATION FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS
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Currently there is confusion among graduate students, faculty advisors, and advisory committees about requirements for meeting the prescribed graduate program “times to completion” regulations articulated in Senate-approved graduate program policies and published in the Graduate Calendar. (See, for example, the current calendar statement for doctoral programs at the end of this document). The existing text is confusing in that it describes graduate programs in terms of completion periods following the period of minimum duration for individual programs. Moreover, the existing policies are enforced in some programs while in others graduate students continue their studies for extended periods of time, often with little input from their advisor and/or graduate committee. To address these issues, it is proposed that a Maximum Registration Policy be approved by Senate and be uniformly applied to all graduate students.

While the “Minimum Duration” and “Completion” expectations are already articulated in existing policies, it is important that graduate students and their faculty advisors have clearly stated expectations of the maximum program duration. With this information the student and advisor can, as necessary, adjust the plan of studies to ensure timely completion. In the instance that the degree completion timelines are not being met due to extenuating circumstances, it is also important that graduate students have a means to appeal for an extension of time and a clear understanding of the consequences of exceeding the extended deadline, if approved.

This proposal is based on the premise that graduate students and faculty advisors receive clear information on the Maximum Registration Policy upon the students’ admission to the program and it is predicated on the following principles:

- That the graduate student and faculty advisor are advised upon the student’s admission to the program as to the regulations and expectations for program completion and the maximum program duration.

- That the graduate student is provided with a progress report via the Graduate Student Evaluation Report which is completed by their advisory committee each semester.
- That the student has the right to appeal the maximum program duration in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Key components of the proposed policy are:

- Clearly defined times to completion, grace periods for approved extensions, and final deadlines for all graduate programs
- A monitoring system for completion periods as designated for each student at admission, and a system generated notification at the end of that semester requiring the student and the advisory committee to submit for review by the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee an acceptable plan of study for completion by the maximum duration limit
- A designated “grace period” for completion of the program based on the approved plan of study
- An appeal process for requests to continue beyond the maximum duration period with the support of the student’s advisory committee.

It is proposed that the Maximum Registration period for graduate programs beyond the prescribed Completion Period will be designated for each program, as listed in Table 1 below. Graduate students who do not complete their program within the prescribed completion period (as indicated in their letter of admission) will be notified at the end of that semester, and both the student and the advisory committee will be asked to submit a single plan of study for completion by the time of the maximum program duration (the plan must be submitted to the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee *via* the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) by no later than the 40th class day of the semester following notification). On approval of the plan of study by the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee, master’s students may continue up to the maximum program duration. With approval, doctoral students may continue for a further three semesters; continuation to the maximum program duration will require a second application to the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee. If the student and the advisory committee do not submit the plan of study as requested, the student’s registration for the subsequent semester will be blocked pending submission of a plan of study to the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee, and this may delay continuation to completion.

In the event that a student does not complete the program by the maximum duration period, he/she will be required to withdraw from the program for failure to complete. Should the student wish to appeal the withdrawal from their graduate program and continue beyond the maximum duration period, he/she would be required to submit an appeal for a time extension to the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee, including the following elements:

- A rationale for the requested extension, outlining why the graduate student is unable to complete the program within the stipulated time frame
- An evaluation report from the student's advisory committee which includes a letter of recommendation from the student's faculty advisor in support of the request for extension
- An approved plan of study for timely degree completion, signed by the student, the faculty advisor, and the members of the student's advisory committee.

[In the event that the student, faculty advisor, and members of the student's advisory committee are unable to agree on a plan of study for degree completion, the graduate program coordinator would be expected to provide a letter commenting on the feasibility of the plan provided by the student.]

In considering the request for extension, the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee will also review all departmental evaluation reports submitted to date regarding the student. (As per existing policy, such reports will have been provided to the student *via* his/ her advisor each semester.)

The Admissions and Progress Sub-committee will grant or deny the request for the extension based on the submissions provided. Where the Sub-committee supports the request, it may also provide advice and recommendations on the proposed plan of study. Failure to complete the degree program within the prescribed time frame following the appeal to the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee will result in a Requirement to Withdraw.

Students may appeal the decision of the Admissions and Progress Sub-committee to the Senate Committee on Student Petitions. An appeal to the Senate Committee on Student Petitions involves an examination of all relevant documents and evidence to determine the appropriateness of a finding. The procedures for conducting an appeal and for holding a hearing are set out in the Regulations of the Senate Committee on Student Petitions.

Table 1: Proposed program durations for graduate students at the University of Guelph.

Program	Expected or Anticipated Completion Period ¹	Progress Report & Plan of Study to A&P by Mid-Semester	Registration Blocked at End of Semester	Continuation with Approved Plan of Study	Maximum Program Duration
Master's (FT)	6 semesters	7	7	Semesters 8, 9	9 semesters
Master's (PT) ²	11 semesters	12	12	Semesters 13, 14	14 semesters
PhD/DVSc	12 semesters	13	13	Semesters 14, 15, 16	18 semesters ³
DVSc	9 semesters	10	10	Semesters 11 and 12	12 semesters
PhD (direct entry & transfer)	16 semesters	17	17	Semesters 18, 19, 20	22 semesters ⁴
PhD/ DVSc (PT) ²	20 semesters	21	21	Semesters 22, 23, 24	24 semesters

1. These completion periods apply to all programs, unless a specific program has received approval from the Board of Graduate Studies for a different period. Students will be advised about their program completion period on their offer of admission letter.

2. The semester counts for part-time students are not based on three part-time semesters being equivalent to one full time semester. The Admissions and Progress Sub-committee will convey an appropriate time limit to students and their advisory committees when the application to part-time status is approved.

3. Continuation on to semesters 17 and 18 will require a second application to the Admissions & Progress Sub-committee in semester 16.

4. Continuation on to semesters 21 and 22 will require a second application to the Admissions & Progress Sub-committee in semester 20.

Implementation

Following Senate approval, the following implementation plan is proposed by the Office of Graduate Studies:

New students:

1. Policy, procedures and timelines to be included in the 2011-12 Graduate Calendar for implementation Fall 2011.
2. Student specific information identifying eligibility period to be included in the admissions letters effective Fall 2011 (copied to advisor and advisory committee)
3. System support *via* Colleague for early warning notification (*i.e.*, request for plan of study) and blocking registration to be in place effective Fall 2011
4. Process and timelines for requests for extensions to be in place for Fall 2011 and deadlines for submission posted in the Schedule of Dates.

In program/course students:

1. All in program/course students will be advised of this new policy during the Summer 2011 semester.
2. All students registered in a semester beyond the Completion Period of their program will be required, in collaboration with their Advisory Committee, to submit a Plan of Study for approval by the Admissions and Progress Subcommittee.
3. With an approved plan of study, continuation will be granted for two semesters to master's students, and for up to five semesters to doctoral students, regardless of the newly implemented maximum program duration limits.

IV. Degree Regulations (2010-2011 Graduate Calendar) – existing regulations

Doctor of Philosophy

Minimum Duration

At least five semesters of full-time study must be devoted to the doctoral program following completion of a recognized master's degree. At least seven semesters are required for those who are permitted to proceed from the honours baccalaureate without completing the master's degree. For a student registered part-time, the minimum duration period is based on the equivalence of three part-time semesters to one full-time semester.

Completion

Normally, the thesis must be formally submitted (see Submission of Thesis) within forty-eight months of the completion of the minimum duration. Candidates must understand, however, that announced departmental policy may require completion of the degree requirements within a briefer time period.

Table 1: Program durations for graduate students at the University of Guelph as defined by Class Level¹.

Program	Completion Period ²	Progress Report & Plan of Study to A&P by Mid	Registration Blocked at End of	Continuation with Approved Plan of Study	Maximum Program Duration
Master's					
FT	6	7	7	8, 9	9
PT	6	6.3	6.3	6.6 to 8	8
PhD					
FT	12	13	13	14 to 16	18 ³
PT	12	12.3	12.3	12.6 to 14	15 ⁴
DE & T	16	17	17	18 to 20	22 ⁵
DE & T - PT	16	16.3	16.3	16.6 to 18	19 ⁶
DVSc					
FT	9	10	10	11, 12	12
PT	9	9.3	9.3	9.6 to 11	11

FT, Full-time; **PT**, Part-time; **DE & T**, Direct entry and transfer from a master's program.

1. Class Level is the cumulative total of full-time and part-time (if any) semesters valued at 1 and 0.3 for each, respectively.

2. These Completion Periods apply to all programs, unless a specific program has received approval from the Board of Graduate Studies for a different period. Students will be advised about their program Completion Period on their offer of admission letter.

3. Continuation through to Class Level 18 will require a second application to the Admissions & Progress Sub-committee at Class Level 16.

4. Continuation through to Class Level 15 will require a second application to the Admissions & Progress Sub-committee at Class Level 14.

5. Continuation through to Class Level 22 will require a second application to the Admissions & Progress Sub-committee at Class Level 20.

6. Continuation through to class level 19 will require a second application to the Admissions & Progress Sub-committee at class level 18.