

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL TO ESTABLISH A MAXIMUM TIME LIMIT FOR COMPLETION OF THE DOCTORAL DEGREE

I. Current Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree: Time Limit (Current Graduate School Bulletin copy)

If a candidate fails to take the final oral examination within five years after passing the preliminary examination, the candidate may be required to take another preliminary examination and be admitted to candidacy a second time.

II. Summary of Proposed Changes in the Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree: Time Limit

- A. Establish a maximum time limit for the completion of all requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.
- B. Establish a drop policy for students who fail to meet this requirement.

III. Justification:

The Graduate School recently conducted a survey examining current UWM Graduate School policies and procedures in comparison to other graduate institutions. One of the policies surveyed was the time limit to complete the doctoral degree. Fifteen institutions were surveyed and all responded (Urban 13 plus Northwestern and Madison). Nine institutions indicated that they had a maximum time limit for completion of the doctoral degree. Maximum time limits ranged from 6 to 10 years.

Progress to degree recently was noted as a concern by several graduate program review consultants. System administration has inquired and expressed concern about timely progress toward degree completion in a time of budget constraints and specifically, has questioned low graduation rates for many graduate programs. Students who make very slow progress toward degree completion in a program may require financial resources, faculty time, and facilities for longer than the time actually needed to complete the degree. Several comments have been made in recent graduate program meetings that these students may even be preventing qualified new students from entering our doctoral programs due to lack of assistantships, laboratory space, etc.

It is difficult to assess and/or respond convincingly to these issues when UWM's policy is vague and a time limit for completion of the doctoral degree is not in force. The existing time limit is extremely permissive and numerous appeals are received to extend this generous limit. A maximum limit would encourage timely student degree completion, permit more precise program monitoring, and facilitate more effective use of University resources. In recognition of the varying requirements of UWM's 17 doctoral programs and predominantly part-time student body, a single time limit of 10 years is proposed.

In summary, the proposed time limit requirement is presented to encourage doctoral students to complete their degree in a timely fashion. If approved, it allows for a more precise assessment of program completion and provides an additional factor by which to measure the quality of UWM's doctoral programs.

IV. Procedure

- A. Students who have not completed their doctoral studies within 9 calendar years of the date of admission to doctoral study, will be issued a warning by The Graduate School. The student's advisor and the chair of the doctoral program will receive copies of this letter.
- B. Students who have not completed their doctoral studies at the end of 10 calendar years from the date of admission to doctoral study will be dropped by The Graduate School.
- C. Under extenuating circumstances, The Graduate School will consider one extension of one year duration upon student appeal. The appeal must be supported by the doctoral advisor and doctoral program. Evidence must be presented of reasonable progress towards the degree.
- D. Students who are dropped for failure to complete the doctoral program within the time limit will no longer be able to register. Students wishing to enter another program must apply to that program and be reinstated.

V. Proposed Requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree: Time Limit (Proposed Graduate School Bulletin copy)

Time Limit

All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed within ten years from the date of the student's initial enrollment in a program of doctoral study at UWM. This includes all coursework, the dissertation, and examinations required for the degree. Students who do not complete their doctoral degree in the 10 year time limit will be dropped from the University.

VI. Recommendations for Action

- A. The regulations on Time Limits for doctoral students are approved as reflected in the proposed Graduate School Bulletin copy described above.
- B. The revised requirements are effective immediately for students seeking admission for the next enrollment period following administrative approval of recommendation #A above. Students who have already been admitted may continue under the former requirements or may elect at their option to fulfill the revised requirements.

Regulations and Requirements Committee

James Brundage
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