

Changes in Registration Requirements for Post-Candidacy Doctoral Students

Overview and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Prepared by the Graduate School
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I. Summary

In June 2007, Provost Alutto formed a task force on graduate tuition and charges to external grants. This task force investigated the implications of recommendations made by the Beck and Freeman Committees regarding dissertation-stage tuition and tuition charges to grants, respectively. The provost's charge to the task force was

1. to gather data from peer institutions on graduate tuition, charges to external grants, and whether tuition is reduced at the dissertation stage;
2. to make a preliminary assessment of how Ohio State's graduate tuition policies compare to its peers and to determine if fiscally sound adjustments can be made rapidly; and
3. to develop financial models to determine the university-wide fiscal effects of changing the level of graduate tuition, of changing the fraction of tuition charged to external grants, and decreasing tuition charges for dissertation-level doctoral students.

The task force released its report on January 30, 2008. Based upon its analysis, the task force recommended:

- reducing the definition of full-time to three credit hours per quarter for all post-candidacy doctoral students;
- requiring continuous academic year registration for post-candidacy doctoral students admitted Autumn Quarter 2008 or after (although leaves of absence could be requested);
- making summer quarter registration optional starting in Summer Quarter 2009; and
- retaining flexibility for colleges in how tuition is charged to external grants.

The provost has approved these changes to be implemented across the university starting Autumn Quarter 2008 with the understanding that the remaining implementation issues for optional summer registration in 2009 need to be worked out during the 2008-09 academic year. **A top-level principle is that implementation of these changes should not have negative effects on students, including current students.**

II. Fiscal Implications

The *Report of the Task Force on Graduate Tuition and the Charges to External Grants* (January 30, 2008) contains detailed calculations regarding this change. Graduate program administrators, staff, and graduate faculty are strongly encouraged to read the full report.

Appendix III contains detailed scenarios regarding the fiscal implications associated with appointing post-candidacy doctoral students as Graduate Teaching Associates, Graduate Research Associates with tuition and fees charged to grants, Graduate Research Associates with tuition and fees covered by departments, or Graduate Administrative Associates.

The task force report also includes 1) an executive summary, 2) overview of data collected from peer institutions and practices and policies at Ohio State, 3) fiscal analysis and implications, 4) recommendations, and 5) appendices.

III. Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do post-candidacy doctoral students need to pay RPAC fees?

Yes. Post-candidacy doctoral students registered for three credit hours are full-time and thus are required to pay the RPAC fee.

2. I'm running into some difficulties with my student health insurance. Am I still eligible?

Yes, you are eligible because post-candidacy students are considered full-time with three credits. Some students who have not registered for at least one credit hour of 999 are encountering the following message when they enroll online: "WARNING: You have not met the enrollment requirements and are not eligible for student health insurance." We are working with the Student Health Insurance office to develop a solution. If you are enrolled for at least one credit hour of 999, you will not encounter the above message.

3. Some of my post-candidacy doctoral students haven't been able to pick up their football tickets. What should we do?

Students cannot pick up football tickets until they are at paid status. Fee authorizations for funded students will be posted approximately one week prior to the beginning of autumn quarter. We are working with the Athletics Tickets Office and the Buck-ID office to come up with a method that allows post-candidacy doctoral students who are registered for three hours to pick up their tickets. In the meantime, if you have students who want to pick up their tickets and they are at paid fee status, their local graduate program/department will need to provide a statement on letterhead to the effect that you verify that the student is a post-candidacy doctoral student enrolled for three credits.

A. General

1. What are the changes in policy regarding registration for post-candidacy doctoral students?

There are three changes. 1) the definition of full-time has been reduced to three credit hours per quarter for all post-candidacy doctoral students whether they are funded or self-funded; 2) continuous academic year registration is now required for post-candidacy doctoral students admitted Autumn Quarter 2008 or after (although leaves of absence could be requested); and 3) summer quarter registration will be optional starting in Summer Quarter 2009.

2. When will these changes go into effect?

All graduate programs are expected to adhere to these changes starting Autumn Quarter 2008.

3. Which graduate students will be affected by these changes?

The new definition of full-time as being three credit hours per quarter applies to all post-candidacy doctoral students starting Autumn Quarter 2008. This new policy applies to post-candidacy doctoral students who are funded (whether they are graduate associates, fellows, or trainees) or are self-funded.

The new requirements for continuous enrollment for post-candidacy doctoral students apply only to doctoral students who begin their graduate programs in Autumn 2008 or later and once they pass candidacy. Current graduate students (those who began their programs prior to Autumn Quarter 2008) are not subject to continuous enrollment post-candidacy. However, these students must continue to meet existing Graduate School rules regarding enrollment, including post-candidacy residency requirements.

4. Have the minimum required credit hours for doctoral degrees also changed?

Not at this time, but the Graduate Council in the Graduate School will be examining this issue as these registration changes are being implemented. Currently, the minimum number of required credit hours for a doctoral degree is 120 credit hours beyond the baccalaureate degree. If a master's degree has been earned by the student, then a minimum of 90 credit hours beyond the master's degree is required.

B. Defining full-time for post-candidacy doctoral students as three credits

1. Does the full-time status at three credits apply to all current post-candidacy doctoral students?

Yes. This policy change is effective beginning Autumn Quarter 2008.

2. In what course or courses should a post-candidacy doctoral student register for three credits?

Because such students should be focused on dissertation research, post-candidacy doctoral students should generally register for their graduate program's 999 research course. However, other course registrations may be allowed. Graduate students should consult with their advisors and graduate programs before registering for courses other than 999 to make sure that they are fulfilling local graduate program degree requirements.

3. Can a post-candidacy doctoral student register for additional credit hours above three?

Yes. A decision to register for more than three credits should be made following discussions between the student and his or her advisor and should meet with the approval of the local graduate program. In making such decisions, advisors and graduate programs should consider the academic and professional relevancy of the additional credits for individual doctoral students, and not simply budget implications for the department. The expectation is that registrations above three credits should be made for academic and professional reasons, including opportunities for a graduate student to pursue a graduate interdisciplinary specialization or a graduate minor.

4. Can a post-candidacy doctoral student register for fewer than three credit hours?

Yes, except for post-candidacy students who are on appointment. Post-candidacy students who are on appointment must register for three credit hours as part of the requirements of the position. Post-candidacy students who register for one or two credit hours will be considered part-time.

5. What about registrations in so-called "enhancement courses" by funded and unfunded post-candidacy students?

The university's decision to reduce the number of credit hours needed for post-candidacy students to be considered full-time was made to reduce costs to principal investigators and students at a time when the large majority of doctoral students are focused on dissertation research and writing rather than engaged in course work. The task force's detailed report is available on the Graduate School website.

The Graduate School's expectation is that all course registration by post-candidacy students is made after consultation between the students and their advisors. The university and Graduate School share the expectation that the large majority of funded post-candidacy students will only register for three graduate credits each quarter. The financial models were predicated on this expectation. Typically, these credits will be in 999. However, if a student and advisor decide that another registration is appropriate, other configurations are acceptable. For example, a student might register for a graduate seminar worth one credit and two credits of 999. Or, perhaps a student might register for a three-credit course featuring content that the student and advisor believe is beneficial to the student's academic development, such as courses needed for graduate minors and graduate interdisciplinary specializations. Registrations over three credits by funded students need to be carefully considered by the advisor and department because of the real implications for departmental and college budgets.

Some funded post-doctoral students may want to register for “enhancement courses” such as physical activity courses offered by PAES. If the student’s total enrollment does not exceed three credits, the Graduate School considers such enrollment to be at the discretion of the student and advisor. If the student’s total enrollment exceeds three credits, priorities within the college and department will have to be considered.

Unfunded post-candidacy students may exceed three credits, including by taking such enhancement courses, because these students are paying their own tuition. In keeping with quality practices in doctoral education, however, the Graduate School expects that graduate programs and advisors discuss post-candidacy registrations with their unfunded post-candidacy students so that the student and program have a clear understanding of expectations regarding reasonable progress and time to degree.

6. Doctoral students currently are required to register for at least three graduate credits during the quarters of the candidacy exam, final oral examination, and expected graduation. Has this rule changed?

No. Doctoral students must continue to register for at least three graduate credits during the quarters in which they take the candidacy exam, final oral examination, and during which they expect to graduate.

7. Does full-time status at three credits apply to all post-candidacy doctoral students regardless of appointment or funding status?

Yes. All doctoral students who are post-candidacy will be considered full-time when registered for three credit hours. This rule pertains to doctoral students who are on graduate associate appointments, who are trainees or fellows, or are self-funded students.

8. Will international students be adversely affected by changing the definition of full-time to three credit hours for post-candidacy doctoral students?

No. These changes have been reviewed by the Office of International Affairs. There will be no negative effect for international students who are post-candidacy provided that the university defines full-time status for post-candidacy doctoral students as being enrolled for three credit hours per quarter.

9. How should principal investigators be sure that they account for these changes in their grants?

Colleges continue to retain flexibility for how tuition is charged to external grants. Principal Investigators should consult with their college fiscal officers to make sure that they are implementing these changes in ways that are appropriate to their college’s specific situations.

10. Does the change in full-time credit hour requirements for post-candidacy doctoral students affect full-time credit hour requirements for funded doctoral students who are not post-candidacy?

No. Existing policies for funded graduate students (graduate associates, fellows, or trainees) remain in place. Funded graduate students who are not post-candidacy must be enrolled for nine credit hours each quarter (autumn, winter, and spring) and for seven credits during summer quarter.

11. Will post-candidacy doctoral students taking three credits be eligible for student health insurance?

Yes, because full-time status for post-candidacy doctoral students at Ohio State is now defined as three credit hours.

12. Will post-candidacy doctoral students taking three credits meet financial aid eligibility requirements to receive aid or defer loans?

Yes, because full-time status for post-candidacy doctoral students at Ohio State is now defined as three credit hours.

13. Will post-candidacy doctoral students taking three credits meet Veterans Affairs requirements?

Yes, because full-time status for post-candidacy doctoral students at Ohio State is now defined as three credit hours.

14. Will Graduate School residency rules for doctoral students change with the change in fulltime credit hours for post-candidacy students?

Yes. The Graduate Council has approved a revision to the post-candidacy residency requirement. The new rule is that post-candidacy doctoral students must accrue a minimum of six graduate credit hours over a period of at least two quarters after admission to candidacy. The 2008-09 edition of the *Graduate School Handbook* will reflect this change.

Candidates for the doctoral degree will continue to be required to complete a minimum of 45 graduate credit hours at Ohio State after the master's degree has been earned or after their first 45 hours of graduate credit have been completed. Candidates for the doctoral degree will also continue to be required to enroll three out of four consecutive quarters for at least 10 graduate credit hours per quarter while in residence at Ohio State.

C. Continuous Enrollment for Post-Candidacy Doctoral Students

1. Does the continuous academic year enrollment policy for post-candidacy doctoral students apply to both incoming and current doctoral students?

No. The continuous enrollment policy pertains only to graduate students who begin their graduate programs Autumn Quarter 2008 or after and who have achieved post-candidacy status. Continuous academic year enrollment will not be required for current doctoral students, including those who are currently post-candidacy, who began their graduate programs prior to Autumn Quarter 2008. However, graduate programs must have plans and schedules in place for each such student to complete their degrees. These students will continue to be required to register for three credits the quarter they graduate.

2. How are international doctoral students affected by the continuous academic year enrollment policy for post-candidacy doctoral students?

International students already must maintain continuous enrollment to keep their legal nonimmigrant status. Specific questions about individual situations should be referred to the Office of International Affairs.

3. How will requests for Academic Leaves of Absence for post-candidacy doctoral students be handled?

Post-candidacy doctoral students interested in an academic leave of absence must consult with their advisor and graduate program before requesting a formal leave. Such leaves for all graduate students are currently handled locally in each graduate program. However, for post-candidacy doctoral students beginning their graduate programs in Autumn Quarter 2008 and subsequent quarters, such requests, when supported by the student's graduate program, must be submitted to the Graduate School for final review and approval or disapproval.

4. If a post-candidacy doctoral student takes an approved Academic Leave of Absence, will his or her student healthcare coverage continue while on leave?

No. If the Graduate School approves a leave of absence, the student's healthcare coverage will cease during his or her leave. Students may qualify for one off-term of student health insurance plan per academic year. The student will need to re-qualify for student health insurance upon reinstatement into his or her graduate program. For complete rules and eligibility, visit she.osu.edu.

5. If summer enrollment is optional, what are the requirements for doctoral candidates that plan to defend or graduate during summer quarter?

Graduate School rules for registration during quarters in which a doctoral candidate plans to take candidacy exams, to take final examinations, or to graduate supersede the summer enrollment option. Doctoral candidates who plan to take the candidacy exam, to take the final oral examination, or to graduate during summer quarter must enroll for three graduate credits that quarter.