
Standards for Ph.D. Qualification, Dissertation, & Degree

All But Dissertation (ABD) Status

After completion of all formal degree requirements other than the completion of and approval of the doctoral dissertation, and the public final examination, doctoral candidates shall be regarded as ABD (all but dissertation). CIT and CMU rules recognize two categories of ABD ("All but Dissertation) doctoral students:

- ABD Students in absentia (Registrar code:ABS).
- ABD Students with student status.

In Absentia Status for ABD Candidates

An ABD doctoral candidate may, upon departmental certification thereof, be regarded as being in absentia when and, so long as, the following three conditions concur:

- The candidate has been enrolled as a full-time doctoral candidate at Carnegie Mellon University for at least one academic year. Part-time graduate enrollment may, at the department's discretion, be counted pro rata towards this total.
- The candidate does not receive a stipend predicated on his or her status as a graduate student or doctoral candidate and paid by or administered by the university (whether teaching or research assistantship, scholarship, or fellowship).
- The student does not require substantial use of University resources. Note: Departmental certification of this condition shall be subject to guidelines established by the school or college. Typically, substantial use shall include: office space other than desk space, if available; all but minimal use of laboratory space or university-furnished laboratory equipment and expendables; and all use of computer resources that is not specifically exempted for thesis text preparation. In absentia candidates shall be permitted use of the libraries or consultation with faculty or students (in particular, with a thesis advisor or members of the advising and thesis committees). The university will provide in absentia candidates with identification for access to the library and other services permitted under the guidelines.

ABD students in absentia will not be certified by the university as a "student" for immigration or loan purposes. "Non-resident alien" students on J-1 or F-1 visas who become ABD in absentia must continue to follow Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) regulations and maintain their status as "full-time students." Any questions about employment or about leaving Carnegie Mellon for extended periods of time should be coordinated with the Office of International Education (OIE).

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While an ABD candidate is in absentia, no formal enrollment or payment of tuition shall be required to maintain doctoral candidacy status, with the exception of the academic semester in which the degree requirements are to be completed.

An ABD candidate who is in absentia shall be required to enroll for a minimum of five units of graduate study during the academic semester in which the degree requirements are to be completed; in default of which a fee equal to the corresponding tuition shall be paid before the degree is conferred.

Student Status for ABD Candidates

ABD students with student status may be certified as full-time students for immigration purposes. Ordinarily, ABD students with student status in CIT are required to register for a minimum of 36 units of academic credit per term, except that: "Under exceptional circumstances, ABD students who are self-supported, and who can demonstrate financial hardship, may petition the College through the departments for permission to register for 5 units of thesis research per semester." The exceptional circumstances for such approval include:

- Self-supporting with demonstrated financial hardship.
- At least three years of full time student status.
- Good standing and progress towards a degree.
- No more than two semesters of required work; ABD with student status and 5 units of tuition per term will not be allowed for more than two semesters of work, where a summer is considered to be one semester.

All doctoral degree candidates enrolled as students shall, in the semester in which all degree requirements are completed, pay tuition prorated by the quarter of the semester, whether used fully or partially. Payment will be waived if all degree requirements are completed by the end of the first full month of the semester in which the degree is completed (fall semester—September 30; spring semester—January 31; summer session—June 30). Doctoral candidates' departments shall notify the Registrar's Office of the appropriate financial arrangement.