

Frequently Asked Questions: Doctoral Students & All But Dissertation

This document addresses frequently asked questions pertaining to forms, processes, and policy related to All But Dissertation status at Carnegie Mellon University.

1. What is All But Dissertation?

All But Dissertation is a status doctoral students declare once they have completed all requirements and have only the dissertation, including proposal, to complete. This status ensures students are appropriately coded and charged in S3 according to their location (on campus – *In Residence*, or off campus – *In Absentia*).

2. Does my department need to use the All But Dissertation status and process?

As an institution, Carnegie Mellon requires **all** doctoral degree-granting departments/programs to use the All But Dissertation process as set by the Provost.

3. Can a student be supported by a department while *In Absentia*?

It is not common for this scenario to take place. Students *In Absentia* cannot be supported and cannot get a stipend.

4. Are students in All But Dissertation status permitted to be Teaching Assistants?

This may be permitted per agreement between the student and department; it is not specifically required nor restricted by the university.

5. Can a student be employed on campus if *In Absentia*?

Students *In Absentia* can be employed as long as their position is not related to their degree work or if they are employed as a teaching assistant (See #4).

6. A student has been *In Absentia* for the majority of the semester; they only became *In Residence* once they defended their dissertation. Do they still need to pay full semester fees for transportation (and/or others)?

Students who are returning for 10 days or less to defend their dissertation from *In Absentia* should be changed to the ABF (All But Dissertation Final Semester – Limited Time on Campus) program code. This special code does not charge students for the transportation or activity fee since they will only be on campus for a short period of time. An ABD Status change form must be submitted to change the student from ABS to ABF program code. Once the student is completed and certified, submit the Doctoral Student Final Semester form.

7. If a current student is *In Absentia* and not actively engaged with the university, why do we need to monitor the enrollment status and update the record in S3?

We must always keep records updated regardless of status; it is important to have accurate records reflected in S3 for various reasons for data integrity. Accurate, updated statuses/records ensures students stay active in university databases, keeping them in contact with reports, communications, verifications, and other affiliation-related benefits with the university (e.g., library access, technology and software, active Andrew accounts, etc.).

8. Can an *In Residence* or *In Absentia* student take a leave of absence?

***What constitutes a leave of absence? Students may take a leave of absence for matters relating to family, medical, military, etc. Students should not take a leave of absence for starting a job, a temporary internship, fulfilling a stipend, etc. The leave of absence must be effective for a full semester(s), not for a partial semester.

Yes, *In Residence* and *In Absentia* students may take a leave of absence and will be considered separated from the university, so they will not be considered as still actively pursuing their degree. Students taking a leave of absence should not be working on their thesis. Students must submit a Petition to Return from Leave of Absence form to their department for approval prior to their return.

Leave of absence is a separate status which is considered a separation from the university, whereas, students *In Absentia* are still considered to be actively pursuing their degree. Students who are *In Absentia* status are still considered as working towards their degree; however, they are not in residence on campus or using campus resources. Therefore, students *In Absentia* can take a leave of absence; however, they should not be working on their dissertation during their time on leave.

***May affect lapse date since students must complete all requirements for their Ph.D. degree within a maximum of ten years from original matriculation as a doctoral student.

9. Why do *In Absentia* students need to pay technology fees?

Students in any status are granted access to CMU technology, software, licenses, and support which require fees to fund. Technology fees are non-negotiable; *In Absentia* students will most likely continue to use computing resources affiliated with CMU.

10. Are *In Absentia* students eligible for student health insurance?

Health insurance is not automatically assessed as it is not a fee. Continuation is determined on a case-by-case basis with special approval with University Health Services.

11. Does *In Absentia* status extend time to complete the degree?

No, the preexisting timeline for degree completion is not altered nor extended when entering *In Absentia* status.

12. Why do we need to submit a Doctoral Student Final Semester form if we certify students in S3 independently?

Submitting a form at the completion of a student's degree is necessary because there is a checklist of processes that need to occur between the University Registrar's Office and the Student Accounts Office. Running queries for certification dates does not provide us with additional relevant information, nor is it efficient for our processing. Submitting a form provides an official document to include with the student's academic record.

13. The date the department certified the student differs from the date of certification in S3. Can this be corrected?

Unfortunately, this date cannot be corrected once entered; however, as long as the correct date is indicated on the doctoral student final semester form, we will have proof of the official date affecting tuition adjustments, if applicable.

14. Are All But Dissertation students permitted to register for courses beyond their Dissertation Research units in their thesis completion semester?

No, students should not be registering for any other courses during their thesis completion semester besides their dissertation research units. This can cause issues with tuition should a student register for additional courses. For example, if a student is full-time and is eligible for the 100% by completing by the deadline, but they are registered for additional courses, this causes an issue when adjusting their tuition charges for the semester. Plus, if students are not notified that they will be financially responsible for paying for those courses, they may also assume they will be free of charge as well.

15. Why is the 01999 course added to the student's schedule if they have not taken a course in their thesis completion semester?

The 01999 course is not actually a course, per se, but rather it is a placeholder representing all requirements being met, including certification, in their final semester. This course is 0 units, ungraded, and added with processing of the Doctoral Student Final Semester form.

16. Can a department financially support conference travel for a doctoral student?

Expenses such as conference travel are not directly related to a student's enrollment or student status, and would not be reflected on the student's account. Therefore, compensation or support for such expenses may be provided to the student at the discretion of the department.

17. How is the Doctoral Student Status Lapse Date determined for the 10 year maximum?

Per the doctoral student policy, students have 10 years to complete their program before their doctoral student status lapses (this time frame may be less depending on the student's department policy). This date is not based on a semester, but on the student's date of matriculation.

For example, if the student matriculated August 23, 2010, they would have until August 22, 2020 to complete or otherwise their status would lapse. Using this example, when completing the All But Dissertation Status Agreement or Change form, the "First Semester Admitted into Doctoral Program" would be *Fall 2010* and then the "Doctoral Student Status Will Lapse" would be *Summer 2020* since the student would need to complete before the Fall 2020 semester begins.

18. What steps to follow for an international student who is ABS and is returning to campus to defend?

The student will either need to be coded as ABR (*In Residence*) if they will return for the full semester or ABF (*Limited Time on Campus*) if they will be returning to defend for 10 days or less. They should be registered for a minimum of 5 units and will be self-supported.

19. If a student was previously departmentally supported, but will no longer be supported in their thesis completion semester, how should they be coded and registered?

If the student is already *In Residence*, they will remain in the same code and be registered for a minimum of 5 units since they will be self-supported. If the student is returning from *In Absentia*, they can either be ABR (*In Residence*), ABF (*Limited Time on Campus*), or ABO (*Off Site*). They should also be registered for a minimum of 5 units and will be self-supported.

20. When a student is returning from In Absentia, what is the difference between ABO and ABF program code options?

ABO students should be registered for a minimum of 5 units and are required to pay the dissertation completion and technology fees. ABF students should be registered for a minimum of 5 units and will pay for the number of units they are taking plus the technology fee.

21. If a student is planning to finish in a certain semester, but they defend at the very end of the semester and are required to make changes to their thesis after their defense, when will their certification semester be?

If the student is not completed with their revisions and certified by the start of the next semester, then they will need to be pushed to the next semester for certification. For example, if they were planning on being a spring graduate, but did not get certified by the start of the summer semester, then they will be considered an August graduate.

22. For students defending in the summer, what will their program code be?

Students who defend in the summer that were previously *In Residence* the prior semester will be coded GRR. Students who were previously *In Absentia* will either return as ABR, ABF, or ABO.

23. Do ABD students pay tuition in the summer?

If students have been *In Residence* status through the spring semester, are registered full-time, and are doing reading and research in the summer, their program code will be automatically changed to GRR in the summer and they will not be assessed tuition or fees. If a student is returning from *In Absentia* status to defend in the

summer and doing the ABR, ABF, or ABO option for 5 units, then they will be assessed tuition (the department, faculty, or advisor may choose to pay the tuition for the student if they would like).

24. When should ABD Status Agreements and ABD Status Change forms be submitted?

Ideally, both of these forms should be submitted by the 10th day of classes because the change in status could impact tuition charges, delay adjustments, and affect enrollment reporting. For example, if the student is going ABS and was registered and the form is submitted late in the semester, the course(s) can be dropped; however, tuition may not automatically adjust and require a tuition appeal.

25. When should a student defend so that they can be certified for that semester?

We recommend not scheduling the defense date before the last week of classes to allow for enough time for revisions; therefore, students should plan to defend anytime before the last week of classes or otherwise they may be in jeopardy of not completing in time. Students must have completed all requirements before the next semester begins, or they should be moved forward to the next semester.

26. For a doctoral student returning from *In Absentia* or going from full-time to part-time in their thesis completion semester, can a department pay for the Dissertation Completion Fee or the student's final 5 units?

Yes, a faculty member, department, etc. may pay for the student's 5 units. This only pertains to the student's thesis completion semester.

27. Should students be encouraged to defend offsite and use the Consent to Livestream form in their thesis completion semester?

The Consent to Livestream form was created for rare cases where students can't return to campus to defend. Students are encouraged to defend on campus; however, if they are unable to be in-person, a Consent to Livestream form must be completed by the student.

28. What happens if a student doesn't finish their revisions before the certification deadline and doesn't complete to be certified for a few more semesters (e.g. a student defends in the fall and doesn't complete revisions until summer).

These situations come up very rarely. The student may have already been registered, charged, and paid for their final units, so it can cause additional work to drop the course and adjust tuition to make their record accurate. In these situations, we will work with the department to make sure the student's record is updated accordingly.

29. Why can't students go *In Absentia* in their thesis completion semester (e.g. – student has been *In Residence* up until their final semester. They got a full-time job and can no longer be full-time status. Why are they not able to go *In Absentia* in their final semester and then change to the ABO or ABF option when they defend?)

Doctoral Student Policy gives ABO and ABF as options for students who are returning from ABS. It does not provide any such options for students who were *In Residence* in their prior semester. Since students are

required per the policy to register and pay for units in their thesis completion semester, students cannot go In Absentia.

30. Can students choose a certain date within the semester to change to In Absentia status?

No, students must change to In Absentia status as of the beginning of the semester and it is effective for the entire semester. Students cannot be registered for the first half of the semester and then request to go In Absentia for the second half. Students requesting to change their status halfway through the semester could impact their visa and causes compliance issues with our enrollment reporting. This is why students must decide to change their status to In Absentia by the add deadline and must remain in that status for the whole semester.