2015-2016 Dissertation Completion Proposal Process
for Humanities and Social Science Graduate Students

Information for Graduate Students

Brown University offers incoming doctoral students five years of guaranteed financial support, in keeping with the very best institutions. Completing the dissertation can, however, require more than five years with circumstances often differing by discipline. In 2011, the Graduate School introduced the Dissertation Completion Proposal process in order to streamline the process for supporting graduate students beyond the fifth year. For 2015-16, the Graduate School is piloting an amended process in order to be responsive to student needs, to distribute resources to greater effect and with greater transparency, and to introduce a new Match Option for programs. A new Match Option will support program autonomy while partnerships with Centers and Institutes will open additional funding pathways for sixth-year students. This process has been developed in consultation with a joint faculty and graduate student committee in response to a resolution passed by the Graduate Student Council on DCP funding, a letter sent to the Graduate School by Chairs and Directors of Graduate Studies, as well as group and individual conversations with graduate students, DGSs, and Chairs of Departments.

What has changed?

- Process is more transparent.
- DCP Application has been revised.
- Students submit DCP Application directly to program.
- Programs have more autonomy.
- Earlier notification of funding decision.

The Graduate School continues to provide all sixth-year students in good standing and with program support full tuition scholarships, health services fee, and health insurance; only the stipend is up for consideration during the DCP process.

What is the new Match Option and how might it affect me?

Graduate students and graduate programs have asked that programs have more autonomy: each discipline may have different needs and each program understands best what funding structures support the recruitment, retention, and successful completion of its graduate students. The Graduate School is introducing a new funding initiative—the Match Option—to strengthen program choices.
The match option will allow your program to make funding decisions and commitments earlier: programs will be expected to establish clear criteria of how students can be eligible for a match option commitment from their program. This match applies to any funding option, including summer-only funding, funding for one semester, or funding for two semesters. As long as the program provides 50% of the stipend, the Graduate School commits to fund the other half. The Graduate School will also cover a full tuition scholarship, health insurance, and health fees. The match option will reduce the competitive aspect of sixth-year funding and empower programs to make long-range funding decisions that should help programs give students greater clarity and earlier notice of future funding.

**What if I received an external fellowship in a prior year?**

*External Fellowships:* Students who have won an external fellowship during their five year guarantee period are guaranteed a sixth year of stipend support (for details, see [guidelines of the incentive program](#)). Programs are required to support the fellowship recipient in year six using the savings accrued as a result of these external fellowships. The Graduate School will cover your tuition scholarship, health services fee, and health insurance. You will still be asked to submit a DCP. (Students in programs that did not participate in the Financial Plan during the fellowship year will be covered by the Graduate School.)

*Internal Fellowships:* Institutional graduate student support in the form of fellowships or assistantships, such as support through institutes or centers, also result in savings to the graduate program. However, internal fellowships and assistantships do not result in a sixth year support guarantee, so that programs have discretion over how to re-allocate the saved funds. Students are encouraged to discuss the possibility of a 50-50 match with the program DGS.

**What if I am applying for a Deans’ Faculty Fellowship, or am in the Open Graduate Education Program?**

Students who are enrolled in the Open Graduate Education Program or who are candidates for a Deans’ Faculty Fellowship will be asked to submit a DCP: sixth year funding for fellows is guaranteed and will either partly or entirely be drawn from funding sources outside of those allocated for sixth-year student support. The DCP application form will allow you to indicate this status.

**What kind of feedback on my funding situation can I expect from my program? And when can I expect it?**

Students have requested earlier notice about their prospects for sixth-year funding, which would help all graduate students, especially international students. The match option allows programs to establish clear benchmarks for students to be eligible for program match support for the sixth year.

- **New mid-year review in the fifth year.** We are asking programs to meet with each fifth-year student in the Fall semester to review his or her progress, plan for completion, and
determine whether a sixth year might be needed. Programs will be expected to issue to each student a written summary of his or her standing after the first semester of year 5. This feedback should help students anticipate funding decisions.

- *Earlier notification of sixth-year funding.* Students will be notified earlier than in previous years. All students will be notified by the end of March, with some students receiving earlier notification if covered by the match option or through TAship or fellowships funded by Center or Institutes. Students who are not selected for stipend funding will receive tuition and health benefits and will be put on a wait list should funds become available.

The Graduate School is committed to working collaboratively with programs to fund as many students as possible.

**What do I need to know if I am submitting a DCP application?**

The student section of the DCP application is now due directly to your program on the last Friday in January. This is earlier than in previous years. Your program will submit the full DCP package, including supporting documents from your Chair and DGS, to the Graduate School.

The DCP application questions and format have been revised with input from graduate students. Students will be able to indicate their interest in a Teaching Assistantship or fellowship through a Center or Institute by checking the appropriate box. The Graduate School will forward the respective DCPs to the Centers and Institute for selection.

**How will the Graduate School review students who are not covered through the 50-50 match option, OGE or by merit of an external fellowship?**

While there are many discipline-specific markers of excellence, the criteria that will guide the Graduate School’s review include:

- Articles or other professional publications
- Conference presentations and other presentations of research outcomes
- Excellence in teaching
- External and internal fellowship awards
- Service at Brown University
- Progress on the dissertation

The Graduate School will rely heavily on the letters of recommendations received from programs in assessing these criteria.

**What about rankings?**

For any students who will be reviewed for funding by the Graduate School, the Graduate School will follow the program ranking, if provided. Programs will not be required to submit rankings. Such rankings will also not be necessary for any students whose funding is secured due to the Match Option, students who have received student-won external funding (incentive program), or Open Graduate Education students in their sixth year.
**Will I be appointed as a Teaching Assistant in my sixth year?**

Most students will receive Teaching Assistant appointments in their sixth year. Under the new process, with greater autonomy given to programs, programs may decide to support some students with a Fellowship or a previously approved Proctorship for any semester fully supported by the program. Programs will be asked to explain for all students in their DCP support materials how the particular teaching, fellowship, or proctorship appointment will contribute to the professional development and timely completion of each student.

**How are programs and the Graduate School planning for anticipated sixth-year funding needs?**

Graduate students and programs have asked for more and earlier information about overall sixth-year funding requests: the revised timeline makes it possible for the Graduate School to collect from programs their anticipated sixth-year funding requests in December. Collecting this information will assist the Graduate School and programs as we work collaboratively to ensure that as many students are funded as possible.

**A timeline follows for your reference.**
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Timeline

Nov.-Dec.  DGS meets with Student
Dec. 10  Program submits worksheet with incoming class target and anticipated sixth-year support need to Graduate School
By Jan. 15  Program issues written evaluation to Student
Jan. 30  Student submits DCP to Program
Feb. 13  Program submits complete DCP package to Graduate School (Graduate School forwards those expressing interest to relevant Brown Institutes/Centers)
March 6  Brown Institutes/Centers notify Programs, Graduate School, and Students of their selection
March 13  Program notifies Graduate School and Students of match option commitment
March 31  Upon notification from Graduate School, Program notifies Students of sixth-year funding (including wait list, if necessary)

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