

Departmental G-year Adjustments Recognized by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

When a graduate student enrolls in a degree program in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University, the Registrar starts a “G-year” clock that does not stop until the student either graduates or withdraws. However, there are specific circumstances in which the Graduate School will recognize a departmental G-year adjustment, counting the student at a lower G-year than the Registrar records. Officially recognized adjustments are important, because the Graduate School uses them to evaluate student progress and calculate eligibility for dissertation completion fellowships (which, for students entering in September 2005 and after are guaranteed only through year G7). Officially recognized adjustments are also important to departments and programs, because GSAS reduces admissions offers by one offer for every five PhD students who are carried on a department’s books in years G8 and above.

Officially recognized departmental G-year adjustments are made when the following circumstances are properly documented:

- An adjustment of one term or one year can be made for a medically-documented severe illness. Contemporaneous documentation must be submitted to the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and should include a letter explaining the illness signed by the physician responsible for the care of the student. The student should contact the AEO to make an appointment to discuss the necessary documentation. GSAS expects that the student will return to full-time study when the illness has been treated. In the case of severe, chronic illness, the AEO, the student, and GSAS will formulate an

accommodation plan, whose terms must be met for the student to remain in good standing.

- An adjustment of one term or one year can be made for childbirth or another major, family-related disruption of timely progress in a graduate student's work. This should be discussed and documented with the department and the GSAS at the time it occurs.
- An adjustment to the G-year clock will be made for all of the years that a student is on active service in the U.S. military.
- An adjustment of one year will be made for students entering a PhD program from a related GSAS AM program. No adjustments will be made for students who receive master's degrees from non-Harvard institutions.
- An adjustment will be made for the years a GSAS student is fully engaged in another Harvard School as an official participant in the MD/PhD or JD/PhD coordinated program. Adjustments will *not* be made for PhD students simultaneously studying for a JD or MD at non-Harvard institutions (such students should withdraw from Harvard while studying elsewhere if they wish the Harvard G-year clock to stop).

GSAS already recognizes official adjustments of the types indicated above for currently enrolled students, even if they were not fully documented at the time the disruptive circumstances occurred. From this point forward, students and departments should take care to document officially recognized interruptions at the time they occur.

Other Circumstances in which studies are interrupted

GSAS understands that a student may wish to interrupt his or her graduate studies for reasons other than those officially recognized above. A student concerned to stop the G-year clock for reasons other than those officially recognized can withdraw and later apply for readmission when he or she is ready to resume full-time progress toward the PhD. However, a student who withdraws is not eligible for University Health Services or Blue Cross/Blue Shield or for GSAS or Harvard Real Estate housing; and he or she will need to begin repayment of any federal loans. The decision to withdraw should be discussed with a student's advisor, director of graduate studies, and financial aid officer.

A GSAS student who plans to return after a period of withdrawal must be in good standing when he or she leaves. Applying its own rules and procedures, the department decides on an application for readmission – and, if the department supports the student's application to resume study, readmission can occur without counting against the program's quota for new admits.

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