

Writing Benchmarks for Dissertating Students

Different dissertation projects may place different demands on students. Some dissertations have a heavier research component up front, for example, while other projects allow students to begin drafting immediately. The first chapter often takes longer for students to write, as they master the greater complexity of argument and scale required by a dissertation chapter.

The benchmarks below are designed to give a sense of what the graduate program considers satisfactory progress on the dissertation. These are minimal benchmarks. Students may wish to establish more ambitious goals in consultation with their advisors. Students and advisors should also establish a plan for how, and how much, students should incorporate article publication, conference presentation, and other professional activities while making progress on the dissertation.

4th year

Dissertation proposals are due on September 15 of the 4th year in the program.

Students should strongly consider enrolling in the Dissertation Writing workshops in either fall or spring of their fourth year. In addition, we recommend students attend the Dissertation Writing Orientation held by the ADGS in the early fall.

Students making satisfactory progress will have a substantial portion (20+ continuous pages) of their first chapter in draft by the April 1 deadline in their fourth year, with a revised and completed chapter turned in and approved by the end of the summer, before the beginning of the 5th year. Please keep in mind that this draft needs to be approved by the dissertation director, which means it needs to be submitted to the director for feedback at least two weeks before the April 1 deadline. Students should be in touch with their dissertation director all through the period from September 15 through the spring of the fourth year. Please also keep in mind that almost all 4th-year students are assigned a 2-0 teaching load. This makes the summer and the spring the key moments for getting significant bodies of work done.

5th year

Fifth-year students making satisfactory progress will have completed a first chapter and partially drafted a second by January of their fifth year, with the expectation of having a second chapter completed and approved before the summer of their fifth year. Since students teaching in their sixth year are likely to have a 2-0 teaching assignment, it is important to capitalize on the time afforded by the summer of your 5th year to get that third chapter well underway.

6th year

Sixth-year students making satisfactory progress will have completed two chapters and be well embarked on the third by the time they file their Dissertation Writer's Report (January of the sixth year). We remind you that teaching in the sixth year normally involves two courses in the fall, so you need to think ahead in structuring deadlines.

Budgetary constraints mean that funding is not guaranteed in the 7th year. Students who have completed 3 or nearly 3 chapters will receive priority for available TA assignments in the 7th year.

7th year

Students in their seventh year should be writing their final chapter(s) and introduction with the plan to defend in April or October.

Important departmental deadlines

Dissertation Proposal due on September 15 of the 4th year

Progress report due to the department on January 15 of 4th year

First Chapter or Part of First Chapter due on April 1 of the 4th year

Progress report due to the department on January 15 of the 5th year

Raritan requests, accompanied by copies of work completed, by February 1 of the 5th year

Progress report due to the department on January 15 of 6th year