

PhD Progress Through Checkpoints

Questions:

1. What fraction of our PhD students are passing our checkpoints, and completing their degree?
2. What fraction are dropping out?
3. What are typical times to completion for their checkpoints and for their degree?
4. How do these compare with our targets?

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PhD Clock

Defn: Each student's clock is the number of months that they have completed in their current program, e.g., their PhD.

The PhD clock does **NOT** include:

Time in MSc.

Time the student is on leave.

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Dataset

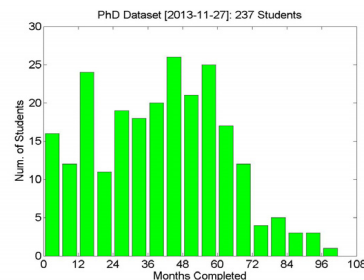
Data provided by DCSIS:

- PhD program start date
- Checkpoint completion dates
- Program withdrawal dates
- Leaves

All students starting their PhD on or after Sept. 2005.

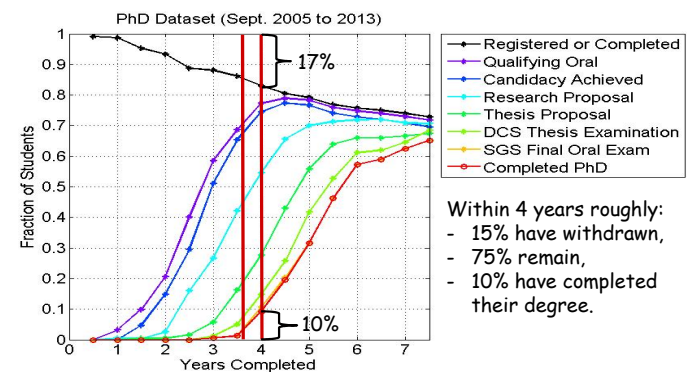
Snapshot taken in Nov. 2013.

Note: Data is sparser beyond 6 years (only about 10% of the sample).



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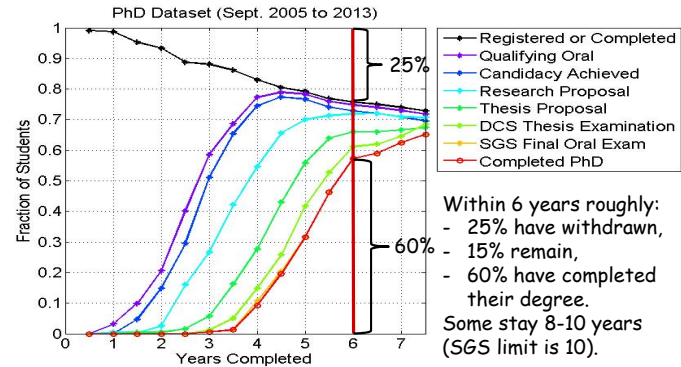
Time to Completion



Guaranteed funding: 43 or 48 months.

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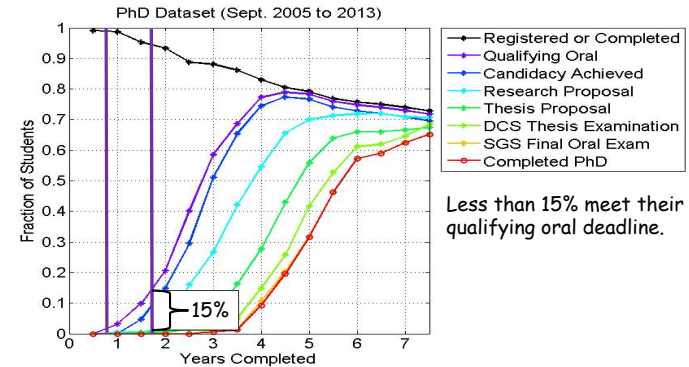
Time to Completion



Student-Years provide a rough measure of cost to both students and faculty.
View above is per-entrant. Alternatively, a snapshot of current students would show a larger fraction of long-term students.

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Time to Completion

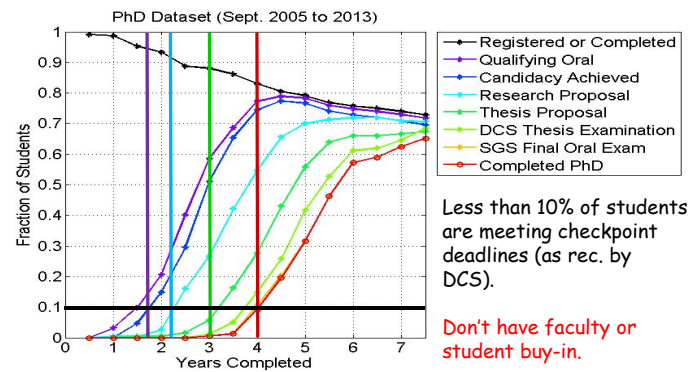


Qualifying Oral deadlines:

- 9 months for PhD with prior DCS MSc,
- 20 months for PhD with MSc from elsewhere.

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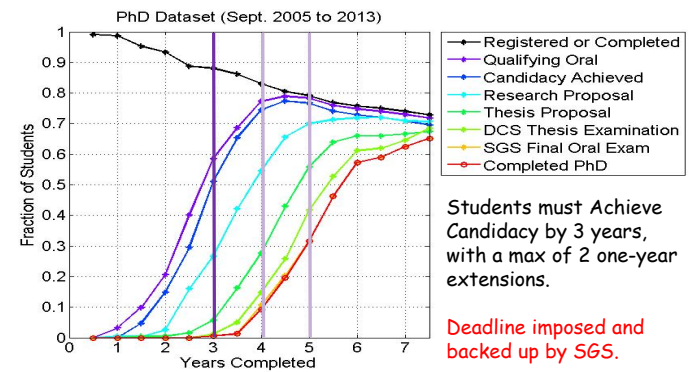
Time to Completion



Is progress monitoring, as it stands, even worthwhile?

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Time to Completion



Qualifying Oral is required to achieve candidacy.

Starting in 2014, the research proposal will be required for achieving candidacy.

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Are Checkpoints and Progress Monitoring Dead?

Current checkpoint system is ineffectual.

Any checkpoint system w/o faculty buy-in will be ineffectual.

What do you want to replace this with?

Something simple, light-weight, flexible, and "with teeth".

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A Possible Direction?

- Put emphasis on the timing of PhD committee meetings, rather than on a particular product, such as a "depth document".
- Regular deadlines for committee meetings at $16+12*k$ months, $k = 0, 1, \dots, 9$. (One limited-term extension can be applied for.)
- Purpose of committee meetings:
 - * Review the student's research progress in the last year;
 - * Provide feedback and direction for the next year;
 - * Provide marks (A+ to F) for progress since last meeting.
- Missing a deadline or failing a committee meeting has substantial, typically graded, consequences (e.g., loss of "good academic standing", funding, or program registration).

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