

The Extended Winter 2021 Rackham Grace Period and F-1/J-1 Status

The information on this page only applies to F-1/J-1 students who are considering use of the [extended Winter 2021 Rackham “grace period.”](#) [1] Students planning to complete their Ph.D. in Fall 2021 or later should refer to the standard [Rackham Grace Period and F-1/J-1 Status information](#) [2].

Key Points

- The Rackham grace period allows a short window after the end of an academic term for students to defend and complete the doctoral degree without enrolling in the next term. Because of the ongoing COVID emergency, the Rackham grace period for the 2021 Winter Term has been extended to August 17.
- I-20/DS-2019 end dates are based on enrollment, not degree conferral.
- Employment authorization (both on-campus and post-completion) is impacted directly by use of the Rackham Grace Period. Advance planning is essential.
- F-1 doctoral students with April 30, 2021 I-20 end dates who need until August 17 to defend, complete and file their dissertation may apply for Post-Completion OPT. This will allow them to remain in the US in their current F-1 status beyond their immigration grace period.
- If OPT is not an appropriate option, F-1 doctoral students with April 30, 2021 I-20 end dates who need until August 17 to defend, complete and file their dissertation may consider enrolling for the Spring half-term. This enrollment, combined with the immigration grace period, will provide time equivalent to the extended Rackham grace period. As tuition will be charged, students considering this option are strongly encouraged to consult with the International Center and their program at the earliest possible moment.
- Students who need additional time beyond the extended Winter Term 2021 Rackham grace period to defend and submit the dissertation may enroll for the full Spring/Summer term, for which tuition will be charged. Students considering full-term enrollment should consult with the International Center and their program at the earliest possible moment. The Rackham grace period for the 2021 Spring-Summer term ends September 20.

Rackham Grace Period

Doctoral students must be enrolled for eight hours of candidacy during the full term in which they defend. While the defense usually occurs before the last day of classes for the intended final term of enrollment, it is permissible to defend during the grace period

Even if you successfully defend your dissertation prior to the last day of classes during your final term, additional time after the oral defense is required for thesis revisions and corrections, a post-defense meeting, and other procedures. The Rackham Grace Period exists to allow Ph.D. students a small amount of extra time if needed after the end of a semester, during which these post-defense degree requirements may be completed without having to enroll in the subsequent semester. For Winter Term 2021, [Rackham has extended the grace period](https://rackham.umich.edu/navigating-your-degree/doctoral-degree-deadlines/) [1] through August 17, 2021. For more information from Rackham about doctoral degree deadlines and requirements, please visit their website:

<https://rackham.umich.edu/navigating-your-degree/doctoral-degree-deadlines/> [3]

<https://rackham.umich.edu/navigating-your-degree/completing-doctoral-degree-requirements/> [4]

F-1/J-1 Status Considerations

F-1 and J-1 Ph.D. students who use the Rackham Grace Period to complete their degree requirements should be aware of the following immigration considerations:

I-20/DS-2019 end date: The end date of your I-20 or DS-2019 is based strictly on your final term of enrollment.

On-Campus employment considerations: F-1 and J-1 students are eligible to work on-campus while enrolled full-time and making progress towards degree completion. The dates of your on-campus work eligibility are strictly tied to the dates of your I-20/DS-2019.

As such, on-campus employment authorization does not exist during the Rackham Grace Period unless obtained via post-completion employment authorization (see below). For example, if you complete your Ph.D. requirements during the winter 2021 Rackham Extended Grace Period, your I-20/DS-2019 end date will be April 30, which means your on-campus work authorization ends April 30, unless you have already been approved to begin Post-Completion OPT or Academic Training.

Post-Completion employment considerations: In order for you to maintain your F-1 or J-1 status and work in the US following the end date of your I-20/DS-2019, you must qualify for, apply for, and be approved for either [Post-Completion OPT \(F-1 students\)](#) [5] or [Academic Training \(J-1 students\)](#) [6]. Please visit our website for more details about these types of employment authorization.

If you intend to work shortly after your final term of enrollment ends, advance planning is essential: current OPT processing time is 3+ months, while Academic Training should be authorized prior to the expiration of the DS-2019.

F-1/J-1 Grace Period: Following the completion date of the I-20 form, F-1 students have a 60-day immigration grace period. Following the completion date of the DS-2019 form, J-1 students have a 30-day immigration grace period.

Please do not confuse this immigration grace period with the Rackham Grace Period. The immigration grace period exists to provide students time after their enrollment is completed, prior to departing the US. Although it is possible to wait until the immigration grace period to apply for post-completion employment authorization, for the reasons explained above, it is not recommended.

Next Steps

As an F-1 or J-1 international student, it is your responsibility to understand and navigate both academic and immigration requirements. Please consult your academic department and/or the Rackham Graduate School should you seek clarification on doctoral degree deadlines and requirements. Please consult the International Center should you seek clarification about F-1/J-1 deadlines and requirements.

Advance planning is very important. Please take time before your oral defense to identify a Ph.D. completion plan that works well from an academic, immigration, and employment perspective.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR F-/J-1 STUDENTS WITH APRIL 30, 2021 I-20 OR DS-2019 END DATES.

The Rackham Graduate School has decided to [extend the Winter Term 2021 deadline](#) [7] for final dissertation completion and filing to Tuesday, August 17, 2021. If the current end date on your Form I-20 or DS-2019 is April 30, 2021, please review the following five scenarios:

1. If you plan to complete all Ph.D. requirements no later than April 30, 2021, or you have already left the United States and plan to complete your Ph.D. requirements outside the U.S., there are no special actions that you need to take.
 - If you plan to work in the U.S. after completing your degree requirements, be sure to apply for [OPT](#) [8] or [AT](#) [6] by the appropriate deadlines.
2. If you are able to complete your Ph.D. requirements between May and August 17, 2021, you may make use of the Rackham Grace Period. This option allows doctoral degree completion without enrollment in spring or spring/summer term. Please see the F-1/J-1 Status Considerations listed above for important on-campus and post-completion employment considerations, such as:
 - The end date of your I-20 or DS-2019 is based strictly on your final term of enrollment. Using the Rackham Grace Period would leave your I-20 or DS-2019 end date unchanged at 04/30/2021.
 - **Note for students with current I-20 or DS-2019 end dates of 08/31/2021 or later: Students with future-dated I-20 or DS-2019 end dates who use the winter 2021 Rackham Grace Period will have their I-20 or DS-2019 end date shortened to 04/30/2021.**
 - Students with an I-20 or DS-2019 end date of 04/30/2021 have no on-campus employment authorization (to work in positions such as a GSRA) unless obtained via post-completion employment authorization (OPT or AT)
 - Following the completion date of the I-20 form, F-1 students have a 60-day immigration grace period. Following the completion date of the DS-2019 form, J-1 students have a 30-day immigration grace period.
 - Students who plan to use the Rackham Grace Period and depart the US before their immigration grace period ends do not need to apply for post-completion employment authorization. They can use the Rackham grace period during their immigration grace period.
 - Students who plan to use the Rackham Grace Period and remain in the US in their current F-1 or J-1 status beyond their immigration grace period must apply for post-completion employment authorization in order to do so.
3. If you are able to complete your doctoral requirements between May and August 17, 2021 and Post-Completion OPT is not an appropriate option for you, you may consider enrolling for the Spring half-term. This will provide time equivalent to the extended Rackham grace period. As tuition will be charged, students considering this option should consult with the International Center and their program at the earliest possible moment.

- Enrollment in spring term would allow you to request an extension of your [I-20](#) [9] or [DS-2019](#) [10] end date to 06/30/2021. You would then have an immigration grace period of 60 days (F-1 students) or 30 days (J1 students) which would allow you to use most or all of the extended Rackham grace period to complete your Ph.D. requirements if necessary. If you choose this option, follow normal extension procedures and be sure to apply for your extension several weeks before your current I-20 or DS-2019 end date. Proof of spring 2021 enrollment (visible on your U-M unofficial transcript) is required to apply for the I-20 or DS-2019 extension.
 - If you do not plan to use the extended Rackham grace period for the Winter Term, enrollment in the spring/summer term will allow you to request an extension of your I-20 or DS-2019 end date to 08/31/2021. As tuition will be charged, students considering this option must consult with their program at the earliest possible moment. Follow normal extension procedures and be sure to apply for your extension several weeks before your current I-20 or DS-2019 end date. Proof of spring/summer 2021 enrollment (visible on your U-M unofficial transcript) is required to apply for the I-20 or DS-2019 extension. The Rackham grace period for the 2021 Spring-Summer term ends September 20.
 - Remember that your on-campus employment authorization ends on your I-20 or DS-2019 end date. You will not be able to work in the U.S., including on-campus after that date, unless you have been approved for Optional Practical Training or Academic Training.
 - If you plan to work in the U.S. after completing your enrollment and your degree requirements, be sure to apply for [OPT](#) [8] or [AT](#) [6] by the appropriate deadlines.
4. If you are able to complete your Ph.D. requirements between August 18, 2021 and September 20, 2021, then you do not qualify to use the winter 2021 Rackham Grace Period, and instead would use the Spring/Summer 2021 Rackham Grace Period.
- Enrollment in spring/summer term is required in this scenario, and it would also allow you to request an extension of your [I-20](#) [9] or [DS-2019](#) [10] end date to 08/31/2021. As tuition will be charged, students considering this option should consult with their programs. Follow normal extension procedures and be sure to apply for your extension several weeks before your current I-20 or DS-2019 end date.
 - Proof of spring/summer 2021 enrollment (visible on your U-M unofficial transcript) is required to apply for the I-20 or DS-2019 extension.
 - Remember that your on-campus employment authorization ends on your I-20 or DS-2019 end date. You will not be able to work in the U.S., including on-campus after that date, unless you have been approved for Optional Practical Training or Academic Training.
 - If you plan to work in the U.S. after completing your degree requirements, be sure to apply for [OPT](#) [8] or [AT](#) [6] by the appropriate deadlines.
5. If you will not be able to complete your Ph.D. requirements by September 20, 2021 and thus need to enroll in classes for fall 2021 term, you should request an extension of your [I-20](#) [9] or [DS-2019](#) [10] accordingly. Follow normal extension procedures and be sure to apply for your extension several weeks before your I-20 or DS-2019 end date.

If none of these five scenarios fit your individual situation, and/or you wish to speak with an advisor to further clarify your options and strategy for best aligning your academic and immigration needs, please do not hesitate to [speak with an International Student Advisor](#) [11]. Advance planning is very important in making sure you execute a Ph.D. completion plan that works well from an academic, immigration, and employment perspective.

Source URL: <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/rackham-grace-period-covid-19>

Links

- [1] <https://rackham.umich.edu/covid-19/#extended-rackham-academic-deadlines-2021>
- [2] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/rackham-grace-period>
- [3] <https://rackham.umich.edu/navigating-your-degree/doctoral-degree-deadlines/>
- [4] <https://rackham.umich.edu/navigating-your-degree/completing-doctoral-degree-requirements/>
- [5] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/opt>
- [6] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/j1-students/academic-training>
- [7] <https://rackham.umich.edu/covid-19/>
- [8] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/apply-opt>
- [9] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/extension>
- [10] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/forms/extension-ds-2019-request-j-1-student>
- [11] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/advising-hours>