

Request for PhD Program Extension, Departmental Support, and Formal Acknowledgment of Delays

Background

Over the course of my PhD program, I have faced extraordinary challenges that have significantly delayed my academic progress. These challenges stem from five major factors:

1. My time under my former advisor (2020-2022):

I dedicated 2.5 years to research in this group, focusing on building experimental setups, conducting measurements, and performing simple simulations. However, due to a lack of proper guidance and support, my work yielded no tangible outcomes. My removal from the laboratory in April 2022 forced me to start over entirely, academically and emotionally.

2. Significant Personal Crisis (May-July 2022):

In addition to the academic disruptions I was experiencing at that time, I faced a significant personal crisis involving financial and emotional distress. This situation added to the extraordinary pressures of the time, further impacting my ability to focus and progress in my research.

3. Mismanagement by the DGS (2022-2025):

During this critical period, the DGS not only failed to provide the necessary support or guidance but also engaged in actions that actively obstructed my progress and exacerbated my challenges. These included forcefully registering me for unrelated and time-consuming courses against my will, imposing probationary measures without proper investigation or justification, and persistently failing to communicate or follow up on critical academic milestones. Furthermore, the DGS consistently disregarded my concerns, denied me meaningful opportunities to be heard, and prioritized punitive actions over constructive support. These actions created a hostile and obstructive academic environment, contributing significantly to the delays and distress I experienced during this period.

4. Excessive TA Assignments (2020-2024):

Throughout this period, I was repeatedly assigned to teach introductory and labor-intensive courses as a TA, often with disproportionate workloads compared to my peers. This included being responsible for multiple lab sessions, attending weekly course meetings, holding discussion sessions, writing up solutions, grading lab notebooks and reports, and grading homework, midterms, and finals. These responsibilities heavily occupied my schedule and further hindered my ability to focus on research progress.

5. Transition to Theoretical Research (2022-Present):

Following my decision to pursue a long-held academic aspiration, I shifted my research focus from experimental work to theoretical research. This transition marked a significant change in methodology and skillset, requiring substantial time to adapt and establish a new academic foundation. While this decision was a deliberate and deeply motivated choice aligned with my academic goals, it involved developing new expertise and redefining my research trajectory. This shift has been rewarding and invigorating for my academic focus, but the necessary time and effort to rebuild have added to the delays caused by the other circumstances outlined above.

These compounded delays have effectively pushed my PhD progress into the negative, with my current state being equivalent to starting from scratch in late 2024. The psychological toll of these experiences has also significantly affected my ability to focus and advance my research.

Requests

To address the significant setbacks caused by these circumstances and ensure the successful completion of my PhD, I respectfully request the following:

1. **Extension of PhD Program:**

I request an additional five years (a total of ten years in the program with expected graduation quarter 2030 Summer) to compensate for the cumulative delays caused by my time under my former advisor, the significant personal crisis I endured, mismanagement by the DGS and excessive TA assignments. This extended timeline is essential for rebuilding my research progress and fulfilling those original academic objectives, which I have consistently worked toward with persistence and determination throughout these difficult circumstances.

2. **Fifth-Year Check-In Form Extension:**

I request a one-year extension for the fifth-year check-in form (to be submitted before Dec 2025) to account for the disruptions and delays outlined above. This extension will allow sufficient time to establish my thesis committee, finalize my research direction, and ensure compliance with institutional requirements.

3. **Departmental Funding (1 Year):**

I request one year (2025 Spring – 2026 Spring) of full departmental funding to enable me to focus entirely on my research without the additional burden of teaching or administrative responsibilities. This funding is critical to ensuring progress during this recovery phase.

4. **Supervision of Academic Progress:**

I request direct oversight by the Dean or a designated representative to ensure timely completion of milestones and prevent further disruptions. Regular progress reviews would provide the necessary support structure to maintain steady progress.

5. **Recognition of Prior Delays:**

I request formal acknowledgment of the extraordinary circumstances that have contributed to my delayed progress, including the lack of outcomes during my 2.5 years under my former advisor, the significant personal crisis I experienced, the mismanagement by the DGS, excessive TA assignments I took over, and transition of research direction. This acknowledgment is essential to provide context for my request for an extended timeline and to ensure that these circumstances are considered in future evaluations.

Recognition of Prior Delays

My case encapsulates nearly all of the systemic issues that can arise within an academic program: neglect by an advisor, unprofessional conduct by a key administrator, lack of institutional support, and the compounding effects of personal and academic crises. This situation serves as a stark example of the need for better mechanisms to address and prevent such issues, including safeguards against administrative abuse of power, the establishment of transparent grievance processes, and stronger protections for students' rights.

I request formal acknowledgment of the extraordinary and compounded circumstances that have significantly delayed my academic progress and severely impacted my ability to advance within the PhD program. These delays, caused by the mismanagement by the DGS, the lack of outcomes during my 2.5 years under my former advisor, the significant personal crisis I experienced, the excessive TA workload, and the major transition in my research focus, have had profound consequences, including:

1. **Academic Progress Setbacks:**

The actions and inactions of the DGS, coupled with the disruptive transition after being forced out of my former advisor's lab, the psychological effects of my personal crisis, and the overwhelming TA workload, have caused delays equivalent to several years, if not decades, in terms of lost opportunities,

unproductive work, and time required to rebuild my academic trajectory. Additionally, the deliberate transition from experimental work to theoretical research necessitated significant time to develop new skills, methodologies, and expertise, further contributing to the time required to regain momentum.

2. **Mental Health and Well-Being:**

The oppressive and dismissive behavior of the DGS, including a lack of meaningful support during critical moments and an insistence on punitive measures, created a highly stressful environment. This stress was further compounded by the personal crisis I experienced, the overwhelming TA workload, and the challenges inherent in navigating a major academic transition. These factors together further affected my capacity to progress in the program.

3. **Existential Threat to My Academic Journey:**

The cumulative impact of these actions placed my ability to continue in the program at serious risk. Had I not demonstrated exceptional resilience and determination, the circumstances would have forced me out of the program altogether, effectively ending my academic aspirations.

Request for Acknowledgment:

I request that the department formally acknowledge these extraordinary circumstances, not only to provide the necessary context for my request for an extended timeline but also to recognize the systemic failures that contributed to this situation. This acknowledgment is critical for ensuring fairness in the evaluation of my academic progress moving forward and for reaffirming the department's commitment to supporting students equitably.

Significance of Acknowledgment:

Such recognition would not only validate my experience but also establish a precedent for addressing similar issues in the future. This step is essential for fostering an environment where students are supported through adversity and protected from systemic mismanagement.

Conclusion

These requests are grounded in the extraordinary challenges and delays I have faced and are essential for ensuring the successful completion of my PhD. I have demonstrated resilience and dedication to my academic goals despite these significant obstacles, and I am committed to making meaningful contributions to my field.

I sincerely hope that the department will consider these requests as necessary measures to rectify the delays and disruptions that have occurred during my program.

Signatures

Applicant: _____

Chair of Students: _____

Dean of Students: _____