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The Board of Officers and Graduate Student Council of the American Philosophical Association are deeply concerned about the effects of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) July 17, 2026 final rule, [*Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure for Nonimmigrant Academic Students, Exchange Visitors, and Representatives of Foreign Information Media*](#).

The rule replaces the longstanding “duration of status” framework for F and J nonimmigrants with fixed periods of admission and is currently scheduled to take effect on September 15, 2026. Under the existing system, F-1 students who maintain their status and make normal progress toward their educational objectives generally may remain in the United States for the duration of their academic programs without separately applying to DHS for an extension of stay. The new rule instead limits an initial period of admission to four years and requires students whose programs extend beyond that period to apply to DHS for an extension of stay.

We recognize that the rule permits students to seek extensions when additional time is required for compelling academic reasons, including when the ordinary structure of an academic program requires more than four years. Students who timely file an extension-of-stay application may also continue pursuing their course of study while the application is pending ([91 Fed. Reg. 44,995, 45,108-09](#)).

These protections are important. Nonetheless, the new system introduces a significant additional layer of federal adjudication, documentation, expense, and uncertainty into degree programs that routinely extend beyond four years. While the four-year fixed period may be appropriate for international undergraduate students, it is not appropriate for graduate degree programs, which in the US are often structured to last longer than four years.

Under the new rule, international graduate students who remain enrolled and who are making appropriate progress toward the degrees for which they were admitted will be required, while those degrees are still underway, to secure an institutional recommendation and submit an extension-of-stay application to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). DHS expressly distinguishes an institution’s recommendation to extend an academic program from USCIS’s adjudication of whether the student is legally eligible for an extension of stay ([91 Fed. Reg. 44,982-83](#)). As part of this process, USCIS may require students to submit biometrics, including fingerprints and photographs, and may require them to appear for an interview ([91 Fed. Reg. 45,030-31](#)). A USCIS officer will ultimately

adjudicate whether the student has established eligibility for the additional period of stay ([91 Fed. Reg. 45,109](#)).

The concern, therefore, is that students pursuing graduate degree programs structured to require more than four years will now be required to undergo additional federal adjudication before they have completed the academic objective that brought them here.

These concerns are particularly acute for doctoral education. Studying toward a PhD for longer than four years does not ordinarily reflect failure to make academic progress. Many doctoral programs in the US are structured to take more than four years; research develops unpredictably; dissertations change directions; and archival, linguistic, and other specialized research requires time. DHS itself acknowledges that students making normal progress may be unable to finish within four years because of “the standard timeline and requirements for the program” and states that such students may qualify for an extension on compelling academic grounds ([91 Fed. Reg. 45,108-09](#)).

[In philosophy specifically, faculty have already warned about the mismatch between a four-year admission period and ordinary doctoral timelines.](#) The “compelling academic grounds” to which DHS refers are what have led these programs to structure the course of study to be longer than four years; the academic aims of these programs cannot, therefore, reasonably be met within four years. Rather than accounting for the difference in expected time to degree for graduate programs as compared to undergraduate programs, the rule subjects graduate students to the same extension-of-stay reviews as undergraduate students.

We are also concerned about restrictions the rule places on academic flexibility and mobility. Under the final rule, F-1 students at the graduate level generally may not change their educational objectives during their programs and may not transfer to another institution barring unusual circumstances ([91 Fed. Reg. 44,978](#); [45,042-44](#)). During the rulemaking process, commenters specifically raised concerns about the ways these restrictions fail to reflect the experiences of graduate students ([91 Fed. Reg. 45,042-43](#)). DHS acknowledged these concerns but retained the restrictions, apart from the narrow transfer exception described above.

Graduate education is not always a linear process. Research interests develop, advisors move institutions, funding circumstances change, and students sometimes find that another program or field is a better intellectual fit. Restrictions that make ordinary forms of academic development substantially more difficult place international graduate students at a significant disadvantage relative to their domestic peers and may constrain academic development for reasons unrelated to academic merit.

These policies therefore affect not only individual international students but the profession of philosophy as a whole. International students are colleagues, teachers, researchers, and future members of the profession. American philosophy benefits profoundly from participating in an international community of scholars and from the ability of US departments to recruit talented students regardless of nationality.

Increased uncertainty and administrative burden surrounding students' ability to complete their programs or to respond appropriately when their academic circumstances change risks discouraging prospective international students from choosing US programs. DHS itself acknowledges that a significant decline in international enrollment would be contrary to their intent ([91 Fed. Reg. 45,004-05](#)).

We sincerely hope that DHS will provide clear and timely guidance concerning the extension-of-stay process and ensure that extensions based on the ordinary duration and requirements of doctoral programs are predictable, accessible, timely, and not unduly burdensome.

We urge philosophy departments and universities to prepare now to support affected students. In particular, we encourage departments and institutions, where resources permit, to do the following:

- cover extension-of-stay filing fees and other related costs directly associated with required biometrics, interviews, or other extension procedures;
- work closely with international-student offices and affected students themselves to establish clear procedures well before students reach the end of their fixed admission periods;
- plan for possible disruptions to graduate-student employment or funding during prolonged extension adjudication and ensure that students are not left without institutional support because of federal processing delays; and
- inform faculty and graduate administrators about the new restrictions governing extensions of stay, changes of educational objective, transfers, international travel, and reentry, so that international students can make academic and professional decisions with adequate institutional support.
- not treat the federal government's four-year admission period as a new academic expectation for completion of the PhD. International graduate students should not face pressure to compress their research, accept reduced funding, or sacrifice the quality of their education simply to accommodate an immigration timetable that DHS itself acknowledges does not correspond to the normal length of every graduate program ([91 Fed. Reg. 45,108-09](#)).
- raise these concerns with federal agencies and policymakers and advocate for reconsideration of the fixed-period admission framework as it applies to graduate students, especially those enrolled in doctoral programs whose normal duration exceeds four years.
- advocate for alternatives that would preserve meaningful governmental oversight while allowing students who remain in good academic standing to complete the programs for which they were admitted, and to change institutions or degree programs, without unnecessary recurring uncertainty about their ability to remain in the country.

The core work of the APA includes supporting philosophers at all stages, fostering international cooperation, and representing philosophy on matters of professional and academic concern. In this spirit, the APA Board of Officers and Graduate Student Council stand with international graduate students affected by these changes. We hope that philosophy departments, universities, and all members of the profession will join the APA in working to ensure that international students in the United States remain able to study, teach, conduct research, and participate fully in the philosophical community.