



Instructions for Applying for a DCF

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Guidelines

Intent of a Dissertation Completion Fellowship (DCF)

The DCF is a *need-based fellowship* intended to allow a student to devote full time to writing the dissertation, with the goal that the dissertation ***will be completed by the end of the semester in which the award is received.*** Thus the student should have completed all data collection before applying for a DCF. The College's philosophy is that the DCF is the last funding provided to the student by College before the student graduates from MSU.

Application Criteria

Before applying for a DCF:

1. the student must have passed comprehensive exams,
2. the student's GradPlan must be approved,
3. if a dissertation proposal is required by the unit, it must be approved, and,
4. the student's RECR requirements and annual research overview must be up to date.
5. Additionally, data collection should be completed and data analysis mostly completed by the time the student applies for a DCF.

Evaluation Criteria

The Graduate Committee will base their evaluation on the following:

1. the status of the dissertation writing and **capacity to finish in the semester indicated,**
2. the student's overall academic record,
3. the **level of need,**
4. the overall quality and organization of the application, and
5. the **strength of supporting letters** in addressing these criteria.

Please note that the ability to finish in the semester of the award and the level of need are critically evaluated by the committee. The DCF is NOT a merit-based award, and faculty who can support their students from other sources (RA, TA, etc.) should do so. We always receive many more nominations than we are able to accommodate, so in prioritizing nominations from your department, consider whether other funding sources are available for each student and the student's capacity to complete their degree in the award semester.

Application Instructions

- A. Compile the following five documents in the order listed below into a **single PDF file.** Completed packets should be sent to canr.grad@anr.msu.edu from the unit's Graduate Program Assistant or Program Director by the deadline listed in the memo released for the current academic year.
 1. Attached cover sheet.
 2. A cover memo from the applicant that includes an explanation of how the fellowship will enable the candidate to complete their dissertation in the semester indicated. This memo should be no more than one page.

- An abstract of the subject of the dissertation, summarizing the research idea and presenting the hypotheses and/or questions to be addressed and an outline of the dissertation (no more than two pages). An outline suggestion is pictured below.

Outline of Doctoral Dissertation and Milestone (% completion)

	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
	Literature Review	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Conclusions / Implications
Abstract	80%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Intro		100%	100%	100%	100%	
Methods		100%	100%	50%	0%	
Results/ Discussion		100%	100%	40%	0%	
Conclusion		100%	100%	0%	0%	
Reference		100%	100%	50%	0%	

- A copy of the applicant’s curriculum vitae (no more than four pages). Focus the CV on publications and presentations during the time enrolled in the doctoral program.
- A letter of support and a statement of progress by the major professor indicating the **likelihood the student will complete in the semester indicated** and the need for the fellowship.

The advisor letter should enhance the student’s packet and augment the arguments for 1) financial need for the fellowship, 2) student’s ability to finish in the semester the fellowship is awarded and 3) the student’s record of achievement. Poorly written letters can be detrimental to the student’s prospects of receiving a DCF as support letters are one of the three main components in the review process.

- Request a letter from the department graduate program coordinator, chairperson or school director addressing the need for the fellowship and outlining past financial support from the unit. The letter should be submitted separately from the student application packet to canr.grad@anr.msu.edu.

Departments with multiple applicants should submit one letter that includes a review of all applicants in the same letter and **prioritizes** the multiple applicants. The letter should be submitted separately from the student application packets to canr.grad@anr.msu.edu.

- Make sure the department’s Graduate Program Assistant or Program Director, as relevant for the department or school, receives a copy of the application submission email message and DCF application package for inclusion in the student personnel file.

Other Relevant Information

- DCFs do not include tuition waivers or insurance.
- DCFs for international students, like other fellowships, are taxed approximately 18% for any amounts over the cost of education.
- Students must be registered for at least 1 credit during the semester of funding to receive the award. (University policy requires students to be registered during the semester in which the dissertation is defended.)
- Students awarded funding may also receive the equivalent of a quarter-time assistantship from other sources.
- Student who receive a DCF and have Federal Direct or Grad PLUS loans or other need-based loans/aid should seek advice from an Office of Financial Aid advisor (517-353-5940; Hannah Administration Building, room 140). The amount of the DCF fellowship award may cause a reduction of loan(s) or other financial aid.
- Students funded are expected to complete the progress report/feedback survey sent from the College at the end of their funded semester.