

Updated Doctoral Committee Formation Policy

Doctoral dissertation committees are composed of four members, all of whom must be current members of the Graduate Faculty at the University of Pittsburgh. There must be three Graduate Faculty members from the candidate's department (“internal members”) and at least one Graduate Faculty member external to the candidate's department (“external member”). A list of Graduate Faculty for the university can be viewed at the following website:

<http://www.ir.pitt.edu/gradfac/homepg.htm>. Membership on the Graduate Faculty is not automatic and must be formally requested by the faculty member's department or school and approved by the Associate Dean before the faculty member can serve on a doctoral dissertation committee.

External committee members must be approved by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies before the thesis proposal/prospectus meeting or defense. Prior approval also must be obtained for any prospective committee member from the University of Pittsburgh or elsewhere who does not have Graduate Faculty status but is requested as an additional committee member beyond the four required members with Graduate Faculty status. Any changes to the committee after the thesis proposal/prospectus/overview meeting also must be approved by the Assistant Dean before the defense. Forms for admission to candidacy and committee changes can be obtained in 5141 Sennott Square. If a graduate faculty member has a primary appointment in one department and a secondary or joint appointment in another department, s/he may serve as either an internal or external committee member. S/he may also serve as a chair or co-chair of the committee. All committee members are required to be physically present at both the thesis proposal/prospectus/overview meeting and the defense. In special circumstances, a committee member may request to participate via videoconferencing at either the overview or defense, but cannot participate remotely in both. Only the Assistant Dean can approve a remote participation from one of the two required meetings (overview or defense).

A graduate faculty member from another University may serve as the external member of a doctoral committee with the approval of the Assistant Dean. A department must submit the C.V. of the external member along with a memo justifying their participation on the committee (i.e., special expertise in a particular field). Requests for external members must be approved by the Assistant Dean in advance of the requested member's participation on the doctoral committee. The Assistant Dean will review the material and either approve or reject the proposed external member. It must be understood by the external member that they are required to be present in person at both the thesis proposal/prospectus/overview meeting and the defense of the dissertation at their own expense. Any exceptions to this attendance rule must be approved by the Assistant Dean in advance. A graduate faculty member from another school or University, who has been approved by the Assistant Dean, may serve as a cochair of a dissertation committee.

Committee members who leave the university after a graduate student has been admitted to candidacy may stay on the committee in their original capacity, be it as an internal/external member, as long as they are willing and able to physically attend the defense, and providing that the defense is scheduled within 12 months of the faculty member's departure. The only exception to this rule is if the departed committee member is the chair, in which case a co-chair from the department must be designated. If a committee member retires, they may remain on the committee as long as they are still willing to serve, and are still active professionally in the academic community.

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