

Departmental Committee Meeting Requirement

Both the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Physics and Astronomy require yearly evaluations of all PhD students. The first committee meeting (the Admission to Candidacy) and the final committee meeting (the Thesis Defense) must satisfy a number of criteria set forth by the Dietrich School and must contain an extensive research presentation to the committee. This document establishes the minimal requirements for the intervening committee meetings in an effort to increase compliance, increase effectiveness, and reduce the burden of these meetings on all parties. A separate document of best practices for these meetings is linked below.

The intervening committee meetings must abide by the following minimal requirements.

- Meetings **must** take place annually.
- In cases in which students are making excellent progress to the PhD, the thesis committee may elect to waive the extensive research presentation. In such cases, there is no need for the committee meeting to last longer than ~15-20 minutes.
- Meetings **must** include a meeting of the student with all members of the committee.
- Meetings **must** include an opportunity for the student to consult with the committee without the PhD supervisor.
- Prior to the meeting, students **must** provide the committee with a brief, written self-evaluation report and written feedback from any previous committee meetings.
- The committee **must** provide the student with written feedback subsequent to the meeting.

Specific suggestions for implementing annual committee meetings can be **found below**.

Links to Dietrich School policies here

- This webpage details the regulations pertaining to a PhD degree:
<https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=189&navoid=17797#Regulations%20Pertaining%20to%20Doctoral%20Degrees>
 - This document describes the composition of the committee and attendance policy:
<https://www.asgraduate.pitt.edu/dsas-doctoral-dissertation-committee-policy>
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Committee Meeting Self-Evaluation Report

The student will submit to the thesis committee a written self-evaluation report one (1) week prior to the meeting. This report will begin with a brief summary of the thesis topic. The remainder of the document will address the following items, either in written prose or in simple bullet-point format as appropriate:

1. The student will provide a copy of the most recent *Meeting Summary and Feedback* from the previous meetings.
2. A summary of progress since the last committee meeting. This can be a simple bulleted list of tasks accomplished and/or achievement of milestones.
3. A response to any questions and/or concerns from previous committee meetings.
4. A brief discussion (a bulleted list will suffice) of research plans for the coming year, including potential significant obstacles to these plans, if any.
5. A description of plans to apply for internal or external fellowships or other research funding including acquisition of computational/experimental/observational resources.
6. A list of papers, including pre-prints, and a list of papers in advanced stages of preparation.
7. A list of talks and/or presentations given.
8. An anticipated timeline towards graduation.
9. A description of post-graduation aspirations.
10. Any other items that the student would like the thesis committee to know in order to enable the committee to best support the student's research and career goals.

Meeting Format

Committee meetings may be brief. The thesis committee may elect to waive the lecture-style review of the student's research. The format and length of the meeting may be left to the discretion of the committee, subject to the following minimum guidance.

1. The thesis committee will meet with the student to review the student's self-evaluation report, the student's research progress, the student's progress toward degree, and the student's professional goals. In cases in which the student is making adequate progress toward the degree and career goals and in

which the committee has few concerns, it is not necessary for this discussion to last more than approximately 15 minutes.

2. To enable the student and/or committee to discuss any issues that they may prefer to address without the advisor being present, the student will meet briefly with the committee while the thesis advisor is **not** present. In cases in which there are few concerns, this phase of the meeting need not last longer than a few minutes.
3. The committee will meet with the advisor while the student is **not** present. In cases in which there are few concerns, this phase of the meeting need not last longer than a few minutes.
4. While we encourage committees to meet together to the greatest extent possible, it is not necessary for all committee members to be present at the meeting. The student must arrange to meet separately with all committee members that were not present at the primary committee meeting.
5. In cases in which the student is making adequate progress toward degree and career goals, the entire meeting need not last longer than approximately 20-30 minutes in total and will satisfy the annual review requirement.
6. In cases in which the thesis committee identifies sufficiently serious concerns about research progress, progress toward degree, and/or progress toward career goals, the student may be required to convene a longer committee meeting that will include a detailed review of the student's research work (see below).

Meeting Summary and Feedback to Student

Subsequent to the annual committee meeting, the student will receive **written** feedback from their supervisor that summarizes the comments of the committee. This written feedback is confidential and will become part of the student's academic record and will be kept on file with the Graduate Administrator. The meeting and this feedback will be due for all students on July 31 each year. This feedback will answer the following specific questions either in prose or in bullet point format as appropriate.

1. Are the student's research progress and general progress toward the PhD degree adequate? Is a more detailed, follow-up meeting necessary?
2. Does the student display adequate knowledge of the research subject and relevant literature given the stage of the student's studies?
3. Has the student demonstrated the necessary communication skills to disseminate the student's work?

4. Does the student display adequate competence in specific research skills necessary to complete a substantial thesis in a timely manner?
5. Are the student's accomplishments to date (publications, research talks, fellowships, etc.) commensurate with the student's career goals?
6. Are the student's future plans commensurate with both producing a substantial thesis and the student's career goals?
7. Are the student's broader plans and timeline to degree reasonable and in accord with the student's career goals?
8. Does the committee have any specific tasks or items that should be addressed prior to the next committee meeting?
9. Does the committee have any other comments or suggestions that may help the student achieve their professional goals?

Detailed Scientific Follow-Up Meeting

In cases in which the student is making adequate progress according to the committee and the committee has very few serious concerns, only the initial, short meeting of the committee is necessary to satisfy the annual review requirement.

In cases in which the committee has waived the extensive research discussion, but identifies substantial concerns regarding the student's progress during the brief meeting, the committee may trigger a follow-up scientific meeting in which the student's work and progress will be reviewed in greater detail. In this case, the student will convene a meeting of the committee in which a more detailed and more lengthy review of the student's progress will take place. The committee should plan for the duration of this subsequent meeting appropriately. In this meeting, the student will present their work in a seminar format. The committee will review this work and offer comments and suggestions as needed to best enable the student to get back on track toward completion of a substantial thesis in a timely manner. The advisor will provide written feedback to the student after this follow-up meeting. In addition to the questions above, written feedback will include an itemized plan that gets the student back on track toward adequate progress toward degree and career goals.