

11.04.99.R0.23 Doctoral Advisory Committees and Dissertations



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Procedure Statement

The Graduate Council establishes basic standards for doctoral advisory committees and dissertations at Texas A&M University-Commerce.

Reason for Procedure

This procedure documents the requirements doctoral advisory committees and dissertations.

Procedures and Responsibilities

1 DOCTORAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 1.1 A doctoral advisory committee shall be appointed for each doctoral student to oversee the dissertation process from initial proposal to completion. After consulting with the student and the faculty member in question, the head of the major department shall appoint one faculty member from the major field as the dissertation advisor. After consultation with the advisor and the student, the department head shall approve at least one or two other department members to serve on the committee.
- 1.2 The minor requirement can be fulfilled by one of the following options:
 - 1.2.1 A comprehensive minor with all course work in one academic area. A committee member will be assigned from the academic area and will determine the courses to be taken and will be involved in evaluating the written and oral qualifying examinations, the dissertation and the dissertation defense.
 - 1.2.2 A split minor in two academic areas with at least four courses in each area (a 6-4 or 5-5 format). Committee members will be assigned from both academic areas, and they will determine the courses to be taken and will be involved in the written and oral qualifying examinations, the dissertation and the dissertation defense.

- 1.2.3 An interdisciplinary studies minor in three academic areas (a 4-3-3 format). In rare cases an interdisciplinary studies minor, consisting of at least three courses in each of three academic areas, may be approved. Committee members will be assigned from each of the academic areas and will be involved in the written and oral qualifying examinations, the dissertation and the dissertation defense.
- 1.2.4 Regardless of the option chosen, the following conditions will apply: assignment of minor advisors rests with the head of the minor department or departments; all courses applied to the minor areas must be approved by the head of the appropriate minor department and at least one committee member must be from outside the student's major department.
- 1.3 At the discretion of the head of the major department, in consultation with the student and the advisor, other graduate faculty from the department or outside may also be requested to serve on the committee whenever their services are thought to be advisable.
- 1.4 All committee appointments described above shall be forwarded to the Dean for Graduate Studies, who has the right to approve or disapprove. In the case of disapproval, the dean shall provide a written explanation to the head of the major department and to the advisor.
- 1.5 The Dean of Graduate Studies may appoint one other member of the dissertation committee. This member shall be selected with the advice and consent of both the head of the major department and the dissertation advisor. If such member is appointed, he/she is to be involved throughout the entire dissertation process and is charged with bringing significant and helpful cross-disciplinary perspectives to bear on the research and writing of the dissertation.
- 1.6 In no case shall the committee have more than six members.

2 THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

- 2.1 After the full committee has been appointed, a date for the formal dissertation proposal shall be set by the dissertation advisor in consultation with the student and the committee. This date shall be publicized to all departments and graduate faculty members by the Office of the Dean for Graduate Studies.
- 2.2 Each department offering a doctoral degree is responsible for developing its own procedures leading to the production of the doctoral dissertation proposal. All procedures should allow for significant input from all members of the student's committee.
- 2.3 When the advisor and committee conclude that the student is adequately prepared, the student shall officially present the proposal at a meeting of at least the dissertation committee. This meeting shall be open to all members of the graduate faculty of the University. It shall be publicized to all graduate faculty by the Office of Graduate Studies. At the department's discretion, such proposal presentations may be opened to other graduate students. The Dean for Graduate Studies may send a representative who is familiar with the proposal.

- 2.4 At this meeting, the committee shall investigate the adequacy of the dissertation topic, methodology and the student's preparation for completing the research successfully. Each department offering the doctorate shall have its own procedures for determining whether a proposal is accepted or rejected.
- 2.5 Once a proposal is accepted at the department level, the dissertation proposal form shall be forwarded to the Dean for Graduate Studies. This form shall include: (1) the topic of the dissertation, (2) the methodology to be followed and its appropriateness, and (3) the topic's significance as a contribution to knowledge in the field. The proposal is to be written in a manner designed to explain the topic's significance to non-specialists.
- 2.6 The Dean for Graduate Studies shall then approve or disapprove the dissertation proposal. If the proposal is disapproved, the dean shall provide to the student and the dissertation advisor a written explanation of the reasons for the disapproval. The proposal will then be revised and resubmitted for evaluation.

3 NATURE OF THE DISSERTATION

- 3.1 A dissertation is designed both:
 - 3.1.1 To demonstrate the student's superior academic competence and scholarship, including the ability to carry out research in the field of specialization.
 - 3.1.2 To contribute significantly to the knowledge of that field.
- 3.2 The topic, the methodology and the topic's significance must be judged by the criteria that constitutes acceptable research among practicing scholars in the discipline.
- 3.3 A suitable dissertation topic must have the potential to do at least one of the following:
 - 3.3.1 Uncover new and significant facts or principles
 - 3.3.2 Test a significant theory still in doubt by collecting and interpreting relevant data
 - 3.3.3 Suggest previously unrecognized relationships
 - 3.3.4 Challenge existing truths or assumptions
 - 3.3.5 Afford further insights into little-understood phenomena
 - 3.3.6 Suggest new interpretations of known facts that can alter in some way the body of knowledge that constitutes the field.

4 FINAL ORAL DEFENSE

- 4.1 When the dissertation advisory committee is satisfied with the written product, a date acceptable to all concerned shall be chosen for the final oral defense. Graduation date may not be less than eight months after the student's admission to candidacy, nor more than ten years after admission into the doctoral program.

- 4.2 The Dean for Graduate Studies must be notified of the time, date and place of the defense. The Office of Graduate Studies will publicize this information to all graduate faculty.
- 4.3 A satisfactory defense is required for the approval of the dissertation. The defense is administered upon recommendation of the candidate's advisory committee after course work, comprehensive examinations and dissertation requirements have been fulfilled. It is a rigorous examination of the dissertation.
- 4.4 It is expected that the entire advisory committee will participate in the examination. The examination is open to all members of the graduate faculty. Visitors may ask questions, but final determination of the student's performance rests with the advisory committee. The Dean for Graduate Studies or a designated representative of Graduate Faculty may attend the defense.

5 DISSERTATION MANUSCRIPT FORM

The Office of Graduate Studies is responsible for maintaining current and appropriate standards for the format of the dissertation. Current requirements are posted on the Graduate Studies website.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements (Required)

System Policy [*11.04 Admissions Standards*](#)

Contact Office

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