

**College of Education Dissertation Manual:
A Guide for Faculty Mentoring Students**

**UNM College of Education
Faculty Graduate Committee
Revised Fall 2007**

A Dissertation Manual: A Guide for Faculty Mentoring Students

Preface

This guide was created by the UNM College of Education 1998-1999 Graduate Committee. It was revised in 2000 and again during fall 2007. Our aspiration was to develop a document that would serve as a brief review of some philosophies, practices, and helpful advice on mentoring doctoral students and conducting the dissertation process. It is a guide that may be particularly useful to faculty who are new to UNM and the College of Education (COE), although many veteran faculty also may find it useful.

The guide has two parts:

- The first and foremost is a "recommended practices" section. In a College as diverse as ours there are numerous variations on how to conduct a dissertation. You may find yourself agreeing with some ideas in this section and other sentiments you may not endorse as wholeheartedly. Keep in mind that these ideas are not policy statements. They are intended only to provide you with ideas from your colleagues based on their experiences on how best to conduct and advise a dissertation.
- In contrast, the second section is a brief summation of some important policies and procedures that govern the conduct of dissertation research as determined by the UNM Senate Graduate Committee and administered by the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS). Also, in the second section is information on how faculty and students can access the exact details of these regulations and policies.

Recommended Practices in the Dissertation Process

The Role of the Dissertation Chairperson

Chairing a doctoral student's dissertation is a unique role instilled with tradition and individual idiosyncrasies. Most of us probably learned how to chair a dissertation by doing what our dissertation chair did (or by trying to avoid what we despised about what our dissertation chair did). The aim of the following paragraphs is to articulate some themes and ideas that may broaden our dissertation chairing repertoire.

Who qualifies to chair a dissertation? The short answer to this question is any regular (tenured or tenure-track) faculty member who has been approved for graduate instruction by the COE Graduate Committee in consultation with the COE Dean and approved for committee service by the UNM Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies. (See Approval Request for Committee Service form at: http://www.unm.edu/~grad/eforms/approval_for_committee_service.pdf.) However, some programs and departments within the College of Education have more stringent guidelines for who qualifies to chair a dissertation. For example, some programs specify that a chairperson must have the requisite understanding of the dissertation process to guide students through the dissertation. This guideline safeguards newer faculty from becoming overburdened with numerous requests to chair dissertations.

Some programs and/or departments promote the use of "co-chairs" to mentor a first-time chairperson through the process. A co-chair is also appropriate in situations in which a committee member is asked to provide time and effort beyond the expectations of a regular committee member. This kind of situation occurs sometimes with faculty who have expertise in methodology or statistics or subject-matter expertise and are asked to volunteer considerable time and talent to the project.

Sometimes untenured faculty feel uncomfortable about chairing a dissertation when the committee is composed of senior faculty, particularly when those senior faculty may eventually be deciding the untenured faculty member's tenure and promotion status. Theoretically, dissertations and tenure and promotion decisions are separate issues; dissertations are about students; tenure and promotion are about faculty. What any faculty member has to offer should depend on competence not rank. If an untenured faculty member has concerns of any kind about chairing a dissertation, she or he could: 1.) seek the advice of her or his senior colleagues, 2.) consider chairing a limited number of dissertations, and 3.) when chairing a dissertation, consult with her or his senior colleagues liberally.

Making the commitment. Completing a dissertation is a rite of passage for graduate students and the faculty who mentor them. The dissertation process involves developmental and socialization functions in which faculty model scholarly collaboration and ultimately promote students to the "rank" of academic peers. This process requires considerable time, effort, and commitment on a faculty member's part and often leads to a lifelong relationship. Dissertation chairpersons may publish with their dissertation students and often are instrumental in helping them develop their careers by writing references and supporting them in their job applications. Because of the significant time commitment, faculty sometimes limit the number of student dissertations they chair at one time to four or five.

Some programs have a large number of doctoral students and a small number of faculty. Consequently, the demands to chair dissertations may be intense, and imposing an arbitrary limit on the number of dissertations an individual may chair may be impractical. The issue is more a concern about quality than an issue of quantity. Each faculty member must decide the point at which his or her mentoring and leadership becomes diluted or ineffective because of over commitment and subsequent inability to provide for individual student needs.

One guideline for deciding whether to chair a dissertation is to avoid chairing a dissertation committee that is on a topic outside the faculty member's expertise or competence. Chairing a dissertation on an unfamiliar topic requires the faculty member to acquire background in the content area in addition to mastering and mentoring the process. This additional obligation adds extra work to an already labor-intensive process and imposes limits on the quality of direction a chair can offer a student.

Deciding to chair a student's dissertation should be based in part on the degree of compatibility between the student and faculty mentor, given the demands and intensity of the student-mentor relationship. Building a student's competence can be a rigorous process. Motivating students through praise, constructive criticism, and goal-setting are all part of the job. Some students are not prepared for accepting

feedback and constructive criticism and may present considerable challenge to the chairperson's patience. It's important to establish expectations at the onset so that a student (and the prospective chairperson) can make an informed choice about the faculty member's suitability as a chairperson for that particular student. Some faculty find it useful to document the agreements they make with students. At a minimum a verbal agreement should be established.

Preparing for proposal hearings and dissertation defenses. One of the dissertation chair's responsibilities is to determine when a student's proposal and/or defense is ready to be presented to the full dissertation committee. A proposal hearing or defense is scheduled only after the chair approves the dissertation proposal or dissertation. It's important to keep in mind that a dissertation reflects on the chairperson as well as the student. The chairperson exercises the authority of determining when a proposal or defense is ready to go to the full committee.

It is important to encourage students to consult with committee members so the committee is given an opportunity to have input into and oversight of the project. Many dissertation committee faculty enjoy providing verbal input and involvement in the development of the dissertation idea but prefer not to edit or review unedited drafts of proposals and defense manuscripts. Moreover, many faculty resent premature meetings because they can result in contention over theory, research design, and appropriate analytic techniques when a student is unclear about her or his intentions. This can be a frustrating experience for faculty and, more importantly, for the student. Fostering communication between committee members and developing a general consensus of committee members' opinions prior to scheduling a proposal hearing or defense helps students and the chairperson to anticipate issues that may be raised during the meeting. This communication is the responsibility of the chairperson. Committee members generally expect to receive a penultimate draft of the proposal or dissertation two to three weeks prior to the scheduled date of the proposal hearing or dissertation defense but this timeline varies by department and program.

Sometimes a student and his or her chairperson reach a point in dissertation planning in which they need to convene a kind of pre-proposal meeting to consolidate differing opinions or to get the input or support of the dissertation committee members for a particularly difficult issue. When this is done, the chair should explicitly state and have the concurrence of the other dissertation committee faculty that the purpose of the meeting is to move a step closer to a proposal hearing rather than determine the merits of or approve the proposal. Such a meeting is arranged informally and requires no official paperwork or documentation.

Conducting proposal hearings and dissertation defenses. The dissertation chairperson has several responsibilities during the proposal hearing and dissertation defense. To begin, the chairperson facilitates the process by setting the agenda and keeping the meeting on schedule. For example, the chairperson typically starts the meeting by noting the time allotted for the meeting (usually 2 hours) and the various parts of the meeting (student presentation, questions & discussion, deliberations). One unique feature of a proposal hearing is that many chairpersons prefer to assert that the agreed upon proposal is a contract between student and committee. Because of this the proposal hearing is often more critical than the dissertation defense in terms of

encouraging committee members to clearly make their suggestions and changes to the research methodology.

After this introduction the doctoral student should be given responsibility for the content of the meeting and, whenever possible, be granted the opportunity to conduct the meeting. At this point the chairperson needs to take notes on what suggestions and changes the committee seeks. (Some chairpersons prefer to tape record the proceedings.) It's important to let the committee do its job and improve the project. Chairpersons should intercede only when the project is losing focus by committee suggestions that would make the project too expansive or overly simplified, or on those rare occasions when a student is overwhelmed by faculty criticism. Sometimes faculty need to be reminded by the committee chair that the project is the student's and that gratuitous changes to a satisfactory proposal simply complicate matters. Because proposals and dissertations are announced broadly, faculty, students, and other visitors may attend dissertation proposal hearings and dissertation defenses. At both the hearing and the defense, it is important to provide these visitors an opportunity to ask questions and voice their opinions before the dissertation committee adjourns for deliberations on the fate of the dissertation.

The chair concludes the meeting by clarifying expectations and the process for final approval of the dissertation proposal. Issues such as details about the quality of the study as reflected in research design (e.g., sample size), whether committee members expect to review drafts, the timetable for the study, and how and who will monitor changes to the study should be discussed and agreed upon before the meeting concludes. In some cases an additional proposal hearing is necessary. In other instances, the chairperson is authorized by the committee to review and approve revisions. The proposal is not accepted until committee members affix their signatures to a form that reports the results of the proposal hearing. See the Department Administrator for this form.

When the dissertation proposal is approved it should be regarded as a contract between the student and the dissertation committee. Both have the responsibility of meeting the terms of this contract. Approval of the dissertation proposal does not automatically infer that the dissertation defense also will be approved. The student still must work diligently through to the end of the dissertation process to earn her/his doctorate.

Working with Doctoral Dissertation Students

The Proposal Stage. One of the important first steps as a dissertation chairperson is discussing with the student his or her responsibilities related to the dissertation process. In particular, students are responsible for attending to the paperwork related to their dissertation and graduation. The chairperson should encourage students to become familiar with the paperwork requirements and scheduling deadlines in their department and the College of Education and in the Office of Graduate Studies (www.ogs.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html). For example, a COE policy is that the student's committee members must be approved prior to the announcement of the proposal hearing, and the proposal hearing announcement must go out two weeks before the actual date of the hearing. (See guidelines at: <http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html>). The chairperson should discuss this

process with the student so the student can work with the Department Administrator (or Department Administrative Assistant) to ensure these requirements are met.

Students and dissertation chairs typically discuss the selection of committee members. The chairperson should discuss this selection early so that the student may obtain the department chair's approval of committee members at least two weeks prior to the announcement of the proposal hearing. Although compatibility of faculty is an important issue, care should be exercised to avoid uniformity or a lack of diversity in committee representation. It is more important to select committee members who have expertise, competency, and the willingness to offer their time. However, it is probably preferable for students to seek committee members with whom they have had some experience. Inviting people unknown by the student or the chair injects a degree of uncertainty into the process which may unduly complicate the committee's work.

Students often have excellent ideas for research; however, they may be too big and unmanageable within the scope of a dissertation. The role of the chairperson is to help students focus on a study that is within the time limits and resource constraints placed on them. Raising appropriate questions will help students think about the parameters of a do-able dissertation. One of the very valuable resources the chairperson can suggest is a review of Dissertation Abstracts so that students can see what their peers have accomplished and the types of dissertations that have been accepted by other universities.

It is important to assist students in developing an idea they have a passion for, to help them articulate researchable questions, and to assist in formulating an appropriate research methodology. A dissertation chairperson is often invaluable in assisting students in developing dissertation research that will ultimately enhance the student's prospects for advancement in the field. Moreover, the chairperson has the responsibility for making sure the proposed research methodology is consistent with the type of research questions asked and that students have the necessary competencies to conduct the proposed study.

Early in the proposal stage, the chairperson should discuss with the student the giving and receiving of feedback. Not only should there be discussion about how feedback will be given (e.g., face-to-face, via email, etc.), but also about how often and at what points in the process. It is critical that the student understands that feedback is given to improve the dissertation and not to stall the process. Therefore, the chairperson must provide constructive criticism, giving clear explanations on how the dissertation can be revised and improved. If the chairperson expects the student to address the feedback given, that expectation must be clearly communicated (preferably in writing) to the student. It is important to give both praise and constructive criticism.

While programs have different requirements for the dissertation proposal format, several programs within the College require the completion of dissertation chapters one, two, and three, and a draft of the Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects) proposal, prior to the dissertation proposal hearing. Even though the requirements of individual programs may differ, it is important that the dissertation proposal be well developed, particularly the methods chapter, if it is to be considered a contract between the dissertation committee and the student. When the proposal is not fully developed and the student is unsure about the proposal, the chairperson and the student can have problems at the dissertation defense if a committee member says that he or she doesn't

agree with the study.

Finally, it is very important to establish ownership and expectations about publication at the onset of a dissertation. Students should be encouraged to publish their research because dissemination of research is part of the scholarly endeavor. There is a variety of opinions about publication credit and dissertations among the faculty in the College and nationwide. In some departments, students are sole authors on publications stemming from their dissertations. In other departments, they are first authors on such publications. *Authorship and data ownership credit is important to discuss prior to the beginning of the dissertation process.* Professional ethics and standards are provided by some professional organizations (e.g., the American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code1992.html>) and may be covered by the University's "intellectual property" regulations. (See UNM Intellectual Property Policy in the Faculty Handbook: <http://www.unm.edu/%7ehandbook/E70.html>.)

The Dissertation Stage. Effective and clear communication between the chairperson and student is critical during this stage. The chair provides guidance and feedback as the student engages in data collection, analysis, interpretation, etc. The chairperson should be encouraging and supportive and provide or point out resources, while avoiding the fostering of dependence. Remember that the developmental goal of a dissertation is to foster an autonomous peer.

It is important that the student maintain regular contact with the chairperson and keep the chairperson and committee members informed about the progress of the dissertation. Students should be encouraged to seek input from committee members, but they should not have committee members read chapters until the chairperson has read and approved them. Because the chairperson must assign a grade of "PR" for progress at the end of each term until the dissertation is completed, it is recommended that s/he have the student document in writing the progress made at the end of each term. Students must inform the chairperson and committee members of any major changes, such as being gone for a term.

During data analysis, it is usually very helpful for both the student and chairperson to review the data together. In this way the chairperson can assist the student with the data analysis especially where there may be problems. Students may need help in thinking about the data; a meeting with the chair helps students articulate what they believe the data are representing and helps the chairperson become familiar with the findings. As a general rule, students should do research and analyses that they understand and can do themselves. Controversy surrounds the issue of hiring outside consultants to assist students with statistical analyses. Faculty have expressed different points of view on this issue. Some faculty vehemently object to this practice noting that this is the heart of doing original research so students must know how to do the statistics related to their study. Others feel that if the research methodology is very complex, and students have no training in it, then it may be appropriate to hire an outside consultant to run the statistics as long as the student is responsible for understanding the analyses and procedures for writing up the results. If an outside consultant is to be hired, the chair should notify the dissertation committee of this decision.

Students sometimes struggle with organizational details such as setting up a schedule and organizing resources. The chairperson should offer advice on how to develop and maintain an organizational system for the dissertation. S/he can provide suggestions for methods of indexing for a literature review such as setting up a filing system using index cards and color coding them or using a computer program for indexing, setting up data files and naming variables, and developing regular writing habits. It is critical that students write regularly and not procrastinate. Last, it is important to help students set realistic time goals for the dissertation and to recognize faculty time limitations and schedules, such as summer schedules. Committee members should be given at least two weeks for reading and providing feedback.

Students have a wide variety of writing skills and talents. Many students struggle with writing, and editing manuscripts for these students can be an onerous task. The chairperson should not have to do extensive rewriting of students' work. S/He should discuss writing skills and abilities openly with students and where writing skills are problematic, recommend hiring an editor. S/He also might suggest that students take advantage of the College of Education Graduate Student Writing Studio for writing support. The Writing Studio provides one-on-one assistance and workshops at no charge.

Ensuring Student Responsibility for the Quality of the Dissertation

The relationship between the role of the dissertation chair and the quality of the dissertation can create a dilemma for all faculty mentors. The dissertation and graduate student requires faculty input and direction, but when does faculty input become excessively large to make the dissertation just as much, if not more, the result of the faculty chair as of the student?

The fact is that the dissertation is to be a test of the student's abilities and competencies to apply research theory and skills acquired in class to a real research experience. The dissertation represents an important process and experience that is as important a part of the student's education as is course content. Like coursework, the dissertation is assessed, with the possibility of a failing grade for work that is below expectations.

Faculty from each program and department are encouraged to develop their own policies and procedures to the extent that faculty can help the students in the process of the dissertation. Faculty need to be aware of the counterproductive influence of excessive control and direction in the dissertation. Yes, there is a need for direction and training, but the student should not be overly reliant on this direction throughout the phases of data collection, post collection data processing, interpretation of results, and writing.

Experienced and skilled faculty mentors seem to migrate to a comfortable balance between direction and freedom for student accomplishments. Faculty who are less experienced with chairing dissertation committees should co-chair with more experienced faculty so that such balanced student-faculty mentoring can be nurtured.

Finally, as the dissertation is a part of graduate education, program and department faculty need to share opinions and develop policies and procedures that clearly delineate the conditions of progress in a dissertation that is and is not satisfactory. Such

policies and procedures also should be shared with the graduate student undertaking the dissertation so that everyone understands student and faculty expectations with the dissertation.

Faculty also are encouraged to develop their own program or department assessment form to support the assessment material from the Office of Graduate Studies for the dissertation defense. Such a form could contain the following questions and a comment and/or scoring space.

- How involved was the student in the development of the research question?
- Was the student trained and competent in all aspects of data collection?
- Was the student self-sufficient in data collection?
- Did the student correctly adhere to all aspects of human subjects' research requirements?
- Was the student competent in organizing and managing data?
- Was the student competent in processing data?
- Was the student competent in statistical procedures?
- Did the student correctly interpret the data?
- To what extent does the finished work contribute to the discipline?
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Given that the assessment for the dissertation is fail, pass, or pass with distinction, such an additional evaluation form is valuable for justifying or not supporting distinction. The responses to the questions on the form also could support crucial feedback to the student after the dissertation defense.

The Role and Responsibilities of Committee Members

Agreeing to serve on a dissertation committee involves a variety of responsibilities. Primarily dissertation committee members provide consultation. Sometimes students turn to committee members for assistance on issues they should be working out with their chairperson. Committee members should provide feedback as appropriate but also refer students to the chairperson for further discussion. It is important to avoid doing the job of the chairperson. Committee members should avoid subverting the chairperson's authority or situations in which they are providing significant guidance and instruction for a student (comparable to that of a chairperson) and not receiving credit for their effort.

As mentioned earlier in this document, dissertation committee members in the College of Education have different expectations about reviewing and editing proposals and final dissertations. Some committee members want to be involved in all phases of editing the document. Others much prefer to see only the final draft after the chairperson has made editorial corrections. It is a good idea to clarify with students as well as the chairperson your preference for reviewing drafts and providing feedback.

Dissertation committee members ordinarily are provided a minimum of two weeks to review draft proposals and final dissertations. It is important to read the dissertation proposal or final draft well before the hearing or defense date. Should you find that the document is significantly flawed, professional courtesy recommends communicating concerns to the student and/or chairperson prior to a proposal hearing or final dissertation defense. This way they can be prepared for the concerns raised. In some

cases, it may be necessary to postpone the proposal hearing or dissertation defense if there are major problems. Dissertation committee members provide "quality control" over the dissertation process and outcome. This is an important responsibility and one that requires the courage to dissent when necessary while also maintaining diplomacy. It is important to recognize the value of diverse opinions in the dissertation process; intellectual stimulation is dependent on it. Constructive criticism and feedback are invited. Moreover, committee members have both the right and responsibility to raise objections and seek changes to a dissertation proposal or a completed dissertation that does not meet expectations.

Infrequently, what appear to be irreconcilable differences develop among the dissertation committee members and the possibility of a committee member resigning from a committee may be raised. Resignation or dismissal of a committee member is an exceedingly rare and undesirable event and some assert that it should never happen. In all committee relations it is important to employ tact and respect, and this principle is especially true of dissertation collaborations. The chairperson should work to prevent misunderstandings by avoiding assumptions and communicating expectations explicitly to fellow committee members. Committee members do have the right to resign from a committee for any number of reasons, including time and commitment limitations, irreconcilable philosophical differences, or undesirable friction with other committee members. The decision to ask a committee member to step down is the student's. Should this occur, however, the chairperson should make sure the dismissed committee member is informed of his or her dismissal and given an explanation for the dismissal. Should a student opt to dismiss a committee member, it may be advisable to include an explanation of this dismissal in the student's file. In the event of changes in committee members, OGS requires a revised Approval of Dissertation Committee form and a memo of explanation if the student is within three months of defending the dissertation.

Policies & Procedures

An Itinerary of the Order and Scheduling of Dissertation Events (Faculty and Student Responsibilities)

In order to take the comprehensive exam, a student must be enrolled in UNM and have announced the comprehensive exam. Following completion and approval of the comprehensive exam, the paperwork processes for completing the doctoral degree begin: **Please note that students are responsible for attending to all dissertation-related paperwork.**

1. A student is advanced to Candidacy by the Dean of Graduate Studies after the approval of the 1) Application for Candidacy for the Doctoral or M.F.A. Degree, including a list of all coursework required for the degree; (2) Certification of Language or Research Skill Requirement form; (3) record of having passed the comprehensive examination; and 4) submission of Dissertation Committee form (available on website).
2. When the student passes the doctoral comprehensive exam, the time limit of five years for completion of all degree requirements starts.
3. The Dissertation Committee is proposed and reviewed by program faculty and the department chair at least two weeks before the announcement of the dissertation proposal hearing.
4. The Announcement of the Dissertation Proposal Hearing form must be submitted by the department administrator to the Dean's office two weeks prior to the scheduled hearing. An announcement is posted on COE faculty and graduate student listserves and in the department office.
5. Following the Proposal Hearing, approval of the proposal is signified by signatures of the dissertation committee and the department chair.
6. The student submits the following to the Office of Research Ethics and Compliance for approval before beginning the study: IRB (Institutional Review Board) proposal, a copy of the dissertation proposal, and a copy of the signed approval form from the Proposal Hearing. In addition, both the student and the committee chair must have completed online IRB training prior to submission of materials. Go to <http://research.unm.edu/recs/CollaborativeIRBTrainingInitiative.htm> for more information.
7. The student informs the program of her/his intent to graduate prior to the OGS deadline (March 1 for summer graduation, July 1 for Fall graduation, October 1 for Spring graduation). This ensures that the student's name is added to the list of potential graduates.
8. The student must enroll in "Dissertation: 699" every term (exclusive of

summer term) until graduation. The only exception to this is if the student is graduating in summer term. Then enrollment in 699 is required.

9. The Announcement of Final Examination for Doctorate (dissertation defense) must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies by the department administrator two weeks prior to the scheduled date. Note that some departments require additional time for preparation of the form. The form must be distributed College-wide and posted on College faculty and graduate student listserves by the department administrator two weeks prior to the date of defense. OGS posts defense announcements at <http://www4.unm.edu/grad/main/dissertation/dissertation.php>.
10. Conduct the open defense hearing at announced time and place.
11. Once a manuscript is passed, it must be submitted to OGS within 90 days of the dissertation defense or the student will have to re-defend.

Abstract of the most relevant Policies Specified by the Office of Graduate Studies

1. Dissertation policies take effect with the student's **Advancement to Candidacy** by the Dean of Graduate Studies (Doctoral Student advances to Doctoral Candidate).
2. **Time Limit for Completion of Degree Requirements.** Doctoral candidates have five calendar years from the date on which they pass their comprehensive exam to complete all degree requirements. The final requirement is generally the acceptance of the student's dissertation manuscript by the Dean of Graduate Studies.
3. **Continuous Enrollment.** Once a student has enrolled for dissertation (699) hours, continuous enrollment is expected in subsequent terms (exclusive of summer terms unless graduating in summer) until the dissertation is accepted by the Dean of Graduate Studies.
4. **Dissertation Committee.** Each doctoral candidate must prepare a dissertation. The Dissertation Committee is charged with the supervision of a doctoral candidate's dissertation activities, including the review and approval of the student's research proposal. The committee may include faculty members who were on the student's Committee on Studies. The doctoral candidate initiates the process of selecting the dissertation committee by first arranging for a qualified faculty member to serve as the director of the dissertation and as the committee chair. The faculty director advises the doctoral candidate on selection of the remainder of the committee.
 - a. **Composition of the Dissertation Committee.** The committee will consist of at least four members approved for graduate instruction by the Dean of Graduate Studies. http://www.unm.edu/grad/eforms/approval_for_committee_service.pdf.
 - (1) At least two members must hold regular, full-time faculty appointments at UNM.
 - (2) At least one member must be from the student's graduate unit.
 - (3) The dissertation director must be a regular (tenured or tenure-track), full-time member of the UNM faculty.
 - (4) A required external member must hold a regular, full-time appointment outside the student's program at UNM. This member may be from UNM or from another accredited institution.
 - (5) One of the committee members may be a non-faculty expert in the student's major research area.
 - b. **Appointment of the Dissertation Committee.** The student arranges for an appropriate faculty member to serve as committee chair. The student and the

committee chair agree upon the remaining members of the committee. The committee must be approved by the graduate unit chair or graduate unit advisor, as evidenced by his or her signature on the student's Application for Doctoral Candidacy. The committee must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies as part of the approval of the Candidacy Application.

5. **General Requirements for a doctoral degree.** A student must complete all course work requirements; fulfill any additional department or graduate unit requirements (e.g., foreign language or skill requirement, practicum, etc.); maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher; pass the doctoral comprehensive exam, apply for candidacy to the Office of Graduate Studies; pass the Final Examination for the Doctorate; have a dissertation approved by the majority of the members of the dissertation committee and by the Dean of Graduate Studies.
6. **Defense.** The doctoral final oral examination is the last formal step before the degree is awarded. The focus of the final examination is the dissertation and its relationship to the student's major field.

At least two weeks before the final examination is held, the major graduate unit must notify the Office of Graduate Studies of its scheduled date by submitting an Announcement of Exam form. The student is responsible for providing each member of the dissertation committee with a complete copy of the dissertation in ample time for review and at least two weeks prior to the examination.

The presentation and examination phases of the exam are open to the community; the deliberation phase is only open to the committee. At the conclusion of the examination, the dissertation committee members will confer and make one of the following recommendations, which must be agreed upon by the majority of them: that the dissertation be approved without change; that the dissertation be approved subject only to minor editorial corrections; or that the dissertation be rewritten or revised before approval. In addition, the committee members determine whether to award distinction to approved dissertations.