

 <p>UNIVERSITY of DENVER</p> <p>OFFICE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION</p>	
<p>Policy: Dissertation and Thesis Committee policy</p>	<p>Version date: 10/23/2018 Previous version date: 5/29/18</p>
<p>Reviewed and Approved by:</p> <p>Corinne Lengsfeld, PhD Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Education</p> <p>Date: 10/23/18</p>	<p>Reviewed and Approved by:</p> <p>Graduate Council Date: 11/7/18</p>

<http://bulletin.du.edu/graduate/academic-requirements-policies-and-procedures/doctoral-degree-requirements/doctoral-dissertation/>

Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation represents the culminating research experience for doctorate of philosophy students through which degree candidates are expected to complete quality original scholarship that contributes to the theoretical/research knowledge base of the candidate's field of study. The college, school or department determines the amount of credit allowed for research and work on the dissertation. Students should consult the Office of Graduate Education on [instructions regarding how to prepare and format the dissertation](#).

The Graduate School of Professional Psychology requires their doctorate of psychology candidates to complete a doctoral paper instead of a dissertation.

The Morgridge College of Education requires their doctorate of education candidates to complete a doctoral paper instead of a dissertation.

Program-Level Dissertation Proposal Committee

All candidates for the doctorate of philosophy degree must have a dissertation director who is in the student's graduate program. Programs may require that dissertation proposals be approved by or defended before a committee within the department. Programs reserve the right to determine the composition of the dissertation proposal committee. However, only those who meet the following University requirements may serve as voting members of the oral defense committee.

Doctoral Dissertation Oral Defense Committee

The doctoral candidate's dissertation oral defense committee will be submitted to the Office of Graduate Education for approval by the Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Education. OGE staff will review the committee to ensure that it meets University policies and the Vice Provost will work with the department/program chair to resolve any concerns that the proposed committee may not adhere to University policies.

Prior to coming to OGE the department/program chair is responsible for confirming the committee membership is appropriate for the dissertation subject matter and for supporting the student's academic needs. If rejected by the chair or the Vice Provost, the dean or designee can review an appeal of committee membership.

The [Thesis/Dissertation Oral Defense Committee Recommendation](#) form should be returned to the Office of Graduate Education as soon as the dissertation proposal has been approved or 30 days following IRB submission but no later than the first day of the quarter in which the student expects to complete the degree.

Composition

Dissertation Director

The dissertation director is ordinarily a tenure-line or research faculty member of the candidate's graduate program. Under some circumstances, faculty with other designations (e.g., clinical) can serve as the dissertation director with approval of the department/program chair and dean/designee. The process for approval is the same as for other committee members (see below).

It is the dissertation director's responsibility to ensure that the student's research meets appropriate academic standards for the discipline in which the degree is being conferred. The dissertation director is a voting member of the committee.

Committee Members

The committee is composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of six voting members, including the dissertation director. This includes the dissertation director but does not include the Oral Defense Committee Chair, who is a non-voting committee member. Tenure-line and research faculty from DU (or approved Iliff faculty for students in the DU-Iliff Joint PhD program), including those outside the student's program, are automatically eligible to serve on dissertation committees if the dissertation subject is appropriate to their field of expertise.

Faculty with other designations (e.g., clinical, teaching, professor of the practice) are eligible to serve as voting members of the committee if they have been actively¹ involved in research and scholarship in a relevant field and meet the following requirements:

1. Possession of the research doctorate, terminal degree in the field, or equivalent record of research, scholarship, or achievement appropriate for the program; and
2. Professional productivity as evidenced by achievement such as:
 - Publication of a book or books recognized in the field as scholarly work;
 - Publication of articles in recognized, peer-reviewed scholarly journals;
 - Publication of articles in conference proceedings;
 - Current award or completion of an externally-funded project (e.g. grant recipient or program manager);
 - Possess national eminence in the topic field;
 - Juried performances, exhibitions, or creative works that have received significant regional, national, or international recognition.

Department/Program chairs should submit the CV of an individual to the dean or designee for approval. Once approved, the Office of Graduate Education will maintain these approved lists for individual programs for three years without additional review.

Individuals from other institutions may serve as voting members (not director) of the committee. If in a tenure-track or research faculty position in a relevant field at a university or research position in a National Laboratory, they are automatically eligible. If not, individuals must submit a current CV through the department chair for approval by the dean/designee. Once approved,

¹ Actively is defined as contributing to research in the last three to five years

the Office of Graduate Education will maintain these approved lists for individual programs. No more than one committee member can come from outside DU, with the exception of the DU-Iliff joint PhD program, in which case multiple members may come from Iliff.

Oral Defense Committee Chair

The role of the oral defense committee chair is to ensure a fair examination process that adheres to the policies outlined in the Graduate Bulletin. The chair should provide a non-specialist's perspective on the quality of the dissertation. The chair must be familiar with the standards for doctoral research and should have some general knowledge of the topic of the student's dissertation. The chair is expected to have read the dissertation prior to the defense and to participate in the defense as their academic expertise permits, but the chair is not a voting member.

The committee chair must be a tenured member of the DU faculty and must be from a department, school, or college other than that of the candidate². There will be no exceptions to this element of the policy. When a doctoral degree is interdisciplinary, the defense committee chair should whenever possible be from a discipline not represented in the degree. Exceptions to this policy can be approved by the dean or designee when accompanied by a conflict of interest disclosure. Those faculty holding only courtesy appointments in a program are not considered "within" the program.

It is the responsibility of the student and dissertation director to find an appropriate oral defense committee chair who meets these requirements and agrees to serve. In case of difficulty reaching agreement, the chair of the department/program will make a decision. This decision is not appealable.

Appeal of Defense Committee Composition

If the department/program chair rejects the composition of the dissertation committee, the student can appeal to the dean or designee. The appeal should include CVs of each proposed committee member, along with a statement explaining why the student believes the composition of the committee is appropriate for the project. The appeal must be signed by the dissertation director to confirm their agreement with the student's proposed committee.

The dean or designee will review the appeal and respond in writing to approve or reject the committee within 10 business days. The decision is final and not subject to appeal.

Unit-Specific Requirements

Schools and departments reserve the right to establish additional requirements that exceed the University standards. It is the student's responsibility to determine whether or not the unit has requirements in addition to University policy and the unit's responsibility to ensure that those requirements have been met before submitting the Oral Defense Committee Recommendation form to the Office of Graduate Education.

² Students in the DU-Iliff Joint PhD program may have an outside chair from the Iliff School of Theology, but that faculty member must be outside of the field of specialization represented by the student's dissertation.

Doctoral Dissertation Oral Defense

An oral defense of the dissertation is required and is conducted by the candidate's oral defense committee. The defense is concerned primarily with the dissertation or research project but also may include such other information in the major field as the committee deems pertinent. The defense must be held at least three weeks before the end of the quarter in which the degree is to be granted. All members of the defense committee must receive a copy of the candidate's dissertation at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense.

The defense is expected to be held with the student present in person at DU unless extenuating circumstances make it impossible for the student to be physically present. Permission to hold a defense with the student participating by conference call, webcast or other medium should be obtained by petitioning the Vice Provost. Petitions for faculty members to participate by conference call or other medium are not required.

Scheduling of the Oral Defense

Prior to scheduling the defense, the student and dissertation director must have established the candidate's oral defense committee in compliance with the associated policies and have submitted the Thesis/Dissertation Oral Defense Committee Recommendation form to the Office of Graduate Education for review.

The student must make arrangements for the date and time of the oral defense with the dissertation director, committee and oral defense committee chair. Students must submit a completed [Schedule of Oral Defense](#) form to their academic program and the Office of Graduate Education no later than four weeks prior to the date of the defense.

Conducting the Defense

The oral defense committee chair will preside over and manage the defense process. The chair is responsible for making certain that the defense is conducted in a professional manner and that the student has a fair opportunity to defend the dissertation. The chair is expected to provide opportunities for each voting member of the oral defense committee to participate in the defense and to ensure that the defense is of high quality while remaining within proper limits of inquiry. Interested faculty members, and in accordance with departmental policy, currently enrolled graduate students also may attend the oral defense. Before or after the oral defense committee has conducted the essential examination of the candidate, questions may be asked by others present if pertinent and appropriate, as determined by the Oral Defense Committee Chair and common practice in the discipline.

When the defense is completed, the chair will request that the candidate and all other persons not on the defense committee leave the room and will call for a motion to pass or fail the candidate. A recommendation to pass can have no more than one negative vote from members of the committee. If the motion is a recommendation to pass, the committee must then agree on the conditions of the recommendation as follows:

- **Pass with no revisions** means that only grammatical, labeling or numbering changes are required. Only a limited number of sentence additions or deletions should be necessary.

- **Pass with minor revisions** indicates that the candidate will be required to reorganize portions of the manuscript and change some of the content.
- **Pass with major revisions** means that a complete chapter or chapters must be rewritten, additional tables are required and interpreted, or the general format must be changed. Responsibility for seeing that needed revisions are made rests with the dissertation director, but committee members also may require their approval before final submission.
- **Fail** indicates that the dissertation content is not of acceptable quality or that the candidate cannot defend the research. In most cases, failing the defense results in the rejection of the student's dissertation and a new or related study usually will need to be undertaken.

A candidate who fails the oral defense may petition the department/program chair for a maximum of one re-examination. The petition should include the reason for the request and committee composition. The Chair of the program will solicit input from the committee before rendering a decision. In the case the Chair is a member of the committee the petition goes to the Dean or their designee. If granted, the re-defense must be scheduled through the Office of Graduate Education and must occur within normal timelines.

The *Result of Oral Defense* form must be signed by all committee members and returned immediately to the Office of Graduate Education. All signatures must be original. In rare occasions, when a committee member participates remotely, a faxed or scanned signature will be accepted.

<http://bulletin.du.edu/graduate/academic-requirements-policies-and-procedures/masters-degree-requirements/masters-thesis/>

Master's Thesis

The master's thesis represents the culminating research experience of the master's degree program. It is a scholarly presentation of original research that is defended as partial fulfillment of requirements for the master's degree. The college, school or department determines the amount of credit allowed for research and work on the thesis. Students should consult the Office of Graduate Education on [instructions regarding how to prepare and format the thesis](#).

Program-Level Thesis Proposal Committee

All candidates for the master's degree must have a thesis director who is a faculty member in the student's graduate program. Programs may require that thesis proposals be approved by or defended before a committee within the department or program. Programs reserve the right to determine the composition of the thesis proposal committee. However, only those individuals who meet the following University requirements may serve as voting members of the oral defense committee.

Master's Thesis Oral Defense Committee

The Masters candidate's thesis oral defense committee will be submitted to the Office of Graduate Education for approval by the Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Education. OGE staff will review the committee to ensure that it meets University policies and the Vice Provost will work with the department/program chair to resolve any concerns that the proposed committee may not adhere to University policies.

Prior to coming to OGE the department/program chair is responsible for confirming the committee membership is appropriate for the dissertation subject matter and for supporting the student's academic needs. If rejected by the chair or the Vice Provost, the dean or designee can review an appeal of committee membership. The [Thesis/Dissertation Oral Defense Committee Recommendation](#) form should be returned to the Office of Graduate Education as soon as the thesis proposal has been approved or 30 days following IRB submission but no later than the first day of the quarter in which the student expects to complete the degree.

Composition Thesis Director

The thesis director is ordinarily a tenure-line or research faculty member of the candidate's graduate program. Under some circumstances, faculty with other designations (e.g., clinical) can serve as the thesis director with approval of the department/program chair and dean/designee. The process for approval is the same as for other committee members (see below).

It is the thesis director's responsibility to ensure that the student's research meets appropriate academic standards for the discipline in which the degree is being conferred. The thesis director is a voting member of the committee.

Committee Members

The committee is composed of a minimum of two and a maximum of five voting members, including the thesis director. This includes the thesis director but does not include the Oral Defense Committee Chair, who is a non-voting committee member. Tenure-line and research faculty from DU, including those outside the student's program, are automatically eligible to serve on thesis committees if the thesis subject is appropriate to their field of expertise.

Faculty with other designations (e.g., clinical, teaching, professor of the practice) are eligible to serve as voting members of the committee if they have been actively³ involved in research and scholarship in a relevant field and meet the following requirements:

1. Possession of the research doctorate, terminal degree in the field, or equivalent record of research, scholarship, or achievement appropriate for the program; and
2. Professional productivity as evidenced by achievement such as:
 - Publication of a book or books recognized in the field as scholarly work;
 - Publication of articles in recognized, peer-reviewed scholarly journals;
 - Publication of articles in conference proceedings;
 - Current award or completion of an externally-funded project (e.g. grant recipient or program manager);
 - Possess national eminence in the topic field;
 - Juried performances, exhibitions, or creative works that have received significant regional, national, or international recognition.

Department/Program chairs should submit the CV of an individual to the dean or designee for approval. Once approved, the Office of Graduate Education will maintain these approved lists for individual programs for three years without additional review.

Individuals from other institutions may serve as voting members (not director) of the committee. If in a tenure-track or research faculty position in a relevant field at a university or research position in a National Laboratory, they are automatically eligible. If not, individuals must submit a current CV through the department chair for approval by the dean/designee. Once approved, the Office of Graduate Education will maintain these approved lists for individual programs. No more than one committee member can come from outside DU

Oral Defense Committee Chair

The role of the oral defense committee chair is to ensure a fair examination process that adheres to the policies outlined in the Graduate Bulletin. The chair should provide a non-specialist's perspective on the quality of the thesis. The chair must be familiar with the standards for master's thesis research and should have some general knowledge of the topic of the student's thesis. The chair is expected to have read the thesis prior to the defense and to participate in the defense as their academic expertise permits, but the chair is not a voting member.

The committee chair must be a tenured member of the DU faculty and must be from a department, school, or college other than that of the candidate. There will be no exceptions to this element of the policy. When a master's degree is interdisciplinary, the defense committee chair should whenever possible be from a discipline not represented in the degree. Exceptions to this policy can be approved by the dean or designee when accompanied by a conflict of interest disclosure. Those faculty holding only courtesy appointments in a program are not considered "within" the program.

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It is the responsibility of the student and thesis director to find an appropriate oral defense committee chair who meets these requirements and agrees to serve. In case of difficulty reaching agreement, the chair of the department/program will make a decision. This decision is not appealable.

Appeal of Defense Committee Composition

If the department/program chair rejects the composition of the thesis committee, the student can appeal to the dean or designee. The appeal should include CVs of each proposed committee member, along with a statement explaining why the student believes the composition of the committee is appropriate for the project. The appeal must be signed by the thesis director to confirm their agreement with the student's proposed committee.

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<http://bulletin.du.edu/graduate/academic-requirements-policies-and-procedures/masters-degree-requirements/masters-thesis-oral-defense/>

Master's Thesis Oral Defense

The candidate's oral defense committee conducts the oral defense of the master's thesis. The defense must be held at least three weeks before the end of the quarter in which the degree is to be granted.

All members of the defense committee must receive a copy of the candidate's thesis at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense.

The defense is expected to be held with the student present in person at DU, unless extenuating circumstances make it impossible for the student to be physically present. Permission to hold a defense with the student participating by conference call, webcast or other medium should be obtained by petitioning the Vice Provost. Petitions for faculty members to participate by conference call or other medium are not required.

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