

Prior to Becoming a Doctoral Chair or Committee Member

The doctoral candidate is expected to provide you with a copy of his/her prospectus before asking you to serve as a chair or member of a dissertation committee. The prospectus is a synopsis of what the candidate intends to study. It includes: a clear statement of the research problem, research question(s), and rationale (supported by literature and sources); an initial literature review; a brief description of the research method s/he plans to utilize; and a list of working references. This will provide you with evidence of the candidate's preparation for the dissertation process.

The Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee will consist of the chair and a minimum of one committee member, (though most universities require 2 or 3). All dissertation committee members must have earned a terminal degree in their field. Candidates are expected to select dissertation committee members in consultation with their chair.

The Dissertation Chair

The dissertation Chair is responsible for guiding the candidate to produce doctoral level original research in the proposed topic area and present it in a scholarly manner. The Chair should be selected on the basis of content expertise; expertise may include topic or subject matter proficiency, experience in dissertation direction (e.g. academic writing ability, research, APA), and/or methodology knowledge. The Chair is responsible for advising the candidate from the prospectus stage to the proposal stage and through the final defense of the dissertation. This process will require, but may not be limited to, the following tasks:

- Guiding the candidate in the selection of dissertation committee members
- Helping the candidate to set a realistic timeline for completion of the Dissertation
- Responsibly assigning the candidate a grade of P (pass with successful progress) or NP (no pass/progress) each term.
- Providing guidance on the research proposal structure, formatting, content and setting clear expectations for timely completion of the Proposal.
- Guiding the candidate in the appropriate selection of methods/procedures for data collection and analysis.
- Assisting the candidate in navigating the IRB approval process and the Dissertation Proposal defense process.
- Delivering timely feedback to the candidate throughout the data collection and analysis process as needed.
- Preparing the candidate for the defense process

Responsibilities of the Chair

- To provide timely and thorough guidance to a student on the various elements necessary for the planning and execution of a dissertation study.
- To recommend appropriate members to serve on the committee and to approve the times when the student may circulate chapter drafts to members of the committee.
- To advise on proposal and final defense protocols, to ensure that students and their manuscripts are adequately prepared for the proposal and the defense, to facilitate the defense, to take notes for the student at the defense, and to discuss what revisions may be needed after the defense has been concluded.
- To be accessible to candidates for dialogue in formal and/or informal meetings as needed.
- To respond to candidate's drafts in a timely basis. A reasonable guideline is no more than 5 working days turnaround time upon receipt of a draft or a response to a student within that 5 working day window if more time is needed (many universities allow for a 10-day window, though Dissertation Perfection views this window as unreasonable).
- To become familiar with the materials found in the university Dissertation Handbook, APA format, and the core documents that describe what is expected in a dissertation. This would include all pre and post proposal and final defense steps that are required of candidates.
- To either provide the editorial and citation support that students need to prepare a final, correctly edited manuscript or to make a referral to an outside resource that students can access for this purpose.
- To respect the power differential that exists between the candidate, chair and committee members, and be aware of the trust your candidate places in you as their primary mentor throughout the dissertation project.
- To be present at graduation to hood the candidate or make alternative arrangements if you are unable to attend. Chairs who feel that they can no longer provide collaborative guidance to the doctoral candidate should consult with the Doctoral Program Coordinator to determine appropriate actions.

Dissertation Committee Members

The primary criterion for selection of committee members is the suitability of the committee members for providing advice to the candidate. Committee members must have earned a terminal degree in their field. Committee members are responsible for reading dissertation drafts and providing feedback to the candidate throughout the dissertation process. This process will require, but may not be limited to the following tasks:

- Work with Chair and candidate to determine a general timeline.
- Read and provide timely feedback on drafts of chapters 1-3 to candidate (via Chair) in preparation for Proposal.
- Participate in Proposal hearing.
- Review and provide timely feedback on drafts of chapters as needed.
- Be available to candidate for consultation as needed.
- Actively participate in formal dissertation Defense process

Responsibilities of Committee Members (in collaboration with the Dissertation Chair).

- To provide timely and thorough guidance to a candidate on project development and/or manuscript drafts.
- To respond to candidate's drafts in a timely basis. A reasonable guideline is no more than 5 working days turnaround time upon receipt of a draft or a response to a student if more time is needed within that 5 working day window. It is important to keep the Chair informed of feedback being provided to candidate outside of the formal defense settings.
- To respect the power differential that exists between you and the candidate and be aware of the trust your candidate has placed in you as a member of their dissertation committee. Members who feel that they can no longer provide collaborative guidance to the student should consult with the Doctoral Program Coordinator to determine appropriate action.

References

Indiana State University (2007). <http://www2.indstate.edu/gradexpress/td-responsibilities.pdf>

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Stanford University (2014). Selecting a Chair and Committee Members. <https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/teaching-talk/selecting-dissertation-chair-andcommittee>

University of Tennessee: Learning and Leadership EdD program (2012- 2017). <http://www.utc.edu/doctorate-learningleadership/doctoralguide/dissertationprocess/committeerespons.php>