

11.99.99.R0.19 Doctoral Dissertations and Committees

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Procedure Summary

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

This procedure documents the requirements doctoral dissertations and committees.

Procedures and Responsibilities

1 DOCTORAL DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

- 1.1 A doctoral dissertation 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 with graduate faculty status 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, as well as an outside department member.
- 1.2 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 the department may also be requested to serve on the committee whenever their services are thought to be advisable.
- 1.3 All committee appointments described above shall be forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School, 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.
- 1.4 The Dean of the Graduate School may appoint one other member to 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 a member is appointed, the individual will 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.
- 1.5 In no case shall the committee have more than six members.

2 THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

- 2.1 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. Each department offering the doctorate shall have its own procedures for determining whether a proposal is accepted or rejected by the department.
- 2.2 The proposal is to be written according to the graduate school's formatting requirements and in a manner designed to explain the topic's significance to non-specialist. The proposal shall include:
 - 2.2.1 The methodology to be followed and its appropriateness, and
 - 2.2.2 The topic's significance as a contribution to knowledge in the field.
- 2.3 After the dissertation committee has been appointed and when the advisor and committee conclude that the student is adequately prepared, the student shall officially present the proposal at a proposal defense before at least the dissertation committee.
- 2.4 The defense shall be open to all members of the graduate faculty of the University. At the department's discretion, such proposal defense may be opened to other graduate students. The Dean of the Graduate School may send a representative of the graduate faculty to attend the proposal defense.
- 2.5 At this defense, the committee shall investigate the adequacy of the dissertation topic, methodology used, and determine whether the student is satisfactorily prepared to successfully complete necessary research.
- 2.6 Once a proposal is defended and accepted by the Department Head and dean of the college, the dissertation proposal form and all required documents shall be forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School.
- 2.7 The Dean of the Graduate School shall then approve or disapprove the dissertation proposal. If the proposal is disapproved, the dean shall provide to the student and the major advisor a written explanation of the reasons for the disapproval. The proposal will then be revised and resubmitted for evaluation.
- 2.8 Students must gain dissertation proposal approval from the Dean of the Graduate School at least once semester prior to graduation. The dissertation proposal defense and the final dissertation defense cannot be held in the same semester.

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 DISSERTATION DEFENSE

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 When the dissertation committee is satisfied with the written product, a date acceptable to all concerned shall be chosen for the final oral defense.
- 4.3 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 of Graduate School or a designated representative of the Graduate Faculty may attend the defense.

5 DISSERTATION MANUSCRIPT FORM

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

6 GRADUATION

- 6.1 The Dean of the Graduate School's approval of the dissertation is required for graduation.
- 6.2 Doctoral graduation may not be less than eight months after the student's admission to candidacy, nor more than ten years after admission into a doctoral program.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

Suspends University Procedure *11.01.99.R0.23 Doctoral Advisory Committees and Dissertations*

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