

THE 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 website (<https://www.du.edu/graduate-education/current-student-resources/dissertation-thesis-information/>) for 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 and should consult with their program regarding requirements for the doctoral paper.

The Morgridge College of Education requires their doctorate of education candidates to complete a dissertation in practice instead of a dissertation and should consult with their program regarding requirements for the dissertation in practice.

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 (found on the OGE website (<https://www.du.edu/graduate-education/current-student-resources/dissertation-thesis-information/>)) 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 actively [1] (p.) 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 academic 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, with the exception of the DU-Iliff joint PhD program, in which case multiple members may come from Iliff.

[1] (p.) Actively is defined as contributing to research in the last three to five years

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 candidate[1] (p.). 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.

[1] (p.) 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.

Emeriti Faculty

- Emeriti faculty may serve as a voting committee member or outside chair.
- They may continue to finish out advising their students as a dissertation/thesis director but cannot take on new students as director. Before retiring, faculty should work with their department chair to confirm the students and their expected graduation term in which they will continue to serve as their director. The department chair should then submit the approved plan to the Office of Graduate Education.

Retired Faculty

- Retired faculty may serve as a voting committee member so long as the associate dean and department chair approve. The Office of Graduate Education will keep these approvals on file for 3 years.
- Retired faculty may serve as an outside chair for up to one year post retirement so long as they had tenure prior to retiring and the associate dean and department chair approve. The Office of Graduate Education will keep these approvals on file for one year.
- They may continue to finish out advising their students as a dissertation/thesis director but cannot take on new students as director. Before retiring, faculty should work with their department chair to confirm the students and their expected graduation term in which they will continue to serve as their director. The department chair should then submit the approved plan to the Office of Graduate Education.

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.