

## Doctoral Dissertation Committee Policy (effective August 28, 2017)

### Committee Composition

Doctoral dissertation committees are composed of four members, three of whom must be Graduate Faculty with either a primary appointment in the candidate's department or a secondary/joint appointment in the candidate's department and a primary/joint appointment in another relevant department within the University of Pittsburgh ("internal members"). The fourth member must be Graduate Faculty external to the candidate's department within the University of Pittsburgh or a qualified scholar with an equivalent status at another accredited institution ("external member"). The Graduate Faculty Roster for the University of Pittsburgh can be viewed at the following website: <https://ir.pitt.edu/graduate-faculty-roster/>. Membership in the Graduate Faculty is not automatic and must be formally requested by the faculty member's department and approved by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies before the faculty member can serve on a doctoral dissertation committee. The Chair of the committee must be a current (or recently departed) member of the University of Pittsburgh. Any member may serve as Co-Chair.

### Notification of Committee Membership

The names of the committee members must be submitted to the Graduate Studies Office as part of the application for candidacy by the graduate student. All requests for subsequent changes to the committee should be submitted for approval to the Graduate Studies Office by the Graduate Administrator for the candidate's department. Any changes to the committee membership, internal or external, after the dissertation proposal/prospectus/overview meeting must be approved by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies before the dissertation defense. Forms for admission to candidacy and committee changes can be obtained by the Graduate Administrator in the A&S Graduate Handbook.

### Special Requirements for External Committee Members from outside the University of Pittsburgh

Faculty from outside the University of Pittsburgh may serve as external committee members, but the qualifications of the proposed committee member must be reviewed and their participation approved by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies before the dissertation proposal/prospectus/overview meeting or defense is scheduled. Such a request should be accompanied by the requested committee member's current C.V. and a brief memo that explains the benefits for the student of the participation of this faculty member on the committee. C.V.s for external committee members who have been approved previously by the Assistant Dean for a particular department's graduate students need only be resubmitted once every five years. In this case, however, the memo accompanying each request for an external member's participation in a new committee must also note the date on which the C.V. was last submitted for this individual. If the date is not known, a new C.V. must be included. Requests for external members must be approved by the Assistant Dean in advance of the requested member's participation on the doctoral committee. The Assistant Dean will review the material and either approve or reject the proposed external member.

### Additional Committee Members

Additional members may be added to the doctoral committee in cases where additional expertise is needed. Such additional committee members are expected to have significant involvement with the graduate student and to attend both the proposal/prospectus/overview meeting and the defense unless prior approval has been received for remote attendance. For additional committee members only, the Graduate Faculty status (or the equivalent at another institution) requirement may be waived if prior approval from the Assistant Dean is requested and granted. Such a request should be accompanied by a brief memo that explains the benefits for the student of the participation of this

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faculty member on the committee and, in the case of a member who is not from the University of Pittsburgh, a current C.V. The C.V. need only be provided every five years for committee members serving on multiple committees within the same department.

### **Committee Participation by Former Members of the University of Pittsburgh Faculty**

Committee members who leave the university after a graduate student has been admitted to candidacy may stay on the committee in their original capacity, as long as they are willing and able to physically attend the defense (or have requested and received permission to attend remotely as described below), and providing that the defense is scheduled within 12 months of the faculty member's departure. If the departed committee member is the Chair, and continues in this role, a Co-Chair from the department must be designated. The participation of any committee member in this category will not affect the maximum number of remote attendees permitted (two, one of whom must be external as described below).

### **Committee Participation by Retired Members of the University of Pittsburgh Faculty**

Faculty who are retired from the University of Pittsburgh are eligible to serve as members on committees formed both before and after their retirement, as long as they are still active professionally in the academic community as reasonably determined by the Chair of the Department. Retired faculty may serve in any capacity including as Chair of the committee. The participation of any committee member in this category will not affect the maximum number of remote attendees permitted (two, one of whom must be external as described below).

### **Remote Participation by Candidate and Committee members**

The candidate and the Committee Chair must attend in person both the dissertation proposal/prospectus/overview meeting and the defense. All other committee members should also be physically present at both meetings. In exceptional circumstances, however, this requirement may be waived as described below.

*External committee member only:* Remote attendance may be requested from the Assistant Dean for both the dissertation proposal/prospectus/overview meeting and the defense for the external committee from a distant location if, and only if, remote attendance can be arranged according to the guidelines detailed below.

*Other committee members.* Remote attendance may also be requested from the Assistant Dean for no more than one of the other committee members. Where an external member from outside the University of Pittsburgh is already attending remotely, however, the request must also be accompanied by a memo from the department explaining the need for this second member to attend remotely. Such a request may not be granted by the Assistant Dean if the situation could easily be resolved by a shift in the meeting date of one month or less. A committee member who participated remotely in the overview meeting must attend the defense in person. It is the responsibility of the student to consult as early as possible with committee members about their availability such that remote attendance by more than one member is avoided if at all possible. Remote attendance by more than two committee members will not be permitted.

## Doctoral Dissertation Committee Policy (effective August 28, 2017)

### Remote Attendance Requirements

To satisfy the requirements of remote attendance, any remotely attending committee member must have full audiovisual interaction. The attendee must be visible to other committee members and the graduate student presenter and must be able to see the presenter as well as others in the room as necessary. The attendee must be able to hear and participate orally in all parts of the discussion and questioning. The candidate's department is responsible for arranging the necessary technology to fulfill the remote attendance requirements and it is recommended that someone with technological expertise be present to resolve difficulties if they arise. **The dissertation proposal/prospectus/overview meeting or the defense of the dissertation must be rescheduled (or finished at later time) if –**

1. it is not technologically possible to accomplish the required level of audiovisual interaction at the time and place appointed; or
2. the video portion of the connection fails before the defense is 50% completed (reasonably determined by the Committee Chair) and cannot be reestablished; or
3. the audio portion connection fails before 90% of the meeting or defense is completed (reasonably determined by the Committee Chair) and cannot be reestablished.

### Chair Certification of Compliance with Remote Participation Requirements

The Chair of a dissertation committee in which any members participate remotely will be required to complete a form ("[Remote Attendance Certification](#)"), in which the Chair attests that the requirements for remote attendance have been met. This form must be included with the results of the dissertation proposal/prospectus/overview meeting or defense in the submission to the Graduate Office. If the Chair of the committee signs the student's paperwork in the name of the remotely attending member, a copy of the authorization for this signature (an email from the remotely attending member authorizing the signature is sufficient) must also be provided when the documentation is submitted.

The form is available at: <http://www.asgraduate.pitt.edu/forms-policies> (see also the Appendix to this document).

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### Overview of Doctoral Committee Participation Rules

(Please refer to the full policy document for additional details, requirements, and explanations)

Members	Required for graduate committee?	Committee member department appointment	Minimum status	Prior approval required? <sup>b</sup>	Prior notification required? <sup>c</sup>	Remote attendance <sup>d</sup>
Internal 1 (Chair)	Required	Primary, secondary, or joint in candidate department	Pitt Graduate Faculty <sup>a</sup>	No	Yes	Must be present for both overview and defense
Internal 2	Required	Primary, secondary, or joint in candidate department	Pitt Graduate Faculty <sup>a</sup>	No	Yes	May request remote attendance of overview or defense but not both.
Internal 3						
External	Required	Not in candidate department	Pitt Graduate Faculty <sup>a</sup> or the equivalent at another institution	No, if Pitt Yes, if non-Pitt	Yes	May request remote attendance of both overview and defense if non-Pitt
Additional Members	Optional	Internal or external to department	Pitt Faculty or the equivalent at another institution	No, if Pitt Yes, if non-Pitt or not Grad Fac	Yes	May request remote attendance of overview or defense but not both.

a) Former Pitt faculty with Graduate Faculty Status may remain on the committee if the defense takes place less than 12 months after their departure. If the former faculty member was the committee Chair and will continue in this role, a current faculty Co-Chair must be designated.

b) Approval from the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies must be requested for all external committee members. If non-Pitt or without Graduate Faculty status (applicable only to additional members), the approval request must explain the benefit to the candidate of committee member's participation and include a C.V.

c) Committee members must be identified on the application for candidacy and any changes to the committee must be requested prior to scheduling the overview or defense meeting.

d) A single remote attendance request by one committee member, either internal or external, for each meeting may be requested and will generally be granted. In the case where the non-Pitt external member is attending remotely, one additional request for remote attendance by an internal member or additional member is permitted (see Chart for additional attendance requirements). The second request may not be granted if shifting the meeting date by one month or less would avoid the need for remote attendance.

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**APPENDIX**

**Remote Attendance Certification  
(To be completed by the Committee Chair)**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Time and date of meeting/defense: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of meeting/defense: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee members

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Committee member or member(s) attending remotely (Maximum of 2 permitted, one of whom must be external). Prior permission must have been obtained from the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies

\_\_\_\_\_

I, as Committee Chair, attest that the remote attendance requirements as detailed on page 2 of this form were met for the dissertation proposal/prospectus/overview or defense conducted on this date.

Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please detail on p. 2 of this form any technological problems that arose and how they were resolved. Please also explain if these issues resulted in a rescheduling or later continuance of the meeting.

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### Remote attendance requirements

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1. it is not technologically possible to accomplish the required level of audiovisual interaction at the time and place appointed; or
2. the video portion of the connection fails before the defense is 50% completed (reasonably determined by the Committee Chair) and cannot be reestablished; or
3. the audio portion connection fails before 90% of the meeting or defense is completed (reasonably determined by the Committee Chair) and cannot be reestablished.

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**Provide below the details of any technological problems encountered and their resolution, including rescheduling and later continuance:**