

GUIDELINES FOR DISSERTATION COMMITTEE SERVICE

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER: It is recommended that the membership of the dissertation committee be submitted to **the Graduate School for approval at least 6 months prior to the student's oral defense**

The Graduate Faculty

For dissertation committee purposes, “The Graduate Faculty” consists of persons who are tenure or tenure-track instructional faculty holding an “unmodified” (i.e., not visiting, adjunct, etc.) appointment at the University of Michigan as Professor, Associate Professor, or Assistant Professor with an earned Doctorate from an accredited institution.

Composition of the Dissertation Committee

Dissertation committees must have at least **four** members, three of whom are members of the Graduate Faculty (see definition above), and two of whom are from the doctoral candidate's home program. Furthermore, each committee

- Must have a sole chair or two co-chairs;
- Must have a cognate member who is familiar with the standards for doctoral research and holds at least a .50 appointment in a Rackham doctoral program, other than the student's home department/program (except IDP programs.)
- May include a University faculty member who is not Graduate Faculty (see definition above), a University staff member, or a qualified individual outside the University to provide expertise in the candidate's discipline.

Roles of the Chair (or Co-chairs) and Cognate Member

The chair (or each co-chair) is responsible for guiding and encouraging the candidate's design and execution of an original, high quality, doctoral-level research project. The end result of this effort is expected to be a dissertation that makes a substantive contribution to the candidate's discipline.

The cognate member's role is to broaden the scholarly representation of the dissertation committee beyond the candidate's home program. The cognate member also serves the Graduate School and its Faculty by providing a non-specialist's perspective on the quality of the dissertation.

Eligibility for Service on Dissertation Committees

Nominations for dissertation committee service are made by means of the Dissertation Committee form found on the Rackham OARD website, which must be signed by the chair of the doctoral candidate's program. All nominations must be approved by the Graduate School and are subject to the following guidelines:

1. Graduate Faculty (see definition above) —i.e., Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant Professors—affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program and who hold an earned Doctorate from an accredited institution may serve as a member of the committee, or as sole chair, co-chair, or cognate member.
2. Graduate Faculty (see definition above) not affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program may serve on dissertation committees. They may also serve as co-chair with a member of the Graduate Faculty (see definition above) affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program, but not as sole chair or cognate member.
3. Instructors and Lecturers who have no appointment as members as Graduate Faculty (see definition above) may serve on dissertation committees if they hold an earned Doctorate from an accredited institution. They may also serve as co-chair with a member of the Graduate Faculty (see definition above) affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program, but not as sole chair or cognate member.
4. Retired and *emeriti* Professors who were affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program may serve on dissertation committees. They may also serve as co-chair or, by special arrangement (see Special Membership), as sole chair or cognate member.

5. Research Professors (i.e., Research Professors and Research Associate Professors) who are affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program may serve on dissertation committees if they hold an earned Doctorate from an accredited institution. They may serve as a co-chair, regular member or by special arrangement as a sole chair.

6. Research Scientists (RS, i.e., Research Scientists, Associate Research Scientists, Assistant Research Scientists, Research Assistant Professors, and Research Investigators) who are affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program may serve on dissertation committees if they hold an earned Doctorate from an accredited institution (see Special Membership form). They may not serve as sole chair or cognate member.

7. All those who do not have an earned Doctorate, whether affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program or not, must be approved for dissertation committee service on a case by case basis. If approved, they may serve as a member of the committee, as the sole chair, co-chair, or cognate member.

8. University faculty and staff not included in the preceding categories and qualified individuals outside the University whose service is desirable may serve on dissertation committees, subject to review on a case by case basis. They may also serve as co-chair with a member of the Graduate Faculty (see definition above) affiliated with a Rackham doctoral program, but not as sole chair or cognate member.

N.B. No person working toward a doctoral degree may serve on a dissertation committee until all requirements for the degree have been met.

N.B. University faculty who were approved to serve as sole chair or cognate member but who are no longer affiliated with the University may not continue to serve as the sole chair or as the cognate member. The faculty member may serve as a co-chair or as a regular member based upon the eligibility guidelines for dissertation committee service.

Special Membership on the Dissertation Committee

University faculty and staff who are not Graduate Faculty (see definition above), and qualified people from outside the University of Michigan who may or may not hold academic appointments and whose service on the Dissertation Committee would contribute significantly, may be nominated for special membership by submitting:

- [Dissertation Committee form](#)
- A memo detailing the nominee's expertise in the dissertation topic
- A Vita or resume
- For a retired Professor, a memo confirming he/she has:
 - a) Experience in serving on, and chairing dissertation committees (decision-making experience as chair is required)
 - b) Service as a teacher of formal courses or seminars
 - c) Served as a counselor or advisor for doctoral students

* Previous experience as a cognate is not required for nomination as cognate (cognate criteria must be met).

Some programs require students to submit the [Dissertation Committee Worksheet](#) to them before the committee can be approved.