Doctoral Student (PhD/DrPH) Dissertation Committee Composition Guideline

After successful completion of the Departmental Preliminary Examination, doctoral students will form their Dissertation Committee.

The Dissertation Committee must include at least three (3) UTHealth School of Public Health (SPH) faculty members. These individually are generally full-time faculty. The committee members must represent the student’s Major, Minor, and Breadth (or second Minor) and include faculty from at least two (2) disciplines (Epidemiology and Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences count as separate Academic Departments). DrPH students who matriculated Fall 2018 or later are required to complete one minor only, as a Breadth area and coursework is built into the curriculum, thus do not require a Breadth committee member.

Students who have elected a certificate requiring committee representation must include a UTHealth SPH faculty member representing the certificate on their committee if not already included. This may be a fourth UTHealth SPH faculty member or one of the three members discussed above.

Additional committee guidelines:

- The faculty member representing the student’s Major must be from the same Department as the student.
- The faculty member representing the Minor(s) must be trained in the minor field, but does not need to be in the corresponding Department. For example, a faculty member trained in Epidemiology who is in the Department of Management, Policy and Community Health may represent a student’s Epidemiology minor.
- The faculty member representing the certificate (if applicable) must be a member of the certificate program.

The Dissertation Committee may include additional “Optional” members who provide expertise not sufficiently covered by the required members described above. Optional committee members can be, but do not have to be, UTHealth SPH faculty.

All committee members must be trained with a terminal degree appropriate to their role on the committee and MAY NOT be a current UTHealth SPH student.

Within the committee, one member is designated the Chair and one is designated the Dissertation Supervisor.

- The Chair must be the student’s faculty advisor.
- The Dissertation Supervisor may be within or outside of UTHealth SPH, but must have training in the student’s major area.

The student’s faculty advisor, whom is the Chair, can serve as the Dissertation Supervisor if they fulfill the qualifications for both positions.

Dissertation Committee membership must be approved by the Director of Academic Affairs. To request approval, students must submit the following materials to the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services:

- Doctorate Form III: Doctoral Dissertation Committee Form.
  - Located on the DrPH Forms or PhD Forms tabs
Curriculum Vitae (CV) for committee members not affiliated with UTHealth SPH who have not previously served on a UTHealth SPH Thesis/Dissertation Committee.

External Reviewers

Dissertation Proposal Defense
The Dissertation Committee will select at least one (1) individual external to the committee to review the student’s dissertation proposal and participate in the proposal defense. The External Reviewer(s) for the proposal can be from within or outside of UTHealth SPH. External reviewers provide critical feedback to the student and participate in discussions related to revisions and corrections required in the proposal.

Dissertation Defense
The Dissertation Committee will select at least one (1) individual external to the committee to review the student’s completed dissertation and participate in the dissertation defense. The reviewer(s) for the completed dissertation can be from within or outside of UTHealth SPH. Further, the reviewer(s) can be the same individual(s) who reviewed the dissertation proposal defense or different reviewers can be selected. External reviewers provide critical feedback to the student and participate in discussions related to revisions and corrections required in the dissertation.

Scope and Audience: Doctoral students (DrPH and PhD)

Related Policies, Forms and Information:

Doctorate Form III - Doctoral Dissertation Committee Form (Located on the DrPH Forms or PhD Forms tab)

UTHHealth SPH Policy 307, Preliminary Exam (formerly Qualifying Exam); Admission to Candidacy and Dissertation Defense

History: Created for clarification on 9.24.2015

Responsible Office/Contact Information: Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services
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