

Formation of the PhD Dissertation Committee

Revised September 2023

The PhD dissertation committee may not be formed until the Comprehensive Exam/ Qualifying Exam has been completed. Please understand that your comprehensive exam committee does not automatically become your dissertation committee.

A minimum of six months must elapse between the completion of the comp exam/qualifying exam and the final defense of the dissertation.

Composition of the Committee

The PhD dissertation committee should be approved in the early stages of the proposal-writing process, so that you have the benefit of a full committee in the development of your dissertation proposal.

The PhD dissertation committee is governed by University regulations and must be approved by the Warner School's Associate Dean.

- The sponsor of the dissertation must be a tenured or tenure-eligible Warner School faculty member who holds a PhD and has the rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor. A clinical-track faculty member who has been approved by the University Dean of Graduate Education is able to serve as co-sponsor along with a tenure-track faculty member. The sponsor may be from your program area in the Warner School, but is not required to be.

Your academic advisor does not automatically become the sponsor of your dissertation. However, if your dissertation sponsor is not your academic advisor, the dissertation sponsor will be designated as your academic advisor for the remainder of your academic career at the Warner School.

- The second member of the dissertation committee must be a tenure-track or tenure-eligible Warner School faculty member who holds a PhD and has a rank of at least assistant professor (or a clinical-track faculty member who has been approved by the University Dean of Graduate Education to serve on PhD dissertation committees). If the sponsor is not from your program area, this second member is required to be from your program area. However, if the sponsor is from your program area, this second member is not required to be from your program area.
- The third member of the dissertation committee must be a faculty member who is tenured or tenure-track, and has a rank of at least assistant professor. The third member must have a **primary** appointment outside the Warner School. He/she must provide an "outsider's perspective," which, in this case, is defined **not** as coming from a discipline different from that of the student or the first two committee members, but as coming from another PhD program

in the University.

University regulations also allow this third committee member to be someone outside the University of Rochester. In this case, the proposed committee member must have an earned PhD (an EdD will be accepted in some situations, but this is rare), teach full time at a PhD-granting institution, have a rank of at least assistant professor, and be actively engaged in research. Approval of a committee member outside the University is dependent upon their background and the relevance of their expertise to your research. (A medical school faculty member does not normally qualify for a PhD committee unless they are on a research track.) A current curriculum vitae is required for a proposed committee member who is not on the University of Rochester faculty. The student must also submit a written explanation that details the reasons this proposed committee member is particularly suited to be on the student's committee. Please send both the CV and the written explanation directly to studentservices@warner.rochester.edu.

Continuance of a Relocated Committee Member

A faculty member who leaves a program may continue to serve as an internal member on any PhD dissertation committees to which they were already appointed prior to leaving the program.

Emeritus Faculty

Emeritus status is not a rank that permits service on a committee. Emeritus faculty members are grandfathered in as inside members of their home department for one year after retirement. After one year, a petition and an updated CV are required for emeritus faculty members to serve in any committee role. The petition must show that they remain active in their field and active with doctoral students.

Approval of Dissertation Committee

To receive approval of your dissertation committee, please send an email to studentservices@warner.rochester.edu, copying each member of your committee, stating that they have agreed to serve on your committee. After the committee has been approved by the Warner School's Associate Dean, you and your committee members will be notified.

Although you will be working with the Office of Student Services, it is important to understand that the Office of the University Dean of Graduate Education (585.275.9093) oversees and coordinates the work for the PhD degree in all graduate schools of the University.