

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL BYLAWS

Initial Approval 10/2001; Revisions Approved by Council 03/2004, 10/2007, 08/2008, 01/2009, 01/2010, 11/2010, 4/2013

The Credentials Committee is responsible for procedures that will ensure careful and competent supervision of dissertation research. The goal is to ensure good scholarship, competent management of the process, high academic standards, and completion of dissertations in a timely manner. To this end, the Committee will conduct a review of the credentials of those who will be recommended to the Graduate Council for approval to direct doctoral dissertations. In making these recommendations, the Committee will follow the procedures outlined below:

1. Faculty members who have not completed their doctorates may not supervise dissertations.
2. Only programs that award doctoral degrees are eligible to request approval to direct dissertations.
3. Faculty may request approval to direct doctoral dissertations through another program. However, their home department head must endorse the request.
4. Program heads and senior faculty are expected to mentor new faculty as they master the art of working with students on their dissertations.
5. Tenure-track faculty are eligible to direct dissertations subject to program approval as indicated by a vote of the tenured faculty and a letter of support from the program head. These items should be forwarded to the Credentials Committee, which will make a recommendation to the Graduate Council.
6. Faculty appointed or promoted to the rank of associate or full professor with tenure will automatically be granted approval to direct dissertations for 10 years and may be reviewed every 10 years thereafter, for as long as approval is sought. Applications for continuing approval should be submitted to the Credentials Committee in the year prior to expiration of approval. The application should consist of a letter of support for continued approval from the program head placing the following items in the context of performance expectations. The past 10-year record of: (a) theses and dissertations supervised (b) peer-reviewed publications (c) grants; (d) other evidence of scholarly activity that may be relevant to the approval to direct dissertations. The primary criterion for approval will be evidence of externally reviewed and validated scholarly or creative activity.
7. Non-tenure track faculty may be considered for approval to direct dissertations for a period of 5 years with the support of the faculty and program head. Approval may be renewed an unlimited number of times. Applications for approval should be submitted to the Credentials Committee. The application should consist of the results of a vote of tenured program faculty and a letter of support from the program head placing the following items in the context of performance expectations. The past 10-year record of: (a) theses and dissertations supervised (b) peer-reviewed publications (c) grants; (d) other evidence of scholarly activity that may be relevant to the approval to direct dissertations. The primary criterion for approval will be evidence of externally reviewed and validated scholarly or creative activity.

8. Faculty members who have not been granted approval for supervision may petition the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School for limited approval to supervise individual dissertations if the program head and department faculty support the request. Petitions should consist of (a) a list of theses and dissertations supervised over the past 10 years; (b) a list of peer-reviewed publications for the past 10 years; (c) a list of grants; (d) other evidence of scholarly activity that may be relevant to the approval to direct dissertations; and (e) a letter of support for approval from the program head placing the above items in the context of performance expectations and a description of the special circumstances that would warrant limited approval.

From time to time, the committee may also consider other matters related to the process of dissertation supervision. The committee will consist of seven members from those colleges that award doctoral degrees. At least one member will be from each of the following colleges: Arts & Sciences; Business; Education, Health, and Human Sciences; and Engineering. Membership on the committee is restricted to Graduate Council members who are already approved to direct dissertations. The committee elects a chair annually. The agenda for each committee meeting will contain the requests for approval to direct dissertations as submitted by the academic department heads. Procedures and deadlines for submission of such requests are posted on the Graduate Council web page.