

Guidelines for PhD Committee Service

(Effective Fall 2018)

Approved by Graduate Council: 2018

PhD committees at the University of Tennessee must be composed of at least four people. At least two committee members must be tenured or tenure track UT faculty. The chair of the committee is typically from the student's department/intercollegiate program. At least one member must be from an academic unit other than that of the student's department; in interdisciplinary programs, one member shall be from outside that program. Committee members outside the student's home department/program are referred to below as external members. External members may be from outside of the University of Tennessee, but must be approved in accordance with the procedures below.

The Dean of the Graduate school must approve every PhD student committee; however, the primary responsibility for approving individuals to serve on those committees is held at the department/interdisciplinary unit level, according to their bylaws. As a rule, the faculty member's graduate unit/department submits the Doctoral Committee form with any necessary attachments to the Graduate School immediately upon formation of the dissertation committee.

Those who may chair and/or serve on committees fall under one of the following categories. However, the Dean of the Graduate School may grant one-time approval outside the parameters of these categories, in specific cases as supported by the department and deemed in the best interest of the student.

Category One: University of Tennessee tenured or tenure-track faculty holding a doctoral degree or joint faculty holding a doctoral degree are automatically granted the approval to chair or be a member of any doctoral committee. University of Tennessee tenured or tenure-track faculty, without a doctoral degree, may serve on doctoral committees.

Category Two: Individuals who are not tenured/tenure track whose primary employer is the University of Tennessee and who hold the titles of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor can co-chair or be a member of dissertation committees. However, they may only co-chair committees if their appointment is within the student's major.

Category Three: Tenured or tenure-track faculty at other institutions may serve as the external member on a dissertation committee. The individual's CV must be attached to the PhD committee form when it is submitted to the Graduate School.

Category Four: Others who are considered experts in the field may serve as an external member of the dissertation committee. The individual's CV must be attached to the PhD committee form when it is submitted to the Graduate School.

Category Five: Emeritus faculty may continue to chair, or serve as a member of, existing committees. They may not be appointed to any new committees once retired, but they may continue to serve out their previously approved committee roles. In the case that a PhD committee chair leaves the University of Tennessee prior to a student completing the degree, the chair may (1) resign from the committee, (2) serve as a co-chair of the committee; or (3) serve as a member of the committee. The student must submit a change of committee form documenting the appointment of a new chair or co-chair and updating the appointment status of the previous chair.

In cases when a department head believes an exception to the above categories is needed, the department head may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School.