

General Information Concerning Ph.D. Committees and Scheduling of Oral Exams

STOR Department

Updated: January 2010.

I. Ph.D. Committees: General Information

A student's doctoral (Ph.D.) committee consists of five, or possibly six, faculty members at UNC. The committee includes the student's advisor(s) and a chairperson. The chairperson is a (typically senior) member of the STOR faculty, who is not an advisor or co-advisor of the student. A student's doctoral committee should contain at least three members of the STOR faculty, but may contain one or more faculty from outside the STOR Department.

The committee chair oversees the formal aspects of the preliminary and final oral exams, including format and duration (more details on these are given below). Students should meet briefly with the chair of their committee before their exams to get their input and advice. Scheduling of the preliminary and final oral exams, including reserving appropriate rooms, is the responsibility of the student and their advisor. Students are responsible for obtaining the appropriate forms from the Graduate School webpage for the preliminary and final oral exams. Information about forms can be found on the STOR webpage.

II. Formation of Ph.D. Committees

Doctoral committees are composed by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) for the student's program, with input from the student's Ph.D. advisor(s). The process for putting together a doctoral committee is as follows.

1. The student's advisor compiles a list of potential committee members that are familiar with the student's thesis topic and general research area(s).
2. The advisor and the DGS review the list of potential committee members, and come up with a tentative committee. (The DGS may request that additions or deletions be made to the list of potential committee members.)
3. Once a tentative committee is identified, the advisor contacts these faculty in order to gauge their willingness and ability to serve. (If for some reason the advisor does not wish to contact a potential committee member, the DGS can do this directly.) If anyone on the list is unable or unwilling to serve, the advisor and DGS will discuss an appropriate replacement.
4. Once the members of the committee have agreed, informally, to serve, the DGS will send an email formally establishing the student's doctoral committee. In addition, the DGS will ask one member of the committee to serve as chair. At this point the student and his/her advisor may contact committee members to begin the process of scheduling preliminary oral exams.

III. External Committee Members

Each member of a student's doctoral committee must belong to UNC's Graduate Faculty. In order for a faculty member outside UNC to serve on a student's committee, their advisor will need to take steps to ensure that the outside faculty member receives a fixed term appointment on the graduate faculty. More information on fixed term appointments can be found on the Grad School website:

<http://gradschool.unc.edu/policies/fac-designation.html>

IV. Scheduling of Exams

In order to receive a Ph.D., a student must take and pass the preliminary and final oral exams. In scheduling preliminary and final oral exams, students and their advisors should adhere to the following guidelines:

- The preliminary oral exam is intended to be a feasibility study, and an opportunity for students to receive feedback and guidance from the members of their doctoral committee. *The preliminary oral exam should be completed by the spring of a student's third year in the Ph.D. program.*
- Scheduling the preliminary oral exam is the responsibility of the student, and should be done after the student's doctoral committee has been established by their DGS.
- Dissertation proposals should be submitted to the members of a student's doctoral committee at least two weeks prior to the preliminary oral exam.
- Final oral exams should occur at least three weeks in advance of the University deadline for submission of theses, so that students have ample time to incorporate changes suggested by members of their doctoral committee at the time of their final oral exam.
- Dissertations should be submitted to the members of a student's committee at least three weeks prior to the final oral exam.

Exam format: The preliminary oral exam is closed to the public; only the student and members of their committee are present. The preliminary oral exam consists of an oral presentation by the student, usually 50 minutes in length, followed by an extended question and answer period with committee members.

The final oral exam consists of two parts. The first part is a formal oral presentation by the student, roughly 50 minutes in length, that is open to the public. The oral presentation is advertised and conducted in the same fashion as a departmental colloquium. The second part of the exam is a closed session including only the student and his/her committee. *Note: The student and his/her advisor are responsible for circulating the abstract and announcement of the final oral exam at least one week in advance of the exam.*

V. Outside Advisors (Statistics and Operations Research Programs)

In most cases, Ph.D. students in the Statistics and Operations Research programs are advised, or co-advised, by core members of the STOR faculty. Core faculty are those with full or part time teaching responsibilities in the Department. Under special circumstances, students may be

fully advised by a non-core faculty member within UNC. Any student who is considering such an arrangement should contact the DGS in a timely fashion, prior to beginning formal research, and must obtain the approval of the STOR Graduate Committee.

In the event that a student is being advised by a faculty member outside the STOR core, the advisor may be asked to contribute to the financial support of the student, depending on the resources and needs of the Department.

The standards and procedures for dissertations with outside advisors are the same as those for students with advisors inside the Department. Students with an outside advisor should, in conjunction with the DGS, identify a doctoral committee chair from among the tenured STOR faculty at the *outset* of their research. The chair is responsible for overseeing the student's thesis progress, and ensuring that their work meets the general requirements of the Department. It is the joint responsibility of the student, their advisor, and the committee chair to ensure that the student's preliminary and final oral exams are scheduled in accordance with the general guidelines set out by the Department.