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# Academic Policy Committee Report - September 2, 2010

Graduate Council

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ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2010  
111 STUDENT SERVICES BUILDING

REPORT

Present: Stefanie Ohnesorg (Chair), Ralph Brockett, Michael Essington, Yanfei Gao, Robert Hatcher, LeAnn Luna, Andrew Morse, Christian Parigger, Peggy Pierce, Kay Reed, Songning Zhang.

The meeting was called to order by Stefanie Ohnesorg, Chair, at 2:15 p.m. in 111 Student Services Building.

The committee continued its discussion of components of current policy and a draft of a changed policy. The committee discussed this policy for several months during Spring Semester 2010. The committee voted to recommend the following new text to replace the current text in the Graduate Catalog under the heading "Doctoral Degree" under the sub-heading "Doctoral Committee":

**COMMITTEE FOR DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Upon entering a Doctor of Philosophy degree program, each student is assigned an initial academic advisor who will assist the student in forming a doctoral committee. During the student's first year of study, the initial academic advisor informs the student about steps towards forming a doctoral committee. The initial academic advisor may (but does not necessarily have to) be a member of the doctoral committee. Once formed, the department head will recommend the doctoral committee with a designated chair to the Dean of the Graduate School. In units without departmental structure, the college dean will recommend the committee. Final approval of each doctoral committee rests with the Dean of the Graduate School.

The tasks of a doctoral committee include mentoring, aiding the professionalization of the student, and ensuring the academic integrity of the doctoral program and the dissertation in particular.

In order to ensure all of these functions the doctoral committee must fulfill the following criteria:

- A doctoral committee comprises a core of at least four faculty members holding the rank of assistant professor or above at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Each doctoral committee will be chaired by a faculty member from the doctoral student's major area of study (the major professor). In special circumstances, a request to allow co-chairs for a doctoral committee may be submitted to the Graduate School for approval.
- At least three members of the doctoral committee must come from academic areas that coincide or overlap with the doctoral student's major area(s) of study so that they can serve as mentors for the dissertation project.

- At least one member of a student's doctoral committee must be from an academic unit\* at UTK that is administratively separate from the student's major field(s) of study. An important function of this 'outside' member of a student's doctoral committee is to assure that all matters related to the completion of the doctoral program (such as course work, comprehensive exams, dissertation proposal, completion of the dissertation manuscript, and doctoral defense) were handled in compliance with the policies outlined in the Graduate Catalog and in the Graduate Handbook of the doctoral student's major area of study.
  - It is optional to add external committee members with appropriate credentials, who are not affiliated administratively with UTK.
    - Students who opt to have external committee members need to be aware that UTK cannot offer any remuneration for this professional service, and that students, in order to avoid any conflict of interest, cannot pay for any expenses that external committee members might incur related to a student's doctoral project (for example campus visits, attending dissertation defense).
    - External committee members will not be involved in judging whether a student can be admitted to candidacy and will therefore not be asked to sign the Admission to Candidacy Form." External members are, however, voting members of the doctoral committee, and students therefore need to be advised that having an external member serve on a doctoral committee might make it necessary to schedule a defense ahead of deadline dates in such a way that all committee members' original signatures can be obtained prior to the deadline(s) that are of relevance related to a doctoral student's graduation plans.
  - Three of the four core members of each doctoral committee who hold employment at UTK, including the chair (or co-chairs if appropriate), must be approved by the Graduate Council to direct doctoral research.
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\* Academic unit is defined as the administrative unit where faculty are hired and evaluated, generally as departments or schools, where the doctoral degree is offered.

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The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.