

Final Report: Status of Dean's Representative

Graduate Council Meeting, May 9, 2012

Committee Membership: Ian Mather (Animal & Avian Sciences, Chair); James Robert Anderson (Physics), Julie Greene (History), John Shea (Economics), Michael Sean Wiederoder (Bioengineering), Susan De La Paz (Special Education), Arthur N. Popper (Assoc. Dean, *ex officio*)

The Committee met on January 18 and March 15, 2012 and members were in contact by E-mail as needed. We conducted an informal survey of the status of the Dean's Representative (DR) (or equivalent) at nine other Universities, including our peers [UC Berkeley, UCLA, Universities of Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio State, Oregon, Penn State, Rutgers, and Wisconsin]. DR regulations among these universities vary widely, and include three major categories:-

- (1) There is no official DR (IL, Penn State, Rutgers, UCLA, UNC, WI). In some cases external members, either within (Penn State), or outside the university (Rutgers) bring in a broader and hoped-for unbiased perspective. In one case (UCLA), there is an "outside member", who has no responsibilities for rules and policies, but who evaluates the quality of the work and makes sure that the examination is fair from the standpoint of scholarship.
- (2) The DR is chosen by the Program or Dept. and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. The DR, or equivalent, is from outside of the department or program (OR), and, also, may be outside of the discipline (UC Berkeley, MI).
- (3) The DR is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School immediately before the dissertation defense. The DR is neither a member of the program, nor a regular member of the committee, but does vote at the end of the examination (OH).

The option of having no DR at all (option 1, above) was not considered seriously by the Committee. All Committee members feel that DRs provide external perspectives to the evaluation of doctoral candidates and ensure that the examinations are conducted in a fair and rigorous manner. Also, there was no enthusiasm for option 3, in which the DR is directly appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School. Initiation of this kind of approach for College Park would require considerable reorganization and increased management time, as there are over 500 Ph.D. defense examinations per year on campus.

Option 2 is more aligned with the current practice on campus but it has run into difficulties from time to time, because there are now many interdepartmental programs and some departments have merged to form bigger academic units. Therefore, it has become difficult to identify a DR from outside the program or department. In addition, the status of the DR as a Doctoral Dissertation Committee member varies widely across departments and programs. In many cases, the DR is a regular Doctoral Committee Member from the outset of the candidate's studies and has a detailed knowledge of the field of study. At the other extreme, the DR has a peripheral knowledge of the field and only attends the final examination to ensure that correct procedures are followed. In all cases the DR is a voting member of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee, regardless of his/her depth of knowledge of the field of study.

To address these issues, the Committee proposes the following regulations for the conduct of doctoral dissertation examinations. Changes to current practice are in ***bold italics***.

(1) There must be at least five approved and voting members of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee for the dissertation defense. One member of the Committee must be a DR. ***The DR may be one of the five voting members. Alternatively the DR may not be a voting member of the Committee. Whether the DR votes or not is a decision made by the student, primary advisor and the DR before the DR is nominated for approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. In addition, the Dean will ensure that there are five voting members on the Committee. Therefore, Committees that have a non-voting DR must have at least six members (five voting members and the non-voting DR).***

(2) The DR is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, following nomination of the prospective DR by the primary advisor and the Graduate Program Director, after consultation with the graduate student. The DR should have at least some background interest related to the student's research or scholarship. The DR ensures that the procedures of the dissertation examination comply with those of the Graduate School [listed in the Graduate Catalog under Academic Policies: Doctoral Degrees] and reports any procedural irregularities in the conduct of the examination to the Dean of the Graduate School.

(3) The DR must be from another tenure home than the student's primary advisor, or co-advisor(s). ***In the case of multi-disciplinary programs, the DR can be a member of the program, as long as they have a different tenure home from the primary advisor, co-advisor(s), or Doctoral Committee Chair (if the Doctoral Committee Chair is not a primary advisor).***

(4) ***The person nominated to become the DR may serve as a regular member of the student's Doctoral Graduate Committee from the time it is first convened. Alternatively, the person nominated to be the DR may be added to the Doctoral Graduate Committee at a later date and either take part in some committee meetings including the qualifying examination, or only join as a Doctoral Dissertation Committee member for the final dissertation defense. In all cases, the DR must be present for the full dissertation defense and serve to adjudicate the defense.***

(5) Voting members approve the dissertation by signing next to their respective names on the Report of the Examining Committee. Refusal of a voting member to sign is taken as disapproval (a "No" vote). ***The Report of the Examining Committee will be altered to indicate whether the DR is a voting or non-voting member.***

(6) Two "No" votes constitute failure.

(7) The following question will be added to the Report of the Examining Committee:

Did the examination procedures comply with those required by the Graduate School [listed in the latest edition of the Graduate Catalog under Academic Policies: Doctoral Degrees]?

Yes

No

Signature of the Dean's Representative

Date

If No, the Dean's Representative must apprise the Dean of the Graduate of the procedural irregularities, followed by a written report (signed and dated) within three days of the examination.