

Graduate Studies website  
MA + PLD

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

## GUIDELINES

### DISSERTATION FINAL EXAMINATION

The supervision of the final stages of the dissertation and approvals thereof are the responsibility of the student's academic unit. This unit may be a department, a school, or a designated graduate program within a college, department, or school. For purposes of the policy that follows, the term "program" or "program faculty" will be used to designate the academic unit that grants approval of the dissertation and the final examination.

#### THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

This committee is comprised of graduate faculty members and is appointed by the candidate's program when the candidate has developed an appropriate dissertation topic and has an approved Advisor. Normally, this committee will consist of a minimum of the Advisor (who will act as chair of the committee), two additional members from the candidate's program, and one faculty member from a discipline outside the program. (NOTE: only one of the four members may be A-3 or F-3 Graduate Faculty Status. All others must have F-4 Graduate Faculty Status.)

The Advisor and at least two of the remaining three must be members of the Graduate Faculty who have been approved to direct dissertations. If a Co-Advisor is desired, s(he) should be included in the above members. If, for warranted reasons, it is desirable to have a person on the committee who does not meet the above qualifications, special permission must be obtained from the Dean of the appropriate college or designee.

When the Advisor believes the dissertation is ready for preliminary approval, the Dean must be notified to request the appointment of the Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR) to serve on the Examining Committee. Once the GFR is appointed, the dissertation will be circulated in easily legible form among the members of the committee.

The Advisor will allow a minimum of a ten-day period for reading of the dissertation and will then convene the dissertation committee including the GFR (without the candidate) for the purpose of evaluating it. Recommended revisions will be noted by the Advisor and communicated to the candidate, and when in the opinion of the Advisor and the candidate, the appropriate revisions have been made, the Advisor will inform the Graduate Coordinator, the Chairperson/Director, and the Dean.

#### COMPOSITION OF THE EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

1. **The Examining Committee** will consist of the Dissertation Committee (a minimum of the Advisor, two additional members from the candidate's program, and one faculty member from a discipline outside the program), plus a representative from the Graduate Faculty who may act as moderator.
2. If a separate moderator is desired, s(he) will be selected by the Dissertation Committee from the members of the Graduate Faculty who have been approved to direct dissertations. S(he) will not be a faculty member in the candidate's major program. The principal duties of the moderator are to preside and to moderate. S(he) should see to it that all participants act in a civilized, polite, and proper manner. S(he) should be familiar with the procedures of the oral defense, and has the authority to suspend the examination should a situation arise that would not be conducive to a fair examination.
3. **The Graduate Faculty Representative** will be appointed by the Dean, or his/her designate after consultation, when appropriate, with the Advisor or Program Chairperson. To qualify, s(he) must have directed a dissertation to completion a member of the D-list. The Graduate Faculty Representative should be familiar with the general content area of the dissertation. The Graduate Faculty Representative most often comes from outside the student's department but may be a member of the candidate's program faculty but outside the candidate's area of concentration. The graduate faculty representative may also come from outside the university but must have directed a dissertation to completion. The Graduate Faculty Representative represents the Graduate Faculty by

noting whether or not the nature of the questioning and the responses meet highly respectable scholarly standards. If s(he) has some reservation in regard to this, the reservations should be presented immediately to the Dean or his/her designate. The Graduate Faculty Representative is expected to question the candidate and to vote on the passing of the final examination.

#### **THE FINAL ORAL DEFENSE:**

1. When the Dissertation Committee has met and has agreed to proceed to the final examination, the Advisor will designate the time and place of the final oral defense and notify all members of the examining committee. The oral defense is open to any member of the University wishing to attend and, therefore, a facility adequate to meet this requirement should be provided. The defense should be scheduled to allow a minimum of ten days for all of the examination committee to look over the dissertation; this is in addition to the ten-day period preceding the Dissertation Committee meeting. In the absence of the Dissertation Advisor, the oral defense may not be held. If it is a matter of long term absence or enduring illness of the Advisor, the Chairperson/Director of the department/school, in consultation with the appropriate Dean, should make appropriate arrangements for a substitute.
2. The dissertation must be in final form (not merely a late draft but also not necessarily the final typed copy) prior to the final oral defense. It is permissible to number pages in pencil, however, so as to reduce the cost of final changes that may grow out of the oral defense. If, in the opinion of more than one member of the examining committee, the dissertation is not in acceptable final form the oral defense will not be held. This is to be determined by vote prior to the final oral examination and without the candidate or others being present. If a negative vote occurs, the candidate may be called in to provide clarification. Acceptable form refers to the substance and usefulness of the dissertation as well as the quality of the writing. A rescheduling of the oral defense, if necessary, will occur when, in the opinion of the Advisor and the student, the dissertation has been modified to incorporate the suggested changes. The dissertation must be acceptable, with no more than one dissenting vote, before the rescheduled final oral can be held. If the dissertation is not in suitable form at this second scheduled oral, the Dean will be so notified. Further action is then the responsibility of the Dean.
3. The final oral defense will be open to the University community. Notification of the time and place of the defense should be provided to the college or independent school so that it may be announced in a suitable publication. Copies of the abstract of the dissertation should be available in the candidate's department/school and the college or independent school prior to the defense and at the defense itself, to familiarize other members of the Graduate Faculty with the methodology and findings.
4. The candidate will open the defense with a brief presentation of his/her findings, after which the members of the examining committee will question the candidate in order to be determined by the Moderator. When, in the opinion of the Moderator, members of the examining committee have had an adequate opportunity to question the candidate, the Moderator may open the examination to appropriate questions from others present.
5. Questions dealing with the substance, meaning, and usefulness of the research in the dissertation are of greatest propriety. Questions or comments dealing with punctuational or grammatical minutiae, spelling, etc., are out of order; such comments should be written out and privately submitted to the advisor.
6. If, in the opinion of the Moderator or upon motion duly passed by a majority of the committee, it should be deemed necessary to discontinue the defense, the Moderator may recess the defense until a time mutually agreeable to the Moderator, the Advisor, the Candidate, and the Dean.
7. When the questioning has run its course, the Moderator will adjourn the defense and the room will be cleared of everyone except the members of the examining committee. Parliamentary procedure will be observed to determine the success or failure of the candidate, with the Moderator acting as Chair without a vote.
8. The candidate should be evaluated both (a) upon the overall quality and significance of his/her dissertation, and (b) upon the oral defense of his/her findings. A candidate passes the final oral defense if s(he) passes with no more than one dissenting vote.

9. All members of the examining committee will sign the Report of Final Examination form, recording their votes; committee members may vote "Yes" or "No" but they may not abstain. The Moderator and Department Chairperson or School/Program Director must then sign the Reports of Final Examination, which is forwarded to the college or independent school.
10. Only members of the examining committee that voted "YES" are required to sign the dissertation signature page.

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*Approved by Graduate Studies Administrative Advisory Committee:* 12-19-02  
04-08-04