

Department of Health & Human Performance
Graduate Research Degrees (GRD) Committee
Standard Operating Procedures

(last revised: 11/11/2010)

Purpose

This document describes the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) used by the Graduate Research Degrees (GRD) Committee of the University of Houston (UH) Department of Health & Human Performance (HHP). The GRD committee will review these SOP annually, but may modify it at any time by a majority vote of its members.

Authority

The GRD committee was established and is authorized by the HHP constitution. The UH and its College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) govern all policies and procedures documented herein. Thus, should any policy or procedural conflict arise between this SOP and current written UH or CLASS documents, the UH or CLASS documents will take precedence.

Committee Responsibilities

The GRD Committee comprises all approved HHP faculty members meeting the eligibility requirements listed below. The Committee is responsible for administering all M.S. and Ph.D. degrees offered by the HHP department. To that end, its members will:

1. Set admission standards for those degrees,
2. Review applications and accept or reject each applicant for admission to those degree programs,
3. Set course, thesis, internship, examination, and other requirements for achieving each of those degrees,
4. Review and determine courses of action for student petitions related to those degree requirements,
5. Review student progress toward degree completion and determine courses of action when necessary,
6. Administer qualifying and comprehensive examinations, review results of those examinations, and determine courses of action when necessary,
7. Review and approve or reject members of all thesis and dissertation committees, and
8. Review and approve or reject applications for adjunct faculty status when the adjunct duties are related to delivering teaching, research, or other aspects of those degrees.

Committee Membership

Any faculty member meeting the eligibility requirements listed below will be approved to become a member of the GRD Committee following formal review of their supporting evidence, which should include a current CV listing all refereed journal articles, grant proposal submissions, and external research presentations, as well as a list of graduate student thesis and/or dissertation committees chaired.

Review Process

New member applicants may submit their supporting materials to the GRD Committee Chair at any time during the school year. The chair, or a designated subcommittee, will review the evidence submitted within one month and present the results to the full committee at its next regularly scheduled meeting. A majority of the committee membership must approve the application for membership to be granted. Membership begins immediately following approval of the application.

Continuing (or Active) members must submit their supporting materials to the GRD Committee Chair by the first of September each year. The chair, or a designated subcommittee, will review the evidence submitted and present the results to the full committee at its October meeting. (Note that no GRD Committee Chair or subcommittee member may review her/his own evidence. Instead, a tenured member of the GRD committee must be elected by the GRD to review the GRD Committee Chair's evidence, and members of the designated subcommittee must recuse themselves from participating in any review of their personal evidence.) No vote is required to retain membership for those meeting the eligibility requirements. However, should a continuing member fail to satisfy all of the eligibility requirements, a majority vote of the GRD committee membership is required to remove that member from the committee or allow continued membership on a probationary status. Any member removed from the committee as a result of the annual review will be allowed to continue chairing any graduate committees that were approved prior to removal. The rights and responsibilities associated with GRD membership as they pertain to chairing a dissertation/thesis committee will continue for this individual until the particular student has graduated.

Any former GRD committee member may reapply as a new member if, and when, s/he meets the eligibility requirements.

New Member Eligibility Requirements:

To become a new member of the GRD Committee, a faculty member must:

1. Hold a tenured or tenure-track faculty appointment in HHP,
2. Demonstrate evidence of active involvement in one or more of the degree programs administered by the GRD committee,
3. Demonstrate evidence of an ongoing, focused research agenda through recently (within two years) published refereed journal articles, grant proposal submissions, or external research presentations, and
4. Demonstrate evidence of having served as Chair or Co-Chair of a successfully completed Doctoral dissertation or Master's thesis committee at UH or other academic/research institution.

Continuing Member Eligibility Requirements:

To maintain continued membership on the GRD Committee, a current member must:

1. Meet all the new member eligibility requirements,
2. Have served as the primary advisor to at least one graduate student in a degree program administered by the GRD committee in the previous review cycle, and
3. Have attended at least two-thirds (2/3) of all regularly scheduled GRD committee meetings in the preceding academic year (or since becoming a member in the preceding year).

Committee Chair

Any member of the GRD committee having at least two years experience as a member of the committee is eligible to run for GRD Committee Chair. The Chair serves for a two-year term, being elected following open nominations from the floor at the September meeting of every even school year. The candidate receiving the largest number of votes from those present at that meeting becomes the new Chair.

Standing Subcommittees

To facilitate the work of the GRD Committee, four standing subcommittees have been established. Subcommittee members must be active GRD Committee members, and members may serve on more than one subcommittee. Subcommittees may meet face to face or electronically as needed to accomplish their work in a timely fashion.

1. **GRD Membership Subcommittee:** Three members elected by the GRD for one-year terms at the first meeting of each school year. Reviews the evidence of eligibility provided by all continuing committee members at the beginning of each school year and by applicants for new member status as

they are received. Makes recommendations for formal votes at the regularly scheduled committee meetings.

2. **Student Application Subcommittee:** Three members elected by the GRD for one-year terms at the first meeting of each school year. Works with the graduate advisors to review student application package as they are received. Makes recommendations for formal votes at the regularly scheduled committee meetings and/or through the on-line voting site.
3. **Student Petitions Subcommittee:** Two members elected by the GRD for one-year terms at the first meeting of each school year. Works with the Chair to review student petitions as they are received throughout the year. Makes recommendations for disposition and formal votes at the regularly scheduled committee meetings.
4. **Research Days Subcommittee:** Two members elected by the GRD for one-year terms at the first meeting of each school year. Works with a student committee to plan and organize the HHP Graduate Student Research Day and the HHP Faculty Research Day each year. Also encourages undergraduate participation in HHP research laboratories (SURF, PURS) and assists the Honors College in coordinating its Undergraduate Research Day.

Committee Voting Procedures

All votes will be conducted either during Committee meetings or through the online voting site. The Committee will agree upon whether to vote during a meeting or through the online site for each voting issue. No business may be conducted and no votes may be held unless a quorum (50% of active members) is present in the meeting or casts a vote through the online voting site. All GRD Committee votes except those regarding membership are decided by the number of votes cast by the members of the Committee present at time of voting, with a simple majority of those votes cast being sufficient for a motion to pass. Votes regarding committee membership require a majority of the entire membership to pass. Votes should be open unless there is majority agreement for a secret (by paper ballot) vote.

Administration of Research Degrees

Admissions

Admission to any of the HHP graduate research programs is based on review of a series of success indicators, including undergraduate courses and degree plan, GPA, GRE scores, TOEFL, letter of research interests/goals, writing sample, letters of recommendation, and personal interview. Applicants must also secure a commitment from a member of the GRD committee to serve as the applicant's primary advisor prior to formal approval for admission. The GRD committee will admit a student to one of the HHP graduate research programs only after a thorough review of the application materials and majority vote of support of acceptance.

General Petitions

General petitions may be submitted by students in HHP graduate research programs to request changes in program requirements, changes in advisor, transfers into different programs, leaves of absence, and other program-related issues. These petitions must be signed by the advisor, and if necessary, will be forwarded to the Chair of the GRD Committee for disposition. The Chair, or a designated subcommittee, will review the petition, consult with the student's advisor, and recommend a course of action to the full committee at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

Any M.S. student wishing to transfer to the Ph.D. program prior to completing their M.S. program requirements may request this using General Petition. To be granted permission, the student must satisfy the entrance requirements for the Ph.D. program. Those transferring to the Ph.D. program must also have successfully defended their M.S. thesis proposal prior to petitioning, and must successfully defend the thesis project within 18 months after the transfer to remain in Ph.D. program.

Doctoral Qualifying Examination

At the end of the first academic year, a Ph.D. student will be required to take the Qualifying Exam. This written examination will be administered within the department based on a book or number of short essays supplied to the student at the beginning of the semester in which they sit the examination. The GRD will review the readings and approve them by a majority vote prior to their distribution.

This examination is designed to assess the critical thinking and critical writing skills of the student, skills that the student will have been expected to begin developing as part of the educational experience supplied in the PEP 8306 Doctoral Seminar class and continue to self-develop during the period they have to review the readings supplied to them.

The questions posed in the examination will be formulated by an external testing entity and approved by the Committee and be based on general conceptual themes appearing in the readings identified by the GRD Committee. The examination will be graded by the testing entity external to the university who is identified by the Committee and will be of a PASS/FAIL nature. The grades will be reviewed and approved by the Committee before distribution to the examinees.

A student must receive a PASS grade in their Qualifying Exam to continue in the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program. Any student that does not receive a PASS grade on the first attempt will be given the opportunity to retake the qualifying examination in the Summer semester after being supplied an additional series of short essays at the beginning of that semester. The second examination attempt will be administered in the same manner as the initial attempt. A student that receives a FAIL grade on their second attempt of the Qualifying Exam will be immediately dismissed from the Ph.D. program.

Candidacy Paper Requirements

Each Ph.D. student is required to complete a candidacy paper, which is a scientific article based on data collected and analyzed by the student while enrolled in the Ph.D. program, and intended for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. The student's advisor will be responsible for identifying two or more independent readers for the student's candidacy paper. If a reader is not a member of the GRD committee, the advisor will require approval from the GRD Committee for that person to serve as a candidacy paper reader. Fulfillment of candidacy paper requirements are ultimately the decision of the GRD who will vote on the issue once a recommendation and evidence of the manuscript's submission to a peer-reviewed journal has been communicated to the committee by the student's advisor.

Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations

Each Ph.D. student is required to pass a comprehensive examination, which is a written exam representing the practical knowledge of an independent researcher. A student's advisor will be responsible for the process of collecting questions from each faculty member tasked with writing comprehensive examination questions, collecting the graded examination, compiling the final grade for the examination and communicating this grade to GRD committee. The GRD committee (based on the information supplied by the Advisor) will have final authority to recommend a pass or fail grade on the exam.

All doctoral students are required to use a computer to write the doctoral comprehensive examination unless a request to use pen and paper (in the form of a general petition from the student to the GRD committee) is reviewed and accepted by the GRD committee.

The GRD committee will be responsible for proctoring doctoral comprehensive exams within the physical location of HHP (e.g. use of conference rooms for 1 to 2 students, use of computer laboratory for more than 2 students).

Each academic advisor will be responsible for proctoring her or his doctoral students during the doctoral comprehensive exam period. Each advisor may make alternate arrangements with other HHP faculty members to serve as proctor but the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that doctoral comprehensive examinations are proctored is that of the academic advisor of the students sitting for the doctoral comprehensive examination.

A student's advisor will be responsible for identifying two or more readers for the student's comprehensive exam questions. If a reader is not a member of the GRD committee, the advisor will require approval from the GRD Committee for that person to serve as a comprehensive exam question reader.

PASS/FAIL decisions on all comprehensive exams are ultimately the decision of the GRD who will vote on the issue once a grade has been communicated to the committee by the student's advisor. Once the GRD committee has reviewed and accepted the results of the comprehensive exam, a student can approach the Chair of the GRD who can indicate whether the student has passed or failed. A student may also speak with her or his advisor, who may indicate informally to the student the results of the GRD Committee vote.

If a student fails the comprehensive doctoral examination, then the advisor, with the approval from the GRD committee, will recommend a remediation plan for that student, culminating in the student's second and final attempt at the comprehensive examination. The contents of this plan are the responsibility of the advisor. Once approved, the advisor must document that the student has reviewed and understood the remedial course of action. If a student fails to complete the remedial plan within its specified time frame or fails the second attempt at the comprehensive examination, the student will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program.

Graduate Student Thesis/Dissertation Committee

A student's advisor will be responsible for identifying Committee members for her or his student's dissertation/thesis committee. If the dissertation/thesis committee members are not faculty members of the University of Houston, the advisor will require approval from the GRD Committee for these individuals to serve as adjunct faculty and dissertation/thesis committee members. Once the dissertation/thesis committee is assembled, the Advisor will notify the GRD committee in a memorandum indicating all members of the dissertation/thesis committee, the student's name and the title of the dissertation/thesis project.

Graduate Student Annual Review

All GRD members are responsible for carrying out an annual review on each of their graduate students in order to assess the progress of each student toward completion of their degree. This process will be completed annually at the end of every spring semester. The culmination of this review will be a report presented to the GRD committee that details the classes the student has completed/enrolled in, research projects in which the student has been involved, any publications or presentations, where in the degree process the student is (i.e., candidacy paper, advancement to candidacy, degree plan filed, comprehensive exams, dissertation proposal, etc.), advisor's assessment of the students progress to date and feedback from the student on their perception of their own progress towards completion of their degree.

Upon completion of the annual review process a student will be placed in one of three categories: (a) making adequate progress towards the degree; (b) probationary status; (c) terminated from the graduate program. The advisor will be responsible for determining whether the student is making adequate progress toward completion of her or his degree. If an advisor deems that a student should be placed in either probationary status or terminated from the graduate program, then the advisor will provide a rationale to the GRD Committee for her or his decision, including those steps deemed necessary by the advisor to have a student removed from probationary status and returned to good standing within the graduate program. As the GRD Committee is ultimately responsible for all student admissions to the M.S. and Ph.D. programs, the final decision on a student's status within the program will be the subject of a committee discussion and vote.

Graduate Student Advisor Change

A student wishing to transfer advisors within the graduate program must submit a General Petition for "change of advisor" to the GRD committee for approval. An Advisor who wishes to terminate her or his service as a student's advisor without the student's consent must explain the decision to the GRD committee, who will then attempt to find a new advisor for the student.

Ancillary Functions of the GRD Committee

Adjunct Faculty Status

The GRD committee may recommend to the Chair of the Department certain individuals for Adjunct Faculty status in the Department. These individuals will play a significant role in graduate research and education within HHP, such as serving as dissertation/thesis committee members, serving as Readers on candidacy papers and doctoral comprehensive examinations or expanding the research opportunities available for our graduate students.