

COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

DATE: October 19, 2011

TO: Rosemary Knight, Chair
XLIV Faculty Senate

FROM: Richard Roberts, Chair
Committee on Graduate Studies

RE: Recommendation for Revisions in Allowable Memberships on
University Oral Examination and Doctoral Dissertation Committees

The Committee on Graduate Studies spent portions of several meetings during AY 2010-11 and Autumn quarter 2011 discussing the composition of PhD Orals and PhD Dissertation Committees. C-GS was greatly assisted during the year by the efforts of Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Education Chris Golde to provide the historical research and different language options as the Committee grappled with the attempt to update the policy so that it describes all of the options for departments and Interdisciplinary Programs to populate their doctoral committees.

The current language from *the Stanford Bulletin* is Part II of this recommendation. Part III is the new language recommended by C-GS (approved at its meetings of April 27, 2011 and October 19, 2011).

For the Dissertation Reading Committees, the changes include:

- Committees will be at least three but no more than five members, all of whom must sign off on the dissertation (the signing-off requirement remains the same as before).
- Emeritus Faculty are now counted as the same as current Academic Council faculty, rather than as non-Academic Council members.
- An exception to the policy that a co-advisor who is an Academic Council member must be appointed if the principal dissertation advisor is an emeritus member of the Academic Council has been added. A co-advisor is not required during the first two years following retirement for emeritus Academic Council members who are recalled to active service.
- Non-Academic Council readers can be appointed to the Reading Committee if they hold a PhD (this allows efficient use of affiliated and consulting faculty who possess expertise in the dissertation field as well as representatives from industry or other university faculties), as long as the majority of Committee members are Academic Council faculty.

For the Orals Committees:

- Emeritus members of the Academic Council may serve on Oral Exam Committees, and are not considered “non-Academic Council members.”
- The number/s of non-Academic Council members allowed was also made specific for committees larger than four examiners (“one of four or five examiners or two of six or seven examiners”).

The requirement that department chairs must approve the composition of all reading and orals committees has not changed. C-GS had hoped to bring this recommendation to the Faculty Senate in Spring Quarter 2010-11 in order to make it effective with the beginning of the following (now current) academic year, on September 1, 2011.

The Committee on Graduate Studies therefore recommends adoption of the revised language (document III) for doctoral reading and orals committees, effective September 1, 2011 without limit of time. The revised language will be added to the *Stanford Bulletin* as soon as possible.

COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

RECOMMENDATION FOR REVISED LANGUAGE RELATING TO DOCTORAL READING AND
ORALS DISSERTATION COMMITTEES

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II. CURRENT LANGUAGE FROM THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY BULLETIN

Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/registrar/bulletin/4939.htm>

The doctoral dissertation reading committee consists of the principal dissertation adviser and two other readers. At least one member must be from the student's major department. Normally, all members are on the Stanford Academic Council. The student's department chair may, in some cases, approve the appointment of a reader who is not on the Academic Council, if that person is particularly well qualified to consult on the dissertation topic and holds a Ph.D. or equivalent foreign degree. Former Stanford Academic Council members, emeritus professors, and non-Academic Council members may thus on occasion serve on a reading committee. If they are to serve as the principal dissertation adviser, however, the appointment of a co-adviser who is currently on the Academic Council is required. A non-Academic Council member (including emeritus professors and former Academic Council members) may replace only one of three required members of dissertation reading committees.

The reading committee, as proposed by the student and agreed to by the prospective members, is endorsed by the chair of the major department on the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee form. This form must be submitted before approval of Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status or before scheduling a University oral examination that is a defense of the dissertation. The reading committee may be appointed earlier, according to the department timetable for doctoral programs. All subsequent changes to the reading committee must be approved by the chair of the major department. The reading committee must conform to University regulations at the time of degree conferral. Exceptions allowing two non-Academic Council members on the dissertation reading committee when a member of the committee becomes emeritus may be granted by the department chair through the Petition for Doctoral Committee Members.

University Oral Examination

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/registrar/bulletin/4937.htm>

Passing a University oral examination is a requirement of the Ph.D. and J.S.D. degrees. The purpose of the examination is to test the candidate's command of the field of study and to confirm fitness for scholarly pursuits. Departments determine when, after admission to candidacy, the oral examination is taken and whether the exam will be a test of knowledge of the field, a review of a dissertation proposal, or a defense of the dissertation. The chairperson of a Stanford oral examination is appointed for this examination only, to represent the interests of the University for a fair and rigorous process.

Students must be registered in the term in which the University oral examination is taken. The period between the last day of final exams of one term and the day prior to the first day of the following term is considered an extension of the earlier term. Candidacy must also be valid.

The University Oral Examination Committee consists of at least five Stanford faculty members: four examiners and the committee chair from another department. All members are normally on the Stanford Academic Council, and the chair must be a member. Emeritus faculty are also eligible to serve as examiners or chair of the committee. (A petition for appointment of an examining committee member who is not on the Academic Council may be approved by the chair of the department if that person contributes an area of expertise that is not readily available from the faculty.) The chair of the examining committee may not have a full or joint appointment in the adviser's or student's department, but may have a courtesy appointment in the department. The chair can be from the same department as any other

member(s) of the examination committee and can be from the student's minor department provided that the student's adviser does not have a full or joint appointment in the minor department.

For Interdisciplinary Degree Programs (IDPs), the chair of the examining committee may not have a full or joint appointment in the primary adviser's major department and must have independence from the student and adviser.

The University Oral Examination form must be submitted to the department graduate studies administrator at least two weeks prior to the proposed examination date. The examination is conducted according to the major department's adopted practice, but it should not exceed three hours in length, and it must include a period of private questioning by the examining committee.

Responsibility for monitoring appointment of the oral examination chair rests with the candidate's major department. Although the department cannot require the candidate to approach faculty members to serve as chair, many departments invite students and their advisers to participate in the process of selecting and contacting potential chairs.

The candidate passes the examination if the examining committee casts four favorable votes out of five or six, five favorable votes out of seven, or six favorable votes out of eight. Five members present and voting constitute a quorum. If the committee votes to fail a student, the committee chair sends within five days a written evaluation of the candidate's performance to the major department and the student. Within 30 days and after review of the examining committee's evaluation and recommendation, the chair of the student's major department must send the student a written statement indicating the final action of the department.

III. PROPOSED REVISIONS ON THE MEMBERSHIP OF DOCTORAL COMMITTEES

Approved by the Committee on Graduate Studies, April 27, 2011 and October 19, 2011

Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee

The doctoral dissertation reading committee consists of the principal dissertation adviser and, typically, two other readers. The doctoral dissertation reading committee must have three members and may not have more than five members. All members of the reading committee approve the dissertation. At least one member must be from the student's major department. Normally, all committee members are members of the Stanford University Academic Council or are emeritus Academic Council members. The student's department chair may, in some cases, approve the appointment of a reader who is not a current or emeritus member of the Academic Council, if that person is particularly well qualified to consult on the dissertation topic and holds a Ph.D. or equivalent foreign degree. Former Stanford Academic Council members and non-Academic Council members may thus on occasion serve on a reading committee. A non-Academic Council member (including former Academic Council members) may replace only one of three required members of dissertation reading committees. If the reading committee has four or five members, at least three members (comprising the majority) must be current or emeritus members of the Academic Council.

Any member of the Academic Council may serve as the principal dissertation adviser. If former Academic Council members, emeritus Academic Council members, or non-Academic Council members are to serve as the principal dissertation adviser, the appointment of a co-adviser who is currently on the Academic Council is required. This is to ensure representation for the student in the department by someone playing a major adviser role in completion of the dissertation. However, a co-adviser is not

required during the first two years following retirement for emeritus Academic Council members who are recalled to active service.

The reading committee, as proposed by the student and agreed to by the prospective members, is endorsed by the chair of the major department on the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee form. This form must be submitted before approval of Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status or before scheduling a University oral examination that is a defense of the dissertation. The reading committee may be appointed earlier, according to the department timetable for doctoral programs. All subsequent changes to the reading committee must be approved by the chair of the major department. The reading committee must conform to University regulations at the time of degree conferral.

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