

Proposal from the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee to Revise GRS Policy on Composition of Examining Committees for Final PhD Oral Exams

Current policy:

Abstract and Final Oral Examination

Students undergo final oral examinations in which they defend their dissertations as valuable contributions to knowledge in their fields and demonstrate a mastery of their fields of specialization in relation to their dissertations. The examining Committee is composed of five or more Graduate School of Arts & Sciences faculty members, at least two of whom are from the student's department. By special appointment approved by the dean of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, examiners may be from outside the School itself. The membership of the committee must be approved by the department chair or the director of graduate studies. [...]

Proposed revision:

Abstract and Final Oral Examination

Students undergo final oral examinations in which they defend their dissertations as valuable contributions to knowledge in their fields and demonstrate a mastery of their fields of specialization in relation to their dissertations. The examining committee is composed of five or more professorial faculty members, including the readers and a committee chair who is not the first or second reader. At least two of the committee members, including the chair, must be from the student's department or graduate program, and a majority of the committee must be Boston University faculty members. By special appointment, approved by the dean of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, examiners may be from outside Boston University. The membership of the committee must be approved by the department chair/program director or the director of graduate studies. [...]

Rationale:

The proposed changes to the composition of dissertation committees are:

1. To allow all Boston University faculty (not just GRS faculty) to sit on dissertation committees;
2. To require that at least two committee members, including the chair, be faculty in the student's department or graduate program; and
3. To require that a majority of the committee members be Boston University faculty members.

Departments and programs can and do have further membership rules, but these would obtain throughout GRS. The changes have been discussed at length by the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee of nine directors of graduate studies.