

# THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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and-professional-education/graduate-degrees/dissertation-and-thesis/embargo-guidelines/) for more information about embargo options.

The academic experience is greatly enhanced if faculty members other than the direct advisor are readily and formally available for consultation and discussion with the graduate student. To provide this element of supervision, a dissertation committee must be put in place for the Ph.D. student early in the dissertation stage. The graduate group is responsible for monitoring the progress of the student through the dissertation committee, as follows:

- A dissertation committee must consist of at least three faculty (including at least two members of the graduate group). While some graduate groups require all members of the dissertation committee be members of the graduate group or affiliated department, others encourage/require appointment of a faculty member from another department to encourage an interdisciplinary perspective. Students should be sure to review the policy about the composition of dissertation committee (<https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd/#dissertationcommittee>) as they are building their committee.
- It is required that the dissertation committee meet with the student, as a committee, at least once per year to assess the student's progress in the program and to provide advice on future work.
- The committee submits a written report to the graduate group chair, at least once per year, detailing its observations of the student's progress and its recommendations.
- The student must be given the opportunity to respond to the committee's report/recommendation and to append a response to the committee's report.
- Copies of the report shall be given to the student and kept by the graduate group.
- This annual progress report will be used, in part, to determine the mark given for the student's dissertation status course.

The Graduate Group is responsible for ensuring that the membership of the dissertation committee is recorded in the student's official University record. The graduate division office at the home school will monitor compliance with this requirement through reports and an annual audit of the official student file.

## Advising on Embargo Options

An important point of guidance from the advisor and dissertation committee – that is sometimes overlooked in the later stage of completion – is to counsel the student on whether to embargo the dissertation. Penn requires open access publication of dissertations in the University's institutional repository, ScholarlyCommons (<https://repository.upenn.edu/home/>). Open access publication provides a wide audience, can help to market ideas to potential employers, and can help make plagiarism or theft much easier to detect. The open access dissertation will be available via the internet, including full text searching through search engines like Google. In cases where papers are in press, patents are pending, or where there are other intellectual property concerns, it may be beneficial to delay publication (commonly referred to as an "embargo"). Students should discuss embargo options with their advisor and their dissertation committee who can help to decide whether a delay in publication is necessary or advisable. Refer to the Dissertation Embargo Guidelines (<https://provost.upenn.edu/for-students/graduate->