Policy Proposals from the Faculty Subcommittee on the Future of the Dissertation
Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures
https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/

The following policy proposals, noted in italic text with prefaces in red text, are based on recommendations from the Report from the Committee on the Future of the Dissertation. Each recommendation is shown in the context of its future implementation, if adopted, in the appropriate policy in the Graduate School’s Academic Policies and Procedures.

1. Policy on Committees (Doctoral/Master’s)
   https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#committees

Minimum Graduate School requirements for graduate committees are as follows:

1. The chair or co-chair of the committee must be Graduate Faculty from the student’s program. The UW-Madison Faculty Policies and Procedures 3.05A stipulates that “the faculty of the Graduate School includes all university faculty defined in 1.02 holding professional rank (professor, associate professor, assistant professor or instructor) in any department with graduate program authority, including those with zero-time appointments in such departments.” Committee members who have retired or resigned from the University automatically retain Graduate Faculty status for one year; after one year they are permitted to serve as co-chair or other non-Graduate Faculty committee member.

2. Doctoral committees/final oral examination committees must have at least 5 members representing more than one graduate program, 4 of whom must be UW-Madison graduate faculty or former UW-Madison graduate faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement. At least one of the 5 members must be from outside of the student’s major program or major field (often from the minor field).

   Voting Item 1: Reduce the minimum number of members serving on doctoral committees/final oral examination committees from 5 to 4, as follows:
   Doctoral committees/final oral examination committees must have at least 4 members representing more than one graduate program, 3 of who must be UW-Madison graduate faculty or former UW-Madison graduate faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement. At least one of the 4 members must be from outside of the student’s major program or major field (often from the minor field).

   Voting Item 2: Adopt a minimum requirement for a majority of the committee to serve as readers vs. non-readers, as follows:
   At least three committee members of all doctoral/final oral examination committees must be designated as “readers.”
2. Policy on Dissertation
https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#dissertation

A doctoral dissertation must be a dissertator’s own work.

Voting Item 3: Adopt the following expansion of current policy on collaborative work in the completion of a dissertation (adapted from Appendix II in the Future of the Dissertation Committee Report):

Dissertations must acknowledge assistance received from other individuals, including co-authors of published work that appears in the document, in any of the following areas:

• Designing the research
• Executing the research
• Analyzing the data
• Interpreting the data/research
• Writing, proofing, or copyediting the manuscript

Publication of the doctoral dissertation is required. The university uses ProQuest UMI ETD Administrator to publish the dissertation electronically and on microfilm and to publish an abstract of the dissertation in Dissertation Abstracts, a monthly publication. Dissertators must pay the cost of processing the dissertation and publishing the abstract by ProQuest.

Voting Item 4: Adopt a requirement for Public Presentation, as follows:

All students are required to present a public presentation or performance, as defined by their graduate program, in conjunction with a dissertation defense.

All doctoral dissertations are reviewed by the Graduate School’s Office of Admissions and Academic Services.

Voting Item 5: Graduate programs should provide evaluation standards for examining dissertations (from Appendix I in the Future of the Dissertation Committee Report), as follows:

All graduate programs must provide a statement of evaluation standards for dissertations to students.

EXAMPLE: An acceptable dissertation completed in partial fulfillment of the doctoral degree should have the following attributes, as recognized by the student’s dissertation committee:

Focus: A dissertation must clearly articulate a research problem or problems, a question or questions. It must specify the limits of the dissertation’s investigation with respect to theory, knowledge, or practice within the field of study.
**Appropriateness:** The methods and techniques applied in the execution of the dissertation must be recognized as appropriate to the subject matter and as fitting, original, and/or aesthetically effective.

**Clarity:** The dissertation should communicate complex ideas in a form and manner that is clear and understandable to area specialists and, as appropriate, to readers beyond the specialty area.

**Durability:** The description of the research and its major conclusions should be in a durable form (written or otherwise capable of being permanently archived).

**Novelty:** The dissertation should embody scholarship that makes a substantive contribution to the field of study. The ideas, concepts, designs, and/or performances should move beyond the current boundaries of knowledge within the field of study.

**Connectedness:** The dissertation should demonstrate a professional level of familiarity with, and understanding of, contemporary work in the field.

**Quantity:** The dissertation should demonstrate an appropriately comprehensive investigation of the student’s research area or artistic form.

**Documentation and Reproducibility:** Documentation in the dissertation should be sufficiently thorough and of an appropriate standard and made available to ensure that the dissertation provides a useful starting point or reference for subsequent researchers, scholars and/or artists.

**Professionalism:** A dissertation should reflect high ethical and professional standards.

Note to GFEC: Individual graduate programs can automatically adopt this standard for dissertations. Alternatively, programs can approve their own standards.
3. Policy on Advisors [https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#advisor](https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#advisor)

An advisor is a faculty member from the program responsible for providing advice regarding graduate studies and for supervising a student’s degree program (including research). An advisor, sometimes referred to as the “major professor”, “mentor”, or “trainer”, generally serves as chair of a student’s final examination committee.

With approval from the program, students can have a co-advisor/co-chair. The co-advisor/co-chair may be from any of the following categories: graduate faculty, faculty from a department without a graduate program, academic staff (including emeritus faculty), visiting faculty, faculty from another institution, scientists, research associates, and other individuals deemed qualified by the program executive committee or its equivalent.

**Voting Item 6**: Formalize the co-advisor/co-chair role by including the following statement in advisor policy:

*The co-advisor/co-chair will be designated on dissertation documentation.*