

Thesis

Advancement to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree

Once a student has passed his/her qualifying exam, he/she should complete the Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree and submit it to the Program Administrator. Although a sample form is available on the web, students should obtain a partially filled out form directly from the program office. A Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee Form (see below) should be returned along with the Advancement to Candidacy Form.

Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee (Thesis Committee)

Along with the Advancement to Candidacy form, each student must also complete the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee Form and submit it to the Program Administrator. Often the members of a student's Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee (thesis committee) are the same as those on his/her Qualifying Examination Committee. If so, students may ask faculty to sign both forms at the conclusion of the Qualifying Examination. The Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee (thesis committee) includes the student's advisor and at least three other faculty members of the Academic Council. The membership of this committee can be changed at a later date by mutual agreement of a student and his/her advisor. Please note that the Advancement to Candidacy and Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee Forms **MUST** be completed and approved prior to making a request for Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status after completing 135 units, at which point quarterly tuition is reduced substantially.

Annual Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee Meetings

Each student is expected to meet with his/her Dissertation Committee once each year. This meeting usually consists of an oral progress report by the student, often with a brief written outline provided prior to this meeting. The student's committee chair is required to make a written report of this meeting and of the student's progress. The student and the student's mentor are to independently write up an written report documenting the student's annual progress and send it to the program office.

Oral Examination

Once the Dissertation Reading Committee gives approval, a student may then take his/her oral examination. Prior to scheduling this exam, the student must verify with Grace that all other requirements have been completed (e.g. qualifying examination, required coursework) and then file the appropriate form. The program office will schedule a seminar room, invite an Examination Chair of the student's choice, or find an Examination Chair as the student's department representative if the student has no preference.

The major accomplishment of each successful Ph.D. student is the presentation of a written dissertation resulting from independent investigation that contributes to knowledge in the area of cancer biology. A University Oral Examination is also required for the Ph.D. degree. In the Cancer Biology Program, a public seminar (one hour) is presented by the Ph.D. candidate, followed by a closed-door oral examination. The University Oral Examination Committee consists of at least four examiners and a chair from a different academic department than the student's advisor. Note that the chair may be a faculty member in the Cancer Biology Program provided that he/she is not in the same academic department as the student's advisor. All members of the Committee are normally members of the Academic Council, and the oral examination chair must be. With the prior approval of the Program Director or School Dean, one of the examiners may be a person who is not a member of the Academic Council if that individual contributes expertise not readily available from the Stanford faculty. Official responsibility for selecting the oral examination chair rests with the Department. Cancer Biology delegates this to the student and dissertation advisor.

Dissertation

The final step in the process is to submit the signed dissertation to the Registrar for approval.

Q: Is the qualifying exam committee the same as the thesis committee?

Not necessarily. The qualifying exam committee is composed of three faculty members from Cancer Biology, excluding your advisor (see above). Often the thesis committee (doctoral dissertation reading committee) might include these same individuals plus your advisor. However, you and your advisor are free to reconstitute a different thesis committee after completion of the qualifying exam. Sometimes students want to add individuals from outside the program or even from other institutions to their thesis committee. Often your thesis committee members serve as references for future positions and fellowship applications, so one should give this some careful thought.