

## PhD Committee FAQ

*How many people serve on PhD committees and must they all be in UNC Chapel Hill's English and Comparative Literature Department?*

Five faculty members must serve on all the benchmark committees: PhD exam, prospectus, and dissertation defense. Three of the five must be tenure ladder faculty within the department. However, if you are a CMPL PhD student, only 2 of your faculty members must come from the department.

*Can I have more than five faculty members serve on my committee?*

There is no restriction on the number of faculty; however, it is preferable and advisable to keep to the minimum of five faculty members since scheduling a date for six adults (yourself and your five faculty members) can prove frustrating; the addition of a sixth faculty member compounds these scheduling difficulties.

*When do I need to make a decision about my committee members, especially about choosing a dissertation advisor?*

This is a hard question to answer. Certainly, we do not expect you to have this figured out your first year in the program, although you should have an idea of who you'd like to work with or faculty members who share your research interests and would be ideal committee members. It's always good to meet with a variety of faculty members early and often. You should definitely try to take classes with faculty who could serve on your committee. And you should be in conversation with the faculty member you would like to work with as your dissertation advisor by your second year and to confirm that relationship either by the second semester of your second year and no later than the first semester of your third year since you'll need to schedule your pre-exam meeting a year in advance of your comprehensive exams (please see the PhD Exam FAQ). At the beginning of the semester in which you plan to schedule your pre-exam meeting, you will need to have your committee composition confirmed.

*How do I approach faculty about serving on my exam committee?*

The faculty in our department are very approachable and want to mentor you and help guide you towards successful completion of your PhD. All faculty members who are not on leave will have office hours during the semester they are teaching. You should contact them through email and then follow up by visiting their office hours. You should also read the faculty profile on the department website in advance of your meeting so that you are familiar with their research agendas and areas of expertise.

*What is the difference between a dissertation advisor and a dissertation chair?*

Your dissertation advisor is your primary advisor whom you will work with in researching and writing your dissertation. Sometimes students choose co-advisors, upon the consent of both faculty members; however, students will only enroll in ENGL or CMPL 994 with a single faculty member (see the FAQ on Full Time Registration). While it is not required that the dissertation advisor remain constant from the time of a student's comprehensive exam through to the dissertation defense, it is advisable and preferable that a student maintain a constant and consistent relationship with a faculty member through the benchmarks of the PhD Program (comprehensive exam, prospectus, dissertation defense).

Your dissertation chair is the faculty member in charge of the administrative details of your comprehensive exam, prospectus, and dissertation defense. S/he will run/moderate/chair the exam, prospectus, and dissertation defense meetings and will coordinate the administrative aspects of each of these benchmarks. As with the dissertation advisor, it is not required that your chair remain constant from exam to dissertation defense, but it is preferable. The DGS office will assign your chair at the time of your pre-exam meeting; however, you can certainly consult with the DGS as to your preferences of a chair.

Both the dissertation advisor and dissertation chair need to be tenure ladder faculty in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, as per the guidelines of the Graduate School:

#### **Committee Composition**

A committee of at least five members is required. A majority of the members of a doctoral committee (and a majority of the people passing the student on an examination or approving a doctoral dissertation) must be regular members of the UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate Faculty from the student's major academic program. Other members may be special appointees to the Graduate Faculty. Doctoral programs are encouraged to include scholars from outside the program to serve as members of doctoral committees. The outside members may be selected from among scholars from other academic programs or from other institutions where scholarly work is conducted. The committee is approved by the academic program's director of graduate studies, after consultation with the student. A student should have a faculty research advisor and a committee chair. One individual faculty member may serve in both roles if approved by the academic program. Both roles should be filled by regular members of the Graduate Faculty in the student's major academic program; however, at the request of the program and approval of The Graduate School, they may be fixed-term graduate faculty members or from another UNC-Chapel Hill program. The *advisor* typically oversees the research progress and serves as the primary mentor. A student may elect to have co-advisors as long as one is from the student's major academic program. The committee *chair* typically oversees committee meetings and the associated documentation.

<http://handbook.unc.edu/phd.html#examinations>

*I'd like to work with a faculty member outside of the English department—is that possible?*

Yes. According to the Graduate School, all tenure ladder faculty at UNC Chapel Hill may serve as graduate faculty. No additional permission/paperwork is involved.

*I'd like to work with a faculty member in the department (or outside the department) who is not a tenure ladder faculty—is that possible?*

Yes. You will need to alert both the DGS and the Graduate Student Services Specialist. You will also need to obtain a c.v. for the faculty member and forward it to the Graduate Student Service Specialist, who will then work with the Graduate School so that the non-tenure ladder faculty member can gain temporary privileges to serve as a graduate faculty at UNC Chapel Hill.

For more information, see this link on the Graduate School website: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/policies/faculty-staff/faculty/>

*I'd like to work with a faculty member who is retired (emeritus)—is that possible?*

Yes. However, even if the faculty member is an emeritus professor in our department, you must still obtain a c.v. for the faculty member and forward it to the Graduate Student Service Specialist, who will then work with the Graduate School (once a faculty retire, they are no longer considered tenure ladder faculty per the Graduate School).

For more information, see the link on the Graduate School website: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/policies/faculty-staff/faculty/>

*I'd like to work with a faculty member outside of UNC Chapel Hill—is this possible?*

Yes. You will need to alert both the DGS and the Graduate Student Services Specialist. You will also need to obtain a c.v. for the faculty member and forward it to the Graduate Student Service Specialist, who will then work with the Graduate School so that the non-UNC Chapel Hill faculty member can gain temporary privileges to serve as a graduate faculty at UNC Chapel Hill.

For more information, see this link on the Graduate School website: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/policies/faculty-staff/faculty/>

*I'd like a faculty member outside of the English & Comparative literature department to be the director/advisor of my dissertation—is this possible? Or can someone co-direct my dissertation from outside the department?*

Your director must come from within the department but you can have someone outside the department co-direct your dissertation; however, for administrative purposes you only enroll in 994 with a single faculty member, which means you need to enroll with the advisor/director in the department. If you have co-directors that are both in English & Comparative literature, you still need to choose just one faculty member and stay consistently enrolled in 994 with that person.

*Do all my committee members need to be physically present for my various meetings/exams/defenses?*

It is preferable for all your committee members to be in attendance during your various meetings/exams/defenses. However, it is possible to have a committee member skype in/phone in (though we only recommend doing this for a single committee member—it is more difficult to handle multiple committee members off-site). In the event that a committee member will not be present for your prospectus or dissertation defense, we ask that you have the committee member contact/email the DGS and grant the DGS permission to sign the original documents (prospectus/dissertation paperwork) for him/her (the DGS has signing authority, as does the Department Chair). The prospectus and dissertation paperwork are original documents generated by the Graduate School and cannot be emailed and/or scanned and must have original signatures of all committee members following the prospectus/dissertation defense.