

Preparing for the Dissertation

Selection of a Dissertation Chairperson (the Major Professor)

As soon as the student has identified a problem area for research, a Dissertation Chairperson (also referred to as the Major Professor) is selected. The Dissertation Chairperson must be an appointed member of the FIU Graduate Faculty and must hold Dissertation Advisor status. A current list of Graduate Faculty is available on the University Graduate School website.

The identification and selection of the Dissertation Chairperson is initiated by the student and the selection of this individual is dependent upon mutual agreement of the student and the faculty member who is asked to guide the Dissertation research. The choice of the Dissertation Chairperson should be made based on the student's proposed area of research and the faculty member's expertise and scholarly interests.

The Dissertation Chairperson must be the Committee member who can supervise the research as a whole, but need not be the primary resource person for all aspects of the study. A recommended approach for students to use in identifying a Dissertation Chairperson is to become informed about faculty members' research interests and areas of expertise. The student and Chairperson will work together, often intensively, over a protracted period, so careful selection is essential. The Chairperson assumes primary responsibility for assisting the student in developing a continued Plan of Study, monitoring the student's progress, and guiding the student throughout the Dissertation project.

Selection of Dissertation Committee

The purpose of the Dissertation Committee is to guide the student's Dissertation research. With the help of the Dissertation Chairperson, the student selects members of her/his Dissertation Committee. Dissertation committees must have a minimum of four members: at least three of whom are from the unit offering the degree and one of whom is from another academic unit at FIU. All FIU faculty who are members of the Dissertation Committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty. A fifth member from within FIU or another educational institution may be added with the approval of the Dissertation Chairperson. All Committee appointments must be approved by the Dean of the University Graduate School. A current list of Graduate Faculty is available on the ***University Graduate School*** website.

To formalize the Committee, signatures from all Committee members are obtained by the doctoral student and recorded on the form. To obtain a copy of the form to formalize the Committee membership, see FIU ***Graduate Student Forms*** and then ***Form D-1 Appointment of Dissertation Committee***. If a Committee member is not FIU faculty, his/her curriculum vitae must be attached to the form.

Changes in Dissertation Chairperson or Committee Member(s)

Changes in the Dissertation Chairperson or Committee membership must be approved by the Coordinator of the PhD Program, the student, and the Dean of the University Graduate School. To obtain a copy of the form to revise Committee membership, see FIU ***Graduate Student Forms*** and then ***Form D-1r Appointment of Revised Dissertation Committee***. The student is responsible for obtaining signatures if Committee membership is changed.

