**Program Planning and Doctoral Committees**

**Initial Program Planning**

During the first term, the student will schedule a program planning meeting with the “initial faculty advisor” in Instructional Technology and Design. Students will meet with the initial advisor to begin planning course work and discussing the composition of the Doctoral Committee. Ideally, this initial advisement meeting will take place in person, but if students are not located within the proximity, the advisement process can occur via email. The initial advisor helps students begin their program planning by completing a draft of the *Program Plan of Study* that will then be submitted to Graduate Studies to be processed in the student’s files. *Program Plan of Study* can be obtained at this Web site: [http://www.usm.edu/graduateschool/planofstudy.php](http://www.usm.edu/graduateschool/planofstudy.php)

The role of the initial faculty advisor during the advisement process is to assure that the first few semesters of course work meet students’ needs and interests, as well as making sure that they are consistent with the requirements to successfully complete the Ph.D. degree in a timely manner.

The assigned faculty advisor may or may not be the major professor by the end of the program when doctoral examinations and dissertations occur. The faculty advisor is initially selected by the department however, students can request a change of advisor later into the program. Criteria for approval are: (1) student choice, (2) student-faculty common interests, (3) faculty consent, and (4) faculty load (limits may be established as to number of advisees per faculty member, so that loads are distributed equitably).

While continued service of the major professor until graduation of the student is typical, a change may be requested by the student, the faculty member, or both. Occasionally, as the student's interests mature, she/he defines an area of specialization which differs from that of the major professor, and a new appointment becomes desirable. The need for such a change may occur with greatest likelihood at the time that the student selects a dissertation topic.

Most fulltime students complete a Ph.D. in four to five years, although a few students have done this in only three. Other students have taken longer to complete their doctorates, especially if they have fulltime employment during their studies.

**Appointing the Doctoral Advisory Committee**

The student must select a major professor by their 18th hour in the program. Then, the student and major professor select and agree upon nominations for membership on the student's doctoral advisory committee by the 30th hour into the program. Developing the Doctoral Advisory
Committee should begin early as possible. This committee may or may not be the same members as the Dissertation Committee later in the program.

With the assistance of the major advisor, the student requests faculty members to serve on the committee. Upon receipt of agreement, the student prepares a Graduate Committee Request form (http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information) located under the Progress to Degree link. This form is to be submitted to the department chair for approval and formal appointment of the committee. When completed, a copy of this form is forwarded to each member of the committee. This process must be completed prior to the semester in which the Comprehensive Examinations are held.

The composition of the advisory committee must meet the following requirements:

1. A minimum of four members, all of which must have Level II status to serve on doctoral committees.
2. The major professor must have doctoral directive status (Level III) in Instructional Technology and Design.
3. At least two members must be in the Instructional Technology and Design program from which the student has taken courses from.
4. One member must have a statistical and/or research methodology background.

The committee could also include faculty members from another department at the University to represent the student’s Minor area. Sometimes, students include faculty members who may not be in the major or minor area, but have taken a course or two from that particular faculty member. The best rule however, is to keep the committee small in size.

When necessary, the composition of an advisory committee may be changed by revising and resubmitting the same form originally submitted to the department head. The selection of a dissertation topic sometimes makes such changes necessary. All changes to the committee must also be approved by the student’s major professor.

**Appointing the Dissertation Committee**

The process of establishing a dissertation committee is the same. Once a dissertation chair has been appointed by the student after he/she successfully passes the doctoral comprehensive examinations, the Graduate Committee Request form (http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information) is required. Once the committee has been established, certain procedures must be followed. Please see the Dissertation for the Ph.D. document for more information.
Continuous Enrollment

After a doctoral student completes his or her comprehensive examination, continuous enrollment in at least one (1) semester hour must be maintained during each fall and spring semester until the student successfully defends the dissertation. If the student has taken 12 hours of 898 and is not defending the dissertation that semester, the student should register for an Independent Study (e.g., IT 797) course. This continuous enrollment allows the student to remain in the program and use University resources. Failure to maintain continuous enrollment will result in the student having to reapply to be admitted to the program.

Last Update: August 24, 2014

Ph.D. in Instructional Technology and Design
Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
The University of Southern Mississippi
Hattiesburg, MS, United States