

The Dissertation Committee
May 7, 2013
Princeton Theological Seminary
(Ph.D. Studies Committee)

Process: After the successful completion of all required written and oral comprehensive examinations, the Ph.D. student is eligible to form a dissertation committee. The process for forming the dissertation committee may vary by department or program but should involve consultation between the student and those faculty members who are to serve on the dissertation committee. Once the committee's composition is determined, the chair of the department is responsible for recommending the composition of the dissertation committee to the appropriate department or program, who formally acts on that recommendation and reports out the resolved action to Ph.D. Studies in the Office of Academic Affairs.

Composition: The dissertation committee is normally composed of three members of the Princeton Theological Seminary faculty, one of whom is to serve as chair of the committee and main advisor of the dissertation. In cases where the dissertation project anticipates needing to engage areas of expertise not adequately supported by current members of the Seminary faculty, a non-PTS affiliated scholar (of appropriate qualification and rank) may be appointed to serve as a third member of the dissertation committee (in place of a PTS faculty member) at the discretion of the department or program. The external member of a dissertation committee (except for Princeton University faculty) is entitled to a small honorarium of \$500. Such an appointment, as in the case of the dissertation committee's composition more generally, is to be reported to Ph.D. Studies in the Office of Academic Affairs who then offers the formal invitation. In all cases, the chair of the dissertation committee and main advisor of the dissertation is to be a full-time member of the Princeton Theological Seminary faculty. Variations in the composition of the dissertation committee beyond what is described above are subject to the approval of the Ph.D. Studies Committee upon the recommendation of the appropriate department or program.

Additional Information

Timeframe for Faculty Evaluation of Student Work: Faculty are expected to read and assess student work in a timely manner - dissertation drafts within six weeks of submission, excluding summer months and sabbatical leaves.

Retired Faculty and Ph.D. Dissertation Committees at PTS
September 7, 2011
(Dean James Kay, Office of Academic Affairs)

Guidelines governing the use of retired faculty continuing on dissertation committees on which they are serving at the time of their retirement:

- It is the longstanding practice of the Seminary that faculty may continue to serve on Ph.D. Dissertation Committees to which they were appointed prior to their retirements. It is also the longstanding practice of the Seminary that such service receives no honoraria. Travel expense reimbursement, if foreseen, may be requested at the outset of retirement through the Office of Academic Affairs.
- Faculty members may understandably believe they have a moral commitment to continue to serve on the Ph.D. Dissertation Committees to which they were appointed prior to their retirement. Nevertheless, the best way to handle this moral commitment may be to refrain

from service on such committees as one approaches retirement and/or to consult with one's department colleagues on how alternative staffing may proceed following one's retirement. In no instance, should any faculty member feel pressured to serve in any Seminary capacity beyond his or her announced retirement date.

- It is the longstanding custom that the Chair of a Ph.D. Dissertation Committee be a currently active PTS faculty member. (Ph.D. Program Review Final Report, p. 30).

Guidelines governing the use of retired faculty joining new dissertation committees formed after their retirement:

- Service on new dissertation committees by retired faculty should be regarded as an occasional and exceptional occurrence. It should only be undertaken with area and departmental authorization when all other reasonable possibilities have been exhausted. A compelling case should be made that the expertise brought by this faculty member cannot be reasonably provided by another member of the Seminary or another proximate faculty.
- Unlike adjunct work, which is annually authorized, service on a Ph.D. Dissertation Committee is often a multi-year commitment. Therefore, departments need to be cognizant of the number of new (and continuing) Ph.D. Dissertation Committees on which any single retiree sits.
- It is the longstanding custom that the Chair of a Ph.D. Dissertation Committee be a currently active PTS faculty member. (Ph.D. Program Review Final Report, p. 30).
- In recognition of the Seminary's provisions for retired faculty (Faculty Manual, 21.5), regarding use of Seminary facilities and equipment, no honoraria will be provided for retired faculty joining new Ph.D. Dissertation Committees. Travel expense reimbursement, if foreseen, may be requested for consideration through the Office of Academic Affairs.
- In no case, will a retired member of the PTS faculty serve as an "external reader" to a new Ph.D. Dissertation Committee as this would defeat the purpose of having a qualitative judgment rendered from someone who is "a member of the wider academic community." (Ph.D. Program Review Final Report, p. 42).
- Letters of appointment from the Seminary will ordinarily be issued by the Academic Office to retired faculty serving on new Ph.D. Dissertation Committees.