A Guidelines Manual

for

The Doctor of Philosophy Program
In Both
Applied Sciences and Engineering

Detailing Advising, the Qualifying Examination, and the Proposal
and Dissertation Defenses.
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Student Advising Guidelines

The following guidelines must be used to ensure consistency in activities related to the selection and assignment of the academic advisor, the dissertation advisor, and the research advisory committee.

Objective

The main objective is to guide each Ph.D. student, starting from their admission into the program, until they narrow down and focus on a research topic, and finally till the eventual conclusion of their research. The selection and assignment of different advisors is detailed herein this document.

The Academic Advisor

1- Academic advisors in the Ph.D. program are full time AUC faculty members responsible for assisting Ph.D. students after admission into the program with regards to preliminary course planning.
2- The relevant director of the graduate program is typically the academic advisor, but may assign another academic advisor (with their consultation) from within the faculty of the program.
3- Academic advisors are assigned to each Ph.D. student upon admission into the program.

The Dissertation Advisor

4- Once the student narrows down a desired research area, the student requests from a full-time faculty member in the program of study to serve as their dissertation advisor.
5- The dissertation advisor will typically be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member.
6- The dissertation advisor will seek to form, in consultation with the student, the “Research Advisory Committee” for this specific student.
7- The research advisory committee is chaired by the dissertation advisor, and includes two other full time AUC faculty members related to the area of the research domain.
8- The director of the graduate program will acknowledge the selection of the dissertation advisor, and the formation of the research advisory committee.
9- The selection of the dissertation advisor and the formation of the research advisory committee will typically take place within the first year of admission.
10- The research advisory committee will play a major role in shaping whatever remains of the student coursework, as well as their research direction.

11- The research advisory committee will foresee the progress and originality of the Ph.D. dissertation and is expected to meet on a regular basis to discuss the student’s research progress and challenges.
Qualifying Examination Guidelines

The following guidelines must be used to ensure consistency in activities related to the provisioning of doctoral qualifying examinations.

Objective

The main objective of the Qualifying Examination is to determine the readiness of Ph.D. students as relates to their problem analysis and solution synthesis abilities, relevant to fundamental concepts and ideas around the field of study. It will act as a prerequisite (along with the completion of coursework) for the transfer of status from "Ph.D. Student" to "Ph.D. Candidate".

Format and Timing

1- The exam is written, in-class, and of a six hour duration.
2- The exam will be offered twice a year: Once during the Fall, and once during the Spring. At the beginning of each academic year, the Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research will announce the dates of the Fall and Spring examinations to the directors of the graduate programs.
3- The student should sit for the exam the semester immediately following the completion of the coursework credit hours, but no later than during the fourth semester since admission.
4- Students may take the exam a maximum of two times. A student failing twice will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program.

Examination Knowledge Areas

5- The directors of the graduate programs will spearhead the identification of the knowledge areas (topics, courses, or subjects) to be covered in the examination in their relevant programs. This information will be made public to students of the relevant programs, and also published on the Ph.D. program website.
6- The knowledge areas can be revised each academic year by the programs, and the updates communicated by the relevant director of the graduate program to both the students and the Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.
The Qualifying Examination Committee

7- The directors of the graduate programs will each form a committee from within the faculty of their programs (The Qualifying Examination Committee) composed of three members to prepare for the exam. The three members need not necessarily belong to the same department in the case of interdisciplinary programs. At the beginning of each academic year (no later than the end of the first month), the formation of this committee is communicated to the Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. This committee will:
   a. Seek questions from faculty to eventually form a written examination.
   b. Form the examination from the received questions.
   c. Handover the written examination component to the Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. The office will administer the exam all at one common time and location and will then send back the results to be graded by the respective programs. Each faculty member will grade the problem(s) that he/she contributed with.

Announcing Results of the Written Examination

8- The written examination grades should be communicated to students no later than three weeks after the date of the written examination.
9- Only students who receive grades in the range [50%-70%] will be asked to go through an oral examination.
10-All students receiving a grade below the lower threshold will have failed this specific attempt of the qualifying examination, and will be immediately notified of their fail status by the director of the relevant graduate program.
11-All students receiving a grade above the upper threshold will have passed the qualifying examination, and will also be immediately notified of their pass status by the director of the relevant graduate program.

Conducting the Oral Examination

12- The oral examination is primarily intended to re-evaluate with more scrutiny students who fall in in the aforementioned range of grades.
13- An oral examination committee composed of three program faculty members will be formed by the qualifying examination committee of each graduate program to orally examine students, as needed.
14- The oral examination will include analytical questions about the questions covered in the written exam, and may cover related topics.
15- Based on the student performance in the oral examination, those students may pass or fail the qualifying examination.
16-After the completion of each oral examination, the oral examination committee will decide in writing whether the student will be granted either a pass or fail grade, and the reasons behind this decision.

17-Immediately after completing all oral examinations required for students of a given program, and receiving the relevant reports from the oral examination committee, the director of the relevant graduate program will communicate to the involved students their pass/fail status in this attempt of the qualifying examination.

18-In case of a second failure in the qualifying examination, no oral exam component is obviously needed.

**Beyond the Examination**

19-The pass/fail status of all students will be sent by the relevant director of each graduate program to the Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research no later than five weeks after the date of the written examination.

20-Students who failed the qualifying examination will sit for the exam the semester immediately after.

21-Students who passed the qualifying examination will be granted a “Ph.D. candidate” status after duly completing their coursework.

22-The director of the relevant graduate program may provide failed students a short high-level feedback indicating the areas of deficiency normally within two weeks after a written request by the student. Such requests must be made within the semester in which the qualifying examination was attempted.
The Ph.D. Proposal Defense Guidelines

The following guidelines must be used to ensure consistency in activities related to the Ph.D. proposal defense.

Objective

The main objective of the Ph.D. Proposal Defense is to act as a milestone through which the research advisory committee can make sure that the Ph.D. candidate has a sound scientific methodology, a well-formulated research plan, and that the researcher is making progress towards completion. Successful completion of the proposal defense is a prerequisite for the dissertation defense.

Timing and Format

1- Once the Ph.D. candidate has narrowed a topic down, a sound scientific methodology has been adopted, and a research plan formulated as a minimum, the dissertation advisor will invite the candidate to conduct a proposal defense.
2- The dissertation advisor will invite the other members of the research advisory committee to attend and evaluate the proposal defense.
3- The candidate will submit to the research committee at least two weeks before the defense a document detailing the research proposal.
4- The duration of the proposal defense, including discussions and questions, will approximately be an hour and a half.
5- Other graduate students are welcomed to attend proposal defenses as audience.
6- The proposal defense is expected to take place at the latest, the semester immediately after the student became a Ph.D. candidate.
7- The director of the relevant graduate program, or a substitute, will moderate the proposal defense.

Outcome

8- After the proposal defense is completed, the research advisory committee will deliberate, in absence of the candidate and audience, about the outcome of the defense, which is determined by majority.
9- In the event of a pass outcome, the candidate can proceed towards completing their research and eventually the dissertation defense.
10- In the event of a fail outcome, the process of this defense starts from the beginning. The candidate is expected to re-defend their research
proposal, at the latest, in the semester after the date of the previous failed proposal defense.

11-A candidate has a maximum of three opportunities to successfully pass the proposal defense; otherwise the candidate is dismissed from the program.

12-In both pass and fail outcomes, the research committee has to provide the candidate with written comments within a maximum of one week after the date of the proposal defense.
The Ph.D. Dissertation Defense Guidelines

The following guidelines must be used to ensure consistency in activities related to the Ph.D. dissertation defense.

Objective

The main objective of the Ph.D. Dissertation Defense is to guarantee the originality and significance of the scientific research contribution made by the doctoral candidate. Its successful completion acts as a partial completion of the degree requirements, and acts as a prerequisite for the conferral of the doctoral degree, after completion of all remaining requirements.

Timing and Format

1- After the Ph.D. candidate has successfully passed a proposal defense, and completed their research activity to the satisfaction of the research advisory committee, the dissertation advisor can initiate, based on the candidate's request, the process of conducting the dissertation defense.

2- The candidate is expected to have as a minimum two accepted peer-reviewed international research publications before the dissertation defense, one of which must be a journal publication.

3- The dissertation advisor will seek the approval of all the other members of the candidate's research advisory committee to permit the candidate to defend their dissertation.

4- The approval of the research advisory committee is made by conducting an informal full draft review of the candidate’s written dissertation document to primarily verify the originality, significance of the contribution, and adherence to the committee’s recommendations after the proposal defense.

5- The two research advisory committee members will constitute the candidate’s two internal examiners.

6- The relevant director of the graduate program will then seek to formally communicate and finalize the participation of two external examiners to participate in the defense.

7- The selection of the two external examiners is made in consultation with the dissertation advisor. The responsibility of the director of the graduate program is to ensure, to the best of their ability, the neutrality and technical relevance of the external examiners.

8- The two external examiners must be full professors in a domain relevant to the research area of the candidate, and from outside of AUC.

9- It is preferred that one of the external examiners has industrial experience relevant to the research area of the candidate.
10-The dissertation document will be sent to all members of the examining committee at least four weeks prior to the date of the defense.
11-The duration of the dissertation defense, including discussions and questions, will approximately be around three hours, with the candidate’s presentation advised not to exceed half of that duration.
12-The date and time of the defense will be publicized as a minimum within AUC.
13-The dissertation advisor will preside the defense.
14-The examining committee will have precedence in the discussions and questions. The faculty member presiding the defense may allow other audience to ask questions and take part in the discussions, only towards the end of the defense.

Outcome

15-Once the defense and related public questions and discussions are completed, the faculty member presiding the defense will ask the audience to leave the examination hall so that the candidate may be examined in private if needed. Once completed, the candidate is asked to leave the hall to make room for deliberations of the examining committee.
16-Deliberations will be made to determine whether the candidate should pass or fail the defense.
17-There are three possible outcomes of a dissertation defense, which must be agreed upon by at least four out of the five members of the examining committee:
   a. Pass with minor changes: No re-defense is needed.
   b. Pass with major changes: Re-defense may be required.
   c. Fail.
18-In case of a pass outcome, written comments will be handed by the examining committee to the candidate’s dissertation advisor. The candidate must take the comments into consideration. Subsequently, both the research advisory committee and at least one of the external examiners must approve the satisfaction of answering such comments by the candidate before the degree can be awarded.
19-In case of a fail outcome, the dissertation advisor is also handed a written justification as to why the candidate is considered to have failed the defense. In such case, the candidate has no further opportunity to re-defend, and is dismissed from the program.
FORM PHD-ADVISING-1
ASSIGNMENT OF AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR

Intent: This form is used to assign an academic advisor to a Ph.D. student.

Ownership: This form is managed by the director of the graduate program. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Name of Program: __________________________________________________________

Name of Student: __________________________________________________________

ID of Student: ____________________________________________________________

Name of the Director of the Graduate Program: _____________________________

Signature of the Director of the Graduate Program: _________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________________________

Name of the Academic Advisor: ___________________________________________

Signature of the Academic Advisor: _________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________________________
FORM PHD-ADVISING-2
ASSIGNMENT OF A DISSERTATION ADVISOR

Intent: This form is used to select a dissertation advisor for a Ph.D. student.

Ownership: This form is managed by the director of the graduate program. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Name of Program: 

Name of Student: 

ID of Student: 

Intended Research Domain: 

Name of the Dissertation Advisor: 

Signature of the Dissertation Advisor: 

Date: 

Name of the Director of the Graduate Program: 

Signature of the Director of the Graduate Program: 

Date: 
FORM PHD-ADVISING-3
FORMATION OF A RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Intent:** This form is used to form a research advisory committee for a Ph.D. student.

**Ownership:** This form is managed by the dissertation advisor. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Name of Program: ________________________________________________________________
Name of Student: ________________________________________________________________
ID of Student: __________________________________________________________________

Name of the Dissertation Advisor: ________________________________________________
Signature of the Dissertation Advisor: _____________________________________________
Date: __________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Name of First Research Advisory Committee Member:
Signature: Date:

________________________________________________________________________________

Name of Second Research Advisory Committee Member:
Signature: Date:

________________________________________________________________________________

Name of the Director of the Graduate Program: _________________________________
Signature of the Director of the Graduate Program: ____________________________
Date: __________________________________________________________________________
FORM PHD-QE-1
FORMATION OF QUALIFYING EXAMINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Intent:** This form is used to indicate the formation of the Qualifying Examination committee members for a graduate program in a given academic. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

**Ownership:** This form is managed by the director of the graduate program.

Name of Program: ____________________________________________

Director of the Graduate Program: __________________________

Academic Year: ____________________________________________

Name of Student: __________________________________________

ID of Student: ____________________________________________

Name of First Committee Member:

Signature: Date:

Name of Second Committee Member:

Signature: Date:

Name of Third Committee Member:

Signature: Date:
FORM PHD-QE-2
FORMATION OF ORAL EXAMINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Intent:** This form is used to indicate the formation of the committee members of the oral component of the qualifying examination for a graduate program in a given academic year. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

**Ownership:** This form is managed by the director of the graduate program.

Name of Program: __________________________________________________________

Director of the Graduate Program: ________________________________

Academic Year: ________________________________________________________

Name of Student: _______________________________________________________

ID of Student: ________________________

Name of First Committee Member:

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Name of Second Committee Member:

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Name of Third Committee Member:

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________
FORM PHD-QE-3
REPORTING RESULTS OF AN ORAL EXAMINATION

Intent: This form is used to document the result of the oral portion of a qualifying examination of a student attempt to take the qualifying examination. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Ownership: This form is managed by the oral examination committee.

Name of Program: ____________________________________________________________

Academic Semester: _________________________________________________________

Date of the Examination: ____________________________________________________

Name of Student: ___________________________________________________________

ID of Student: _____________________________________________________________

Final Result: ___PASS ___FAIL

Name and Signature of First Examiner:

Name and Signature of Second Examiner:

Name and Signature of Third Examiner:

Please report on the justifications for awarding the status:
FORM PHD-QE-4
ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULT

**Intent:** This form is used to document the final result of a student attempt to take the qualifying examination.

**Ownership:** This form is managed by the director of the graduate program. A copy of this form is sent to both the student and, kept within records of the program, and sent to the Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Name of Program: _______________________________________________________________

Director of the Graduate Program: ________________________________

Academic Semester: _______________________________________________________

Name of Student: ____________________________________________________________

ID of Student: ______________________________________________________________

Final Result:  ___PASS ___FAIL

Date: ________________________________________________________________

Signature of the Director of the Graduate Program: _____________________________

Note to student: If you did not pass the first attempt of your qualifying examination, you must take the qualifying examination during the semester immediately after your first attempt.
FORM PHD-QE-5
STUDENT REQUEST TO TAKE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

**Intent:** This form is used by students to request taking the qualifying examination during a given semester.

**Ownership:** This form is filled by a student and submitted to the director of the relevant graduate program. A copy is retained within the program.

Name of Program: ____________________________________________________________

Name of Student: ____________________________________________________________

ID of Student: ______________________________________________________________

Academic Semester to take Qualifying Examination: ______________________

Signature of Student: _________________________________________________________

Date of Submission: __________________________________________________________

First Attempt: _______ Second Attempt: _______
FORM PHD-QE-6
STUDENT REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK

Intent: This form is used by students in case of first attempt failure to request feedback on some of their deficiencies for the purpose of self-improvement. The director of the relevant graduate program may provide feedback to the student, as applicable.

Ownership: This form is filled by a student and submitted to the director of the relevant graduate program.

Name of Program: ______________________________________________________________

Name of Student: ______________________________________________________________

ID of Student: _________________________________________________________________

Academic Semester: ___________________________________________________________

Signature of Student: __________________________________________________________

Date of Submission: ___________________________________________________________
FORM PHD-PROPOSAL-1
REQUEST TO DEFEND A PROPOSAL

Intent: This form is used by the Ph.D. candidate to request conducting their proposal defense.

Ownership: This form is submitted by the candidate to the dissertation advisor and approved by the director of the graduate program. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Name of Program: ________________________________________________________________

Name of Student: _________________________________________________________________

ID of Student: _________________________________________________________________

Research Topic: ______________________________________________________________

Name of the Dissertation Advisor: _________________________________________________

Signature of the Dissertation Advisor: ___________________________________________

Date: _______________________________________________________________________

Name of the Director of the Graduate Program: _____________________________

Signature of the Director of the Graduate Program: ___________________________

Date: _______________________________________________________________________
FORM PHD-PROPOSAL-2
RESULT OF A PROPOSAL DEFENSE (1/2)

**Intent:** This form is used to report the result of a proposal defense.

**Ownership:** This form is managed by the dissertation advisor. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Name of Program: ________________________________

Name of Student: ________________________________

ID of Student: ________________________________

_____ PASS  _____ FAIL

Name of the Dissertation Advisor: ________________________________

Signature of the Dissertation Advisor: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Name of First Committee Member:

Signature: Date:

Name of Second Committee Member:

Signature: Date:
FORM PHD-PROPOSAL-2
RESULT OF A PROPOSAL DEFENSE (2/2)

COMMENTS TO CANDIDATE:

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FORM PHD-DISSERTATION-1
REQUEST TO DEFEND A DISSERTATION

Intent: This form is used by the Ph.D. candidate to request conducting their dissertation defense.

Ownership: This form is submitted by the candidate to the dissertation advisor and approved by the research advisory committee. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Name of Program: ________________________________

Name of Student: ________________________________

ID of Student: ________________________________

Name of the Dissertation Advisor: ________________________________

Signature of the Dissertation Advisor: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Name of First Research Advisory Committee Member:

Signature: __________________ Date: __________________

Name of Second Research Advisory Committee Member:

Signature: __________________ Date: __________________

Approving this form implies the confidence of the research advisory committee about readiness of the candidate to defend their dissertation.

Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research

Last Edited: 11 November, 2013
FORM PHD-DISSERTATION-2
FORMATION OF THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE COMMITTEE

Intent: This form is used by the relevant director of the graduate program to report the full formation of the dissertation defense committee, which is composed of the research advisory committee and two external examiners with specialization relevant to the research domain of the candidate.

Ownership: This form is submitted by the relevant director of the graduate program to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. A copy is retained within the program.

Name of Program: __________________________________________________________

Name of Student: __________________________________________________________

ID of Student: _____________________________________________________________

Dissertation Title: _________________________________________________________

Defense Date: _______________ Defense Time: _______________

Location of the Defense: ___________________________________________________

Name of the Dissertation Advisor: _________________________________________

Name of the First Internal Examiner: ________________________________

Name of the Second Internal Examiner: _________________________________

Name of First External Examiner: _________________________________________

Affiliation of First External Examiner: _________________________________

Name of Second External Examiner: _______________________________________ 

Affiliation of Second External Examiner: _________________________________

Name of the Director of the Graduate Program: ____________________________

Signature of the Director of the Graduate Program: _________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________________________
FORM PHD-DISSERTATION-3
RESULT OF A DISSERTATION DEFENSE (1/3)

**Intent:** This form is used to report the result of a dissertation defense.

**Ownership:** This form is managed by the dissertation advisor. A copy of this form is retained within the records of the program and another sent to the office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

Name of Program: ___________________________________________________________

Name of Student: _____________________________________________________________

ID of Student: ___________________________________________________________________

Dissertation Title: ____________________________________________________________

Defense Date: _____________________ Defense Time: ________________

- _____ PASS WITH MINOR CHANGES

- _____ PASS WITH MAJOR CHANGES _______ REDEFENSE REQUIRED

- _____ FAIL

Signature of the Dissertation Advisor: _________________________________
FORM PHD-DISSERTATION-3
RESULT OF A DISSERTATION DEFENSE (2/3)

Name of the Dissertation Advisor: ________________________________

Signature of the Dissertation Advisor: ____________________________

Date: ________________________________

Name of First Internal Examiner:

Signature: Date:

Name of Second Internal Examiner:

Signature: Date:

Name of First External Examiner:

Signature: Date:

Name of Second External Examiner:

Signature: Date:
FORM PHD-DISSERTATION-3
RESULT OF A DISSERTATION DEFENSE (3/3)

COMMENTS:

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Signature of the Dissertation Advisor: __________________________________________________________

Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research