Planning a Doctoral Program and Appointment of a Guidance Committee

Each graduate student admitted to a doctoral program has the responsibility to form a guidance committee with the approval and the assistance of the department or school chairperson or director or designated representative. The guidance committee will consist of at least four (4) Michigan State University regular faculty at least three of whom, including the committee chairperson, possess an earned doctoral degree, preferably of the same type that the student is seeking (for example, Ph.D.).

For the Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree, the guidance committee will consist of at least four (4) regular MSU faculty, at least two of whom, including the committee chairperson, possess the DMA degree. In practice, exceptions to this regulation are readily granted at the student’s request.

The guidance committee shall be formed within the first two semesters of doctoral study, or within two semesters beyond the master’s degree or its equivalent. Committee members do not need to sign the form at the meeting. Students turn in a handwritten form to the Graduate Studies Office. Anne Simon will make a printed copy and contact the committee members to come sign the form.

Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degrees:
At least two faculty members in the student’s area, one faculty member in the area of music theory, and one faculty member in the area of musicology must be members of the student’s guidance committee. In instances where additional expertise would be beneficial it is recommended that the guidance committee include an additional faculty member from within or outside the School of Music. The Associate Director for Graduate Studies will sign off on the completed Guidance Committee Report form.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD.) degrees in Music Education:
The student’s major professor, two other faculty members in the area of music education, and one faculty member from the student’s cognate area must be members of the student’s guidance committee. The Associate Director for Graduate Studies will sign off on the completed Guidance Committee Report form. (Please mark off the categories listed and write in ‘Requirements’ or category name needed.)

Guidance Committee Report:
Within one semester after the committee has met, the chairperson of the guidance committee shall file a guidance committee report with the dean of the college, listing all degree requirements. A copy of this guidance committee report shall also be given to the graduate student. This guidance committee report, as changed or amended in full consultation between the graduate student and the committee and approved by the appropriate department or school chairperson or director and the dean of the college, shall be regarded as the statement of program requirements. The program will not be considered binding unless signed by the student.

The guidance committee report includes a statement of the student’s proposed program, with a timetable and tentative dissertation topic. In the report, the committee also recommends whether to accept any graduate credit beyond the master’s degree level that was taken at other institutions; whether any study may be done in absentia, and under what conditions; what language examinations or alternative program, if any, the student must complete; and which member of the committee should later direct the research that is to form the basis of the student’s dissertation. Committee members do not need to sign the form at the meeting. Students turn in a handwritten form to the Graduate Studies Office. Anne Simon will make a printed copy and contact the committee members about signing the form.

Responsibility of the Guidance Committee:
Once designated, the guidance committee has the responsibility to meet periodically to oversee the graduate student’s progress for as long as the graduate student continues in good standing. Any desired or required changes in the membership of the guidance committee may be made by the graduate student with the concurrence of the unit chairperson or director or designated representative, or by the unit with the concurrence of the graduate student in accordance with University, college, and unit policy. The membership of the guidance committee, with the concurrence of the graduate student, may be changed as appropriate to the dissertation topic. Guidance committee chairpersons on leave shall provide for the necessary guidance of their advisees during their absence.

The guidance committee is responsible for insuring the adequacy of the overall program, in keeping with the general policy that three or more academic years of study and research beyond the bachelor’s degree are required.