

DISSERTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (DAC) POLICY
FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PhD PROGRAMS IN OHSU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC) meeting purpose:

- Evaluate student progress toward their degree.
- Provide critical input and advice to facilitate student's completion of their PhD in a timely manner.
- Provide additional mentorship to the student as needed (including discussion of the student's career goals as appropriate).
- Typically, DAC members will be invited to serve as part of the student's Dissertation Exam Committee.

Membership: is the responsibility of the Graduate Program Director, who will ensure DAC are appointed in a timely manner and submitted to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies for approval. Students (in consultation with their mentor and program director) may request specific faculty to serve on their DAC.

At the request of the student, DAC members may be added or removed with the approval of the Program Director and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Following the change, the DAC composition will still adhere to the above requirements.

Each committee will include:

Mentor(s): At least one mentor must be present at the DAC meeting. (If students have co-mentors, both may serve on the DAC, and at least one must be present at each DAC meeting).

Minimum of 3 faculty in addition to mentor(s): with expertise in one or more aspects of the student's project and who are familiar with requirements of the graduate program for completion of a PhD. If co-mentors are included, DAC membership must be expanded so that non-mentor faculty are a majority. For example: 2 co-mentors would require having 3 non-mentors (total 5); three co-mentors would expand the DAC to 4 non-mentors + 3 mentors (total 7).

- **OHSU faculty from outside the Graduate Faculty may be included**, but a majority of non-mentor DAC members must be members of the SOM Graduate Faculty.
- **One member may be from outside the university**, but these require approval by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies (the Program Director should include a brief cv and short explanation of non-OHSU faculty expertise on the committee to the Associate Dean).
- **No more than two DAC members may lack any DAC experience**, and at least one member must have been on a DAC for a graduated student.

Chair: One of the DAC members, but not the mentor, with significant experience in mentoring graduate students. The chair must have served on a DAC before, preferably for a graduated student.

Meeting format: While every effort should be made to schedule meetings to include all members of the DAC, we recognize that from time to time, not all faculty will be able to make every meeting. It is OK to hold a DAC meeting as long as a majority of members, including a research mentor and DAC chair, can attend. The student is responsible for meeting with DAC members who missed a meeting to discuss their research progress individually.

One week prior to a DAC meeting students will submit a written summary of their recent work and share with all DAC members. For students who have just begun their PhD research, this summary can consist of an outline of proposed aims. For more advanced students, this summary should include the goals identified by the committee at their previous DAC meeting, and a description of the student's work to

address these goals (including successes and problems). Individual graduate programs might require additional elements to be included (students should check with their program director).

The mentor should be prepared to provide an evaluative summary of student progress at the start of the meeting. Individual graduate programs also have the option of requiring mentors to provide a brief written summary of their student's progress, prior to a DAC meeting. However, the mentor's evaluation of student progress will be discussed as part of the DAC meeting itself.

For each DAC meeting, students should prepare an organized presentation of their recent progress, including:

- a brief summary of the goals outlined by the DAC during their previous meeting.
- a discussion of their accomplishments and any problems encountered.
- a summary of the directions they intend to pursue during the following six months.

After each DAC meeting, a short report that summarizes the issues raised during the meeting should be prepared by the student in consultation with the mentor (with revisions by the DAC members), and DAC chair (with input from the other faculty members). DAC chairs are responsible for distributing revised copies of the DAC summary to the student, all members of the DAC, the Graduate Program Director, and sending a copy to the Graduate Studies office.

The summary should include:

- Date, present participants, and absent members if necessary
- Summarize the student's progress since the previous DAC meeting
- Summarize any significant problems or issues that need to be addressed
- Summarize what the student should attempt to accomplish in the next 6 months
- When appropriate, summarize the student's plans/career goals
- Estimate of date of completion (this will be more precise as student advances)

Additional elements required by the student's graduate program may include:

- Description of career discussions with student.
- Date of ethics courses taken (NIH requires regular exposure to ethics training (at least every 4 years).
- Date when DAC anticipates student is ready to write their dissertation.

Meeting frequency:

- Students are required to form their DAC, and hold their first meeting, within one term of passing their qualifying examination.
- Students must meet with their DAC in person (preferred) or hybrid at least every six months. Additional meetings may be scheduled by the student or by the members of a DAC to ensure the student's progress towards their PhD.
- Individual programs might require the earlier formation of the DAC and more frequent meetings.
- Program Directors should ensure each student meets regularly with their DAC, and that DAC reports are completed in a timely manner and shared with Graduate Studies.

Approved by Graduate Council: 10 June 2014

Amended by Graduate Council: 8 July 2025