PROPOSAL TO AMEND UNIVERSITY POLICIES PERTAINING TO THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

1. That the University Senate approves the attached proposal to amend University policies pertaining to the doctoral dissertation, as approved by the Graduate Academic Council.

2. That this proposal be forwarded to the President for approval.
Rationale

University regulations pertaining to the development, approval and submittal of doctoral dissertations have been unchanged for decades. No substantive changes are proposed pertaining to the development and approval of dissertations under the supervision of the faculty. However, it is proposed that standards for the submittal of approved dissertations be modified to allow and eventually require the submittal of such works in digital form, in keeping with national trends toward digital publication and the dissemination or research findings. This proposal seeks to modify policy so as to allow the establishment of new digital submission procedures under the direction of the Graduate Dean in consultation with the Graduate Academic Council and the University Libraries. The entire section of policies pertaining to the dissertation are proposed for restructuring as follows:

(Deletions in italics)

EXISTING UALBANY DISSERTATION POLICIES & PROCEDURES AS SPECIFIED IN THE GRADUATE BULLETIN

Dissertation

Doctoral programs require the submission of an acceptable dissertation. In general, the dissertation is expected to demonstrate that the candidate is capable of doing independent scholarly work and is able to formulate conclusions which may in some respects modify or enlarge what has previously been known. For particular characteristics of the supporting research and nature of the dissertation and associated requirements refer to descriptions of individual programs.

A student in a doctoral program must be admitted to candidacy at least one regular session in advance of submission of a dissertation.

Dissertations which have been approved must be transmitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies by May 1 for degrees to be conferred in May, by August 1 for degrees to be conferred in August, and by December 1 for degrees to be conferred in December.

Approval of Doctoral Dissertations/Development and Distribution of Dissertation Procedures

Each department and/or school must develop and provide its students with copies of its dissertation procedures and have a copy on file with the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies. Each department must also file copies of any changes in procedures and inform all concerned of such changes. The Graduate Office, in consultation with the Graduate Academic Council, shall review and act upon the procedures or changes before they become effective.

Doctoral students must have a dissertation or research committee to guide their dissertation project or research and to approve each stage of the process.

Ordinarily each dissertation committee must have a State University of New York at Albany full-time faculty member as chair. Individual exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the Office of Graduate Admissions. A faculty member may continue as chair of the dissertation committee after leaving the University. It is the committee chair's responsibility to be accessible to the student and to see that the other members of the committee are kept informed of the student's progress so that the committee members may react constructively and in a timely fashion. It is the student's responsibility to keep the dissertation chair informed of his/her progress. Each department that plans to permit its students to conduct research away from this campus should agree on guidelines for these arrangements which are known in advance to the student and all others directly involved.

Students must play a role in shaping the membership of their dissertation committee. The student and committee will have to agree mutually on a topic. There should be as much consistency as possible in
the membership of the committee which initially agrees to the topic, advises the student, and recommends
the final evaluation of the dissertation to the appropriate academic unit.

The dissertation committee must consist of a minimum of three members, two of which must be
from the student's school/college, and at least one of these must be from the student's major department.
Departments are encouraged to include at least one committee member external to the department.
Ordinarily, only those with an earned doctorate or those who hold a full professorship are eligible to
participate formally in dissertation advisement and the approval of a dissertation. The final membership of
each dissertation committee must be approved in accordance with the process specified in the procedures
adopted by each school/college and reported to the Office of Graduate Admissions.

While students must be given an on-going evaluation of their dissertation by their dissertation
committee as various sections or chapters of the work are completed, final approval must be given only to
a completed document. A final review or examination may be scheduled with the comments, advice,
recommendations, and evaluations of outside readers being considered by the dissertation committee. To be
accepted a dissertation must be approved by a majority of the dissertation committee. Schools/colleges and
departments are encouraged to provide an opportunity for students to publicly present the results of their
research.

The final error-free and clean copy presented to the Office of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree must be the copy read and approved by the
dissertation committee and the copy approved by the department chair.

This revised policy will be effective for all doctoral dissertations begun during and after the 1982
fall session.

GENERAL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE SUBMISSION OF A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

The dissertation is the culmination of a program of advanced study leading to a doctoral degree
and, as such, is expected to attest to the attainment of a high degree of scholarly competence. The
dissertation must report in accepted scholarly style an investigation of a problem of significance, if not a
unique contribution, in the major field of study. It must demonstrate that the candidate is capable of
sophisticated, independent research and analysis, and scholarly reporting in an academic discipline or
professional field.

Responsibility for the evaluation and acceptance of a dissertation rests with the major department
and the candidate's dissertation or doctoral committee.

The student ordinarily must be admitted to candidacy at least one session (exclusive of a summer
session) before the acceptance of the dissertation.

General regulations and procedures governing the preparation and submission of a doctoral
dissertation follow. Full information including detailed procedures and qualifications for undertaking a
dissertation is available in the students' major department and should be obtained by students
(and their dissertation advisors) at the beginning of the planning for the research and writing of a
dissertation.

1. Each doctoral candidate is required to submit two copies of the accepted dissertation and two
similar copies of an abstract to the Office of Graduate Studies and to pay charges for having them
bound and for the making of microfilm copies. One copy, after binding, is filed in the University
Library and the second copy, after binding, is filed in the office of the dean of the appropriate
college or school. Microfilms are filed in the University Library and the Library of Congress.

2. The copies of the dissertation submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies must be in one of the
following physical modes:
   a. A typed original without errors or corrections, on 100 percent cotton or rag bond paper,
      and a copy, without errors or corrections, on 25 percent cotton or rag bond paper;
   b. A copy of an original on 100 percent cotton or rag bond paper, and a copy of an original
      on 25 percent cotton or rag bond paper;

3. The student should be guided by the directions to students for format, style, and general
procedures in writing and submitting the dissertation. Directions may be obtained from the major
department;

4. The student submits unbound the required number of final copies of the dissertation and abstract
to the advisor as required by the department and University;

5. The department chair or the student's doctoral committee or advisor (depending on departmental
procedures) arranges for the reading and evaluation of the dissertation;
6. The department chair notifies the student and the Dean of Graduate Studies as to the official evaluation of the dissertation if it is accepted or not accepted;

7. Upon final acceptance of a dissertation, the student makes a prepayment of charges to the University Library to cover the cost of binding and microfilming and gives the receipt to the department chair. The student then completes arrangements for microfilming in the Office of Graduate Studies. These arrangements involve completing forms and signing an agreement required by University Microfilms, including arrangements for copyrighting, if desired. If the author arranges for copyrighting, an additional payment to the University Library is required;

8. The two required copies of the dissertation are submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies by the chair of the department along with a) the chair's certification that the dissertation has been accepted by faculty of the department, b) the statement of approval signed by the readers, and c) a receipt from the student for the prepayment of binding and microfilming charges. Unless the copies of the dissertation are unacceptable to the Dean of Graduate Studies (in which case the dean notifies the student and the department), the dean notifies the Registrar of the acceptance of the dissertation. Subsequently, the dean transmits the dissertation to the University Library for binding, microfilming, distribution, and filing (ordinarily after the degree has been conferred);

9. No grade or academic credit is assigned to a doctoral dissertation. The title of the accepted dissertation appears on the student's transcript;

10. Dissertations which have been approved must be transmitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies by May 1 for degrees to be conferred in May, by August 1 for degrees to be conferred in August, and by December 1 for degrees to be conferred in December.

[PROPOSED REPLACEMENT POLICY]

POLICIES PERTAINING TO THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Dissertation

Doctoral programs require the submission of an acceptable dissertation. The dissertation is the culmination of a program of advanced study leading to a doctoral degree and, as such, is expected to attest to the attainment of a high degree of scholarly competence. The dissertation must report in accepted scholarly style on an investigation of a problem of significance in the major field of study that modifies, enlarges and/or makes a unique contribution to what has previously been known. It must demonstrate that the candidate is capable of sophisticated, independent research, analysis, and scholarly reporting in an academic discipline or professional field.

Policies and procedures pertaining to dissertation development in each doctoral program, consistent with the minimal University standards that follow, should be available from each doctoral program office or department.

The Dissertation Committee

Doctoral students must have a dissertation or research committee to guide their dissertation project or research and to approve each stage of the process. Ordinarily, each dissertation committee must have a University at Albany faculty member in an unqualified rank (i.e., tenure track or equivalent) as chair. Individual exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. A faculty member may continue as chair of the dissertation committee after leaving the University. It is the committee chair's responsibility to be accessible to the student and to see that the other members of the committee are kept informed of the student's progress so that the committee members may react constructively and in a timely fashion. It is the student's responsibility to keep the dissertation chair informed of his/her progress.

Students must play a role in shaping the membership of their dissertation committee. The student and committee will have to agree mutually on a topic. There should be as much consistency as possible in the membership of the committee which initially agrees to the topic, advises the student, and recommends the final evaluation of the dissertation to the appropriate academic unit.
The dissertation committee must consist of a minimum of three members, two of which must be from the student's school/college, and at least one of these must be from the student's major program/department. Departments and/or programs are encouraged to include at least one committee member external to the department or program faculties. Ordinarily, only those with an earned doctorate or those who hold a full professorship are eligible to participate formally in dissertation advisement and the approval of a dissertation. The final membership of each dissertation committee must be approved in accordance with the process specified in the program specific policies/procedures.

**Dissertation Approval**

Responsibility for the final evaluation and acceptance of a dissertation rests with the departmental or program faculty and the candidate's dissertation or doctoral committee.

While students must be given an on-going evaluation of their dissertation by their dissertation committee as various sections or chapters are completed, final approval shall be given only to a completed work. Departments and/or programs are encouraged to provide, or require, an opportunity for students to publicly present and defend the results of their research as part of the final approval process. Too, a final review or examination may be scheduled with the comments, advice, recommendations, and evaluations of outside readers being considered by the dissertation committee. To be accepted, a dissertation must be approved by a majority of the dissertation committee.

The final dissertation presented to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree must be the one approved by the dissertation committee.

**Submittal of Approved Dissertations**

In order for a dissertation to be accepted by the University in partial fulfillment of requirements for the doctoral degree, it must be submitted in acceptable form according to procedures specified by the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies, by May 1 for degrees to be conferred in May, by August 1 for degrees to be conferred in August, and by December 1 for degrees to be conferred in December. Specifications for such submittal procedures and “acceptable form” shall be developed and maintain by the Dean of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Graduate Academic Council and University Libraries for archival purposes.

Doctoral students admitted in Spring 2006 or thereafter will be expected to submit the approved dissertation in authorized digital form. Students should familiarize themselves with all digital dissertation submittal regulations and procedures early in their doctoral studies.