

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF MUSIC HANDBOOK FOR PH.D STUDENTS**

The Music Education faculty of the University of South Carolina offers these suggestions to help delineate faculty expectations of students and the corresponding responsibilities of faculty members. Our belief is that by clearly stating these, we may avoid any future misunderstandings.

Before students are admitted to the Ph.D program (following an interview with a quorum of the music education faculty), faculty should define the objectives of graduate education for music education; describe what is expected in the candidacy and comprehensive exams; and describe a successful dissertation and oral defense.

FACULTY assigned as program advisors should also help students understand the process of becoming a professional in the discipline.

*The responsibilities of advisors include:*

- Communicating the goals of the program.
- Communicating milestones needed for degree completion.
- Providing a well-defined process of assessment, which allows students to know their progress in the program.
- Promoting seminars and other research activities that ease the transition from coursework to dissertation research and writing.
- Encouraging the student to take his/her written and oral comprehensives at the completion of coursework, which should not exceed three years.
- Helping students to identify faculty with whom they will do research, and ultimately, with whom they will complete the dissertation.

## **RESEARCH COMPETENCIES**

Students should begin research related to their dissertation early in their graduate careers, soon after the candidacy exam. However, candidates should not plan on beginning the dissertation prior to demonstrating the following competencies:

- Define descriptive research and provide examples of how such research may be used to solve problems in music education.
- Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research, and experimental and descriptive research.
- Provide examples of how experimental research techniques are used to solve problems in music education.
- Define historical research and provide examples of how such research is used to solve problems in music education.
- Define objective and subjective measurement techniques, and provide examples of how these techniques may be used in research and practice in music education.
- Define various computer technologies and provide examples of how computers may be used to solve problems in music education.

## **PROGRAM ADVISING**

STUDENTS should work with advisors to set a timetable for completing the program. Strategies to accomplish this include having complete information about:

- Degree requirements
- Major milestones
- Setting a topic, within the expertise of the faculty.
- Timetables and deadlines, including the consequences of straying from the timetable.
- Realistic expectations for receiving timely feedback

A proposal is a student's plan for dissertation research and writing. The following are minimum requirements for an acceptable proposal:

- Introduction to the topic and statement of research questions
- Related research
- Design
- A discussion of the appropriate analysis for the data.
- Tentative timeline

PLEASE NOTE: No data collected prior to the proposal approval may be used in the dissertation document, unless it was part of a project for MUED 890 and will be used as a pilot study for the approved topic.

A carefully prepared proposal can provide a clear road map for the dissertation. The student and advisor, in consultation with the dissertation committee, will refine the dissertation proposal.

The candidate should meet several times during the process with the director and at appropriate times with the dissertation committee, to review progress on the dissertation and draw up a plan for the next steps in the process. All plans should be placed in the candidate's departmental file.

In agreeing to the plan:

The CANDIDATE should pledge, insofar as possible, to meet the timetable, and to adhere to the scheduled meetings with the advisor and the committee.

The DISSERTATION ADVISOR should be committed to the task of coaching the dissertation author to write in the accepted style and language of the discipline, and to provide appropriate support to the student academically and intellectually. When necessary, the advisor will recommend that the student enroll in technical writing courses.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS should understand that some dissertation writers may desire meetings throughout the process, to provide feedback and guidance. In any event, they need to make the same commitment to timely review and return of drafts as the dissertation chair.

A good temperamental and intellectual fit between candidate, dissertation advisor, and committee can be critically important to a productive relationship.

## THE COMPLETION PLAN

### *Considerations for the Candidate*

- How compatible are the advisor's work habits with the student's?
- How long will it take to return written materials with comments?
- Is the faculty member willing to serve as an editor?
- How accessible is the advisor for discussion? How much time does the advisor spend away from campus?
- How much freedom will be granted in the choice of a dissertation topic?
- How much help will the advisor give in obtaining funding for students?
- Candidates are reminded that every program has its own procedures for assigning advisors to students; that these procedures should be followed; and that faculty members will ask their own questions of the student.

## DISSERTATION CHAIR AND COMMITTEE

### *Considerations for the Dissertation Advisor*

In agreeing to serve as dissertation advisor, faculty should be prepared to spend the time and effort involved in supervising the dissertation research and writing.

In agreeing to work as dissertation supervisor, the faculty member should:

- Reach an understanding with the student about what

constitutes a reasonable time period for the review and return of dissertation drafts

- Discuss how much editing she/he is willing to provide
- Decide what procedures will be followed in the submission of sections of the dissertation i.e. whether they come only to the advisor, first to the advisor and then to the committee, or simultaneously to the advisor and the committee as a whole.

### *Considerations for the Dissertation Committee Members*

Because the dissertation committee is charged with the supervision of a candidate's dissertation activities, the entire committee should agree to be a resource upon which the candidate may draw throughout the period of dissertation-oriented research and writing.

CANDIDATES AND FACULTY involved in the enterprise should recognize that:

- The dissertation is a demonstration of the capacity for independent work that marks the beginning of a scholarly career, not the work of a researcher with many years of experience
- Candid and open communication, as well as a supportive intellectual, psychological and ethical collaboration, are essential to success;
- There may need to be changes in the committee membership before the process is completed. These changes should be made as smoothly as possible to protect both candidate and faculty members from adverse consequences.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE DEFENSE**

### *Faculty*

Since the dissertation is based upon an approved proposal, faculty should choose to focus the majority of their remarks on the analysis and discussion. This is, of course, presuming that the first three chapters are consistent with what was approved of in the proposal process.

### *Candidate*

- Relax—this is a collaborative process and another step in your journey to becoming an independent scholar.
- There are very few dissertations that do not require some degree of revision after the defense. Any feedback you receive or changes you are asked to make are for the purpose of making the strongest document possible.