

Policy on the “Outside Member”

The Graduate School requires that one member of a Ph.D. dissertation committee be an individual who is not a member of the student’s degree program. This individual may be a Rutgers faculty member or someone from outside the university. Outside members are intended to bring a fresh perspective to the supervision of a student’s research and also to bring an unbiased look at the quality of the work. Therefore, they must be people with no conflict of interest with regard to assessment of the student’s work.

In some fields, especially the biomedical sciences, there is such a broad inclusion of relevant individuals on program faculties that it has become quite difficult to find a Rutgers faculty member to appoint as an outside member of a dissertation committee who is not already a member of the program faculty. At the same time, the membership of these programs is drawn from a wide range of units within Rutgers and UMDNJ, such that there can easily be faculty members of a program who have little professional contact.

It is therefore permissible, in such situations, that the “outside” member be drawn from within the program faculty when it can be shown that that individual has no close personal or professional ties to the student, the adviser and other members of the committee. In these cases the outside member may not be a member of a department already represented on the committee. Requests for these exceptions will have to demonstrate that this is the case and will require approval by the Graduate School.