

Dissenting Vote(s) at a Dissertation Defense

Faculty members of the Dissertation Examination Committee normally will examine the student candidate and vote to approve the dissertation. In the vast majority of cases these votes are unanimously for approval. In the rare case that there are faculty concerns that can not be resolved through subsequent revisions, and which therefore result in dissenting (negative) vote(s), the Committee Chair will refer the case to the Graduate Dean for resolution.

In the case of a single dissenting vote, the Committee Chair and the dissenting voter will be asked to explain the reasons for the dissent in a letter to the Graduate Dean. After consulting with these and other members of the Committee, the Graduate Dean may then decide to accept the majority opinion and approve the Dissertation, or may seek the opinion of an additional reader. After considering this additional evidence, the Graduate Dean may approve, or may decline to approve, the Dissertation.

In the case of two or more dissenting votes, the Committee Chair and the dissenting voters will again be asked to explain the reasons for the dissent. The Dean may then decide to decline to approve the Dissertation, or to ask the Department or Graduate Program to name a Resolution Committee, consisting of three tenured or tenure-track professors at Washington University or elsewhere who did not serve on the original committee, to re-examine the Dissertation and the candidate. A unanimous positive recommendation from this committee will be required in order for the Dean to approve the Dissertation. Failure of a Department or Graduate Program to identify three faculty members to serve on this Resolution Committee will be tantamount to a rejection of the Dissertation.

--Approved by the Graduate Council, April 26, 2007