

Selecting a Full Committee: 2nd Year PhD Students

The Rule: The Graduate School requires that all doctoral students have a full special committee no later than the end of the 3rd semester.

What Constitutes a Special Committee?

A *minimum* of three members of the Cornell graduate faculty constitute a special committee for a Ph.D. student.

1. One member, the chair of the committee (major advisor), represents your major field and concentration (example: Systems).
2. One **minor** member must represent a *minor outside* of Systems
3. The third **minor** member may either:
 - Represent another minor outside of the field or
 - In may be an internal minor in some subspecialty of Systems
4. To request additional time please submit a [General Petition form](#)
5. For more information about committee requirements visit our [web site](#)

To find the faculty members of any given field, go to: <http://gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/fields-of-study/fields> and look under faculty toward the bottom of the first page for the field. To find all of the fields to which any given faculty member belongs, go to the same page, on the right hand side (Narrow your Search) you can enter the faculty member's name at the top and check the box halfway down "Filter by Faculty". This will display all of the fields and concentrations that person can represent.

The Philosophy

The selection of the special committee is up to the student in consultation with his/her major advisor. Theoretically, your minor/s can be in any field; however, in practical terms, you will want to select faculty who will, in some way, contribute to or support your research goals. *The field requires that at least two of the members of your committee are qualified to read and understand the technical aspects of your dissertation.*

The Power of the Special Committee

The faculty member who represents a particular subject/concentration on the committee determines the specific requirements for that student (e.g. coursework needed). The committee, as a whole, evaluates the student at the time of the "A" exam and "B" exam and determines whether you have met the appropriate standards for original research contributing to the knowledge base of the field (approving your dissertation).

Students are encouraged to meet with their full committee at least once a year to ascertain that everyone is in agreement regarding the progress toward the degree (hint: committee members can be useful allies)

Procedure

1. To nominate your committee visit [Student Center](#).
 - a. (just below advisor box to “Graduate Committee Selection”).

FAQ's

Per the Systems Ph.D degree requirements, students need to have two minors. Who determines the minors: student, chair, committee or a combination?

The student, committee chair and the minor advisors decide. It can be slightly iterative - the student and major advisor (committee chair) discussion options for the special committee.

How many credits/courses determine a minor?

This depends on the field. For example, if a student in minoring in ECE, we ensure they have sufficient background in the specific field that it is credible. If they have an undergrad in ECE that would be minimal course work, and just participating as the minor member is sufficient. For minor requirement are decided by the minor committee member which are operated in a decentralized manner with most of the decisions made by the student's Ph.D. committee