



ADVISOR ASSIGNMENTS AND DISSERTATION COMMITTEES FOR HDFSC DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Initial Advisor Assignment

When you are first admitted to one of our PhD programs (Human Development & Family Studies, Marriage & Family Therapy, or Child Development & Early Education), you are assigned a temporary advisor. This is a faculty member in your program who will advise you in the first 1-2 years of your program until you have been matched with your Research Advisor.

Degree Committee

You have to file a formal [degree plan](#) with the TWU Graduate School when (or before) you have completed 18 hours of your doctoral coursework. The degree plan has to be approved by your committee. Your initial advisor will help you select your Degree Committee, which consists of 3 members (your advisor and two other HDFSC faculty members). It is best to have at least 2 members from your program (the third member can be from another program but must be from the HDFSC department).¹

Research Advisor/Dissertation Chair

During the first two years of your program, you should learn about the research and content expertise of the faculty in your program (faculty profiles can be found on the [School of Human Sciences website](#)). Matching of students and research advisors will be done based on goodness of fit (research topic alignment and expertise). Your Research Advisor will also be your Dissertation Chair. Your dissertation research is expected to be directly applicable to the degree you are receiving, and the research topic should be closely aligned with your Dissertation Chair's research expertise. Thus, not all topics will be available for you to study. Please work with your Research Advisor/Dissertation Chair to select a topic that meets these requirements.

Please note that there is a limit to how many dissertation students each faculty member can have (to ensure adequate focus and attention to the current students), so your first choice may not be available. Once you have been matched with a Research Advisor/Dissertation Chair, a [change of advisor](#) form should be submitted to the department's Graduate Secretary. In order to serve as Research Advisor/Dissertation Chair, the faculty member must hold Full Graduate Faculty Status with Dissertation Chair Endorsement from the TWU Graduate School.

Qualifying Exam Committee

In your last semester, you will take the department's [Qualifying Exam](#). Your Qualifying Exam Committee will consist of your Research Advisor plus two other faculty members. Preferably, your Dissertation Committee (see below) should serve as your Qualifying Exam Committee.

Dissertation Committee

Your Dissertation Committee should consist of three TWU faculty members (including the Dissertation Chair). At least two should be from your program¹. The third member can be from another program (including other departments), but must be a full-time TWU faculty member with Graduate Faculty status. It is important to have at least one committee member who is an expert in the topic you are studying (preferably the Dissertation Chair) and at least one who is an expert in the methodology you are choosing (quantitative or qualitative research). When you have selected your committee, your Dissertation Chair should submit the [committee form](#) to the department's Graduate Secretary.

Notes

¹Students in the Child Development & Early Education program must have at least two HDFSC faculty members on their Degree Committee and at least one HDFSC faculty member on their Dissertation Committee.