

Thesis Committees

Thesis committees have an established place in the academic world and play a vital role in the guidance and direction of graduate student research. One member of the committee, the chairperson, has a more formal administrative relationship with the student because of the way the university recognizes the chairperson's responsibilities. On occasion, the roles of the chairperson and the committee members require clarification.

1.0 Thesis Committee Structure

1.1 Number of Members

- 1.11 Each graduate thesis and doctoral dissertation committee shall be composed of a minimum of three members.
- 1.12. Under extenuating circumstances (e.g., member's death or sudden leave), to be noted by the graduate program coordinator* in a letter to the graduate dean, an individual student in the final stages of the thesis may request to have fewer than three members on the committee.
- 1.13 A fourth and/or fifth member may be added to the committee when deemed appropriate/necessary to provide required expertise.

1.2 Committee Membership

- 1.21 Two of the three required committee members, including the chair, shall be members of the *Master's Graduate Faculty Group* of the student's degree program. Only members of this group are allowed to chair a thesis. In order for a member to chair a thesis, he/she must have previously served as a second or third member of a thesis committee (per APM 226-2, III. *Criteria for Membership in a Master's Graduate Faculty Group*, par. 3).

The Graduate Group in the program, with the approval of the department, may invite their Faculty Early Retirement Program (FERP) faculty members to participate on thesis committees as second or third readers, with the stipulation that they demonstrate a personal commitment to function in this capacity and that they have been appointed as members of the consultative body. Graduate faculty members whose status has been terminated due to retirement or who are in FERP status may complete outstanding examining committee, thesis committee, and advising assignments as chair if they wish

* The terms *Program coordinator* and *Program director* are interchangeable in this document.

to do so, but they may not accept new assignments to chair such committees (see APM 226-3, III. *Criteria for Membership in a Master's Graduate Faculty Group*, par. 8). *Note:* In order for the thesis committee to function as required, the program must appoint FERP faculty serving on these committees as adjunct faculty during each of the academic terms in which they have inactive status.

- 1.22 An individual who possesses requisite expertise, but who is not a member of the Graduate Faculty Group in the student's program, may serve as a third reader on a thesis or dissertation committee with the approval of the department chair. This may include part-time and adjunct faculty, retired program faculty, faculty from other programs or universities, and community professionals. In such cases, a curriculum vita of the individual concerned must accompany the submitted Thesis (299) Committee Assignment form.
- 1.23 Each graduate program committee may establish additional procedures for the appointment of thesis committee members. It is recommended that these procedures be published and be made available to incoming graduate students and new faculty members.
- 1.24 The committee chair shall be a faculty member of the graduate faculty from the student's program. A faculty member from another department may assume the role of committee chair only if eligible for and appropriately appointed as program graduate faculty (see APM 226) in the student's degree program.
- 1.25 For the doctorate degree, the committee chair must be a member of the *Doctoral Graduate Faculty Group*, and possess requisite knowledge and experience in discipline-based research theory and methodologies at the doctoral level, knowledge of the requirements for doctoral dissertations in the discipline, and a demonstrated ability to successfully direct others in research activities. The first time an individual is being considered as a chair of a doctoral dissertation committee, supporting documentation must accompany the recommendation through all levels of review (per APM 227-2, III. *Criteria for Membership in a Doctoral Graduate Faculty Group*, par. 6c).
- 1.26 Each graduate program's graduate group should establish a reasonable maximum for the number of theses an individual faculty member may supervise.
- 1.27 The department chair should ensure that work of the thesis or dissertation committee chair is calculated as part of the faculty's required regular workload.