

Guidance for Graduate Advisory Committees

As soon as a course of study/research area for a master's thesis student or a doctoral student has been established, an advisory committee will be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School upon recommendation of the home program/department. Members of the advisory committee must not have conflicts of interest with each other or with the student.

The major advisor, who chairs the committee, and other members of the committee must reflect the student's scholarly area of interest. The responsibilities of the advisory committee include but are not limited to the following: provide guidance on the research of the student, review and approve the thesis/dissertation proposal, if applicable, review research progress, conduct a final defense of the thesis/dissertation, and review and recommend approval of the written thesis/dissertation to the Dean of the Graduate School. Thesis and dissertation defenses must include a public presentation of the work and an oral examination by the advisory committee. The advisory committee will meet with the student as often as necessary to help guide and direct the student's work and to foster the student's professional and career development.

Changes to the advisory committee of a student must be reviewed and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. Changes to the advisory committee must occur prior to the student's semester of graduation and should follow program-/department-specific guidelines.

Master's Advisory Committees

The master's advisory committee consists of at least TWO members of the Graduate Faculty. The preponderance of the committee, including the chair (major advisor), must have TTU Graduate Faculty Status and be members of the program/department or have affiliate status with the program/department in which the degree is housed. Adjunct Graduate Faculty may not serve as sole chair (major advisor) of a thesis committee, but they may co-chair together with a full member of the Graduate Faculty. Emeritus or retired faculty, as well as qualified individuals from outside the university, may serve on the student's committee, but may not serve as chair. External members must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, or designated proxy, after careful review of the individual's qualifications.

Doctoral Advisory Committees

The doctoral advisory committee consists of at least THREE members, including one representative from the minor area, if a minor is elected. The preponderance of the committee, including the chair (major advisor), must have TTU Graduate Faculty Status and be members of the program/department or have affiliate status with the program/department in which the degree is housed. Adjunct Graduate Faculty may not serve as sole chair (major advisor) of a dissertation committee, but may co-chair together with a full member of the Graduate Faculty. Emeritus or retired faculty, as well as qualified individuals from outside the university, may serve on the student's committee, but may not serve as chair. External members must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, or designated proxy, after careful review of the individual's qualifications. For the defense of dissertations, the advisory committee is augmented by a graduate dean's representative, who must be a member of the TTU graduate faculty and from a program other than that of the student. The dean's representative attends the presentation and may participate in the exam; however, they have no vote in the exam, but rather complete a dean's representative report.

Additional resources:

See OP32.17 for additional information about faculty titles

See OP64.10 for additional information about Graduate Faculty

See OP10.20 for additional information regarding conflict of interest

See Roles and Responsibilities of Graduate Advisory Committee Members

See Roles and Responsibilities of Graduate Dean's Representative

Roles and Responsibilities of Graduate Advisory Committee Members

Advisory Committees* are responsible for the overall direction of master's thesis and doctoral dissertation research. Each committee must have a designated chair or co-chairs who will oversee the research process and ensure that Graduate School policies are met.

The primary duties of advisory committees are to help the students achieve their goals and to uphold the academic standards of Texas Tech University.

Responsibilities of the Chair

- Guide the student on the selection of a research topic appropriate to the discipline, interests, and degree level
- Guide the student on the development of a research plan appropriate to the topic
- Assure that applicable research compliance requirements (e.g., human subjects, recombinant DNA, radiation safety, vertebrate animals, etc.) are met
- Advise the student on timelines for degree completion and ensure that annual activity reports and other requirements of the Graduate School are met
- Work with the student to schedule regular committee meetings to review degree and research progress (at least once per year)
- Assist the student with the development of professional presentations, publications, and other scholarly works
- Guide the student on professional and career development activities (e.g., assist the student in developing an individual development plan)
- Assign a grade for each semester the student is enrolled in thesis/dissertation hours (a grade of "credit" or "no credit" must be assigned for all semesters, except the semester of graduation, in which a letter grade must be assigned.)
- Review thesis/dissertation drafts and provide constructive feedback to ensure that the work meets scholarly standards in the discipline
- Prepare the student for the defense process
- Work with the student to identify a graduate dean's representative for dissertation defenses
- Work with the student to schedule a public presentation and defense of the thesis/dissertation; submit the master's/doctoral defense notification form.
- Ensure that the student submits a draft of the thesis/dissertation to the committee at least THREE (3) WEEKS prior to the defense; communicate with the committee about the thesis/dissertation before proceeding with the defense
- Ensure that all members of the advisory committee and the graduate dean's representative (for dissertation defenses) are present in real time (attendance may be remote, consistent with program guidelines). If not all members are present, including the dean's representative, the defense is NOT valid and it must not proceed, but be rescheduled
- Introduce the student at the public presentation and chair the defense, ensuring that all members, including the dean's representative, participate
- The defense must proceed in a fair, unbiased manner. The participation of the dean's representative helps assure appropriate treatment of the doctoral candidate and that all procedures are followed. If the dean's representative has concerns, they may ask for a recess to discuss these concerns with the chair privately. Instances of bias or unfair treatment will be reviewed by the Graduate School and the defense may be declared invalid by the Dean of the Graduate School.
- File the results of thesis/dissertation defense form with the Graduate School
- Review and approve the final version of the thesis/dissertation; submit the thesis/dissertation approval form to the Graduate School; approve the submission of the thesis/dissertation to the electronic archive platform

Responsibilities of Committee Members

- All members of the student's committee share responsibility for ensuring that the student progresses through their program and produces high-quality work.
- Review and provide feedback on the research plan
- In cooperation with the Chair, advise the student through the various phases of their research
- Provide subject matter or methodological expertise as requested by the Chair or student
- Review and critically evaluate drafts of the thesis/dissertation. Provide a rationale for both support as well as criticism. Make recommendations for substantive changes. Major flaws that are likely to result in a student's unsuccessful defense should discuss these concerns with the candidate and Chair immediately (prior to the defense).
- Attend public presentation and participate in the defense; record evaluation of defense performance on report of defense form
- Re-evaluate the thesis/dissertation, if needed, and record approval/disapproval on thesis/dissertation approval form
- In the case of a master's students pursuing a non-thesis option (e.g., exam, internship, portfolio, report), critically evaluate the work product to the standard of the discipline and record the evaluation; assure that the comprehensive evaluation form is submitted to the Graduate School

*See "Guidance for Advisory Committees" for details on committee composition