

The Graduate Advisory Committee

Forming a graduate advisory committee is one of the most important decisions to be made in a master's program. Until a committee is selected, the graduate program coordinator should be consulted for information and advice. The graduate coordinator assists in establishing a basic course of study and helping identify academic specialties among the program's faculty. The chair of the graduate advisory committee should be selected as early as possible after consultation with the graduate program coordinator.

The committee chair, with assistance from the graduate advisory committee, directs the graduate student's course of study and oversees the thesis, project, or comprehensive examination. The committee chair will assist in meeting the University style and format requirements for master's theses and projects.

Students should check with their graduate coordinator to determine the number of committee members required for their program (some programs require a chair and one member; others require a chair and two members).

Members of the graduate advisory committee, particularly the chair, should have a strong background in the appropriate academic area, be able to communicate and work well with other faculty in the program, and have the time to participate on or chair the committee.

The committee chair must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member who is from the program. This includes faculty members participating in the early retirement program (if they agree to "volunteer" their time during their off-campus semester).

The second member must have the same qualifications as the committee chair. In some departments, the second member may be:

1. A tenured or tenure-track faculty member associated with a program other than the one granting the degree, or
2. A tenured or tenure-track faculty member who is fully retired from the program but willing to "volunteer" her/his time to serve on the committee.

The graduate coordinator of the program must approve a second committee member who falls into category one or two above.

The third member customarily meets the second member qualifications. An exception may be allowed for a person to serve as the third member in cases where the person does not meet the specific criteria indicated above, but is determined to be otherwise qualified for committee membership due to significant professional achievement in an area related to the subject of the thesis or project. This includes professionals working in the community. In this case, approval is required by the committee chair, graduate coordinator and graduate dean.

Graduate advisory committee membership is prohibited for people with conflicts of interest (e.g., those who are related to the graduate student by blood, marriage, personal relationship, or living arrangement).

Students who select the thesis or project as their culminating activity are urged to complete it during the semester they are enrolled in the designated course (customarily taken during the last semester of the master's program). In cases where the thesis or project is not completed during enrollment in these units, students are allowed a maximum of three additional semesters to complete the thesis or project. If the thesis or project is not completed by this deadline (and the program time limit has not run out), members of the committee can choose to withdraw. In the case of a faculty member withdrawing, it is the responsibility of the student to reconstitute the committee.

Exceptions to the policy on Graduate Advisory Committees may be requested by the graduate program coordinator and must be approved by the dean of Graduate Programs.