

11.99.99.R0.06 Master's and Specialist Thesis and Advisory Committee



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Procedure Statement

The Graduate Council establishes basic standards for thesis and advisory committees at Texas A&M University-Commerce.

Reason for Procedure

This procedure documents the requirements for thesis advisory committees and theses.

Procedures and Responsibilities

1 THESIS COURSE

- 1.1 All degree programs involving a thesis require the satisfactory completion of the 518 course. Upon the appointment of the thesis committee, a thesis student must be registered for a minimum of three graduate hours, which may include three hours of the 518 course, to receive thesis advice and assistance from members of the faculty or to use university facilities or services.
- 1.2 Students must be enrolled in 518 the semester they submit their final thesis to the Graduate School.
- 1.3 Credit for no more and no less than six hours of 518 is required in a degree program and is awarded only upon satisfactory completion of all requirements. Unless approved by the department head or director of school or program coordinator, 518 must be taken in the department/school of the major field of study.

2 THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 2.1 A thesis advisory committee shall be appointed for each student enrolled in the thesis of his/her master's or specialist program. In accordance with University Procedure [12.04.99.R0.02 Graduate Faculty Membership](#), the chair of the thesis advisory committee must have graduate faculty membership. In addition, all members of the thesis advisory committee must have graduate faculty membership or temporary graduate faculty status. The committee is to oversee the thesis process from initial proposal to completion. After consulting with the student and the faculty member in question, the head of the major department/director of school shall approve one faculty member from the major field as the thesis advisor. After consultation with the thesis advisor and the student, the department head/director of school shall approve two other department/school members to serve on the committee or one other department/school member and another member from outside the department/school. The committee must have a minimum of three members. [Thesis Committee Selection Form](#) must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School and approved a minimum of 30 days prior to the proposal meeting.
- 2.2 All proposed committee appointments shall be forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School, who after consultation with the committee chair has the right to approve or disapprove of the committee membership. In the case of disapproval, the dean shall provide a written explanation to the head of the major department or director of school and to the advisor.
- 2.3 In no case shall the committee have more than four members.

3 NATURE OF THE THESIS

- 3.1 A thesis is designed :
- 3.1.1 To provide a culminating experience to the master's or specialist degree.
 - 3.1.2 To demonstrate the student's academic competence as a scholar, including her/his ability to understand and carry out research or creative activity in the field of specialization.
 - 3.1.3 To provide evidence of the student's understanding of select methods and tools in the field of specialization.
- 3.2 The significance of the topic and the appropriateness of the proposed methodology must be judged by the criteria that constitutes acceptable master's or specialist level research among practicing scholars in the discipline.
- 3.3 A suitable thesis topic should have the potential to do at least one of the following:
- 3.3.1 Uncover new and significant facts or principles
 - 3.3.2 Test a theory by collecting and interpreting relevant data or research

- 3.3.3 Suggest previously unrecognized relationships
- 3.3.4 Challenge existing assumptions
- 3.3.5 Afford further insights into little-understood phenomena
- 3.3.6 Suggest new interpretations of current understandings
- 3.3.7 Replication of a prior study
- 3.3.8 Demonstrate appropriate artistic mastery or merit

3.4 A master's thesis must:

- 3.4.1 Provide evidence of the student's knowledge of the relevant foremost works published on the subject of the thesis.
- 3.4.2 Have a significant research component and a concentration that falls within the academic field in which the degree will be received.
- 3.4.3 Provide evidence of the student's ability to operate in a manner befitting the academic field in which the degree will be received.
- 3.4.4 Be produced, structured and written in accordance with current methodologies in the academic field in which the degree will be received.

4 THE THESIS PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Each department/school offering the master's or specialist thesis is responsible for developing its own procedures leading to the production of the thesis proposal. All procedures should allow for significant input from all members of the student's committee.
- 4.2 When the advisor and committee conclude that the student is adequately prepared, the student shall present the proposal at a meeting of the full thesis committee. Such proposal presentations may be open to other faculty, graduate students, and other interested parties, as determined by the department/school.
- 4.3 At this meeting, the committee shall investigate the adequacy of the thesis topic, the proposed methodology, and the student's ability to complete the proposed thesis successfully. Each department/school offering the thesis option shall have its own procedures for determining whether a proposal is accepted or rejected at the department/school level. If the proposal is accepted, the student must make all changes (if any) requested by the committee and follow the process to submit the proposal to the Graduate School for review and approval.

- 4.4 After a proposal has been accepted at the department/school level, the need for referral to the appropriate [research compliance](#) committee will be determined by the chair of the thesis supervisory committee in consultation with the head of the academic department/school. Research using human participants, animal subjects, or hazardous materials will be referred to the appropriate committee (Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and/or Institutional Biosafety Committee for hazardous materials) for review and approval.

The student cannot collect data for the thesis that has been reviewed for research compliance before receiving approval from his/her committee and, research compliance.

4.5 Proposal Submission:

The student will submit the following documents to the Graduate School for review and approval at least one semester prior to graduation:

- Thesis Proposal Approval Form with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean*,
- Completed thesis proposal saved as a Microsoft Word (or PDF, if using LaTeX),
- [Advisor's Approval Form to Submit Proposal form with both the advisor's and student's signature](#),*
- Copy of research compliance approval (if applicable),
- Copy of successful completion report for responsible conduct in research training and all other research compliance training applicable, and
- Copy of the iThenticate Similarity Report.

The forms are located in the Thesis Proposal Packet, which can be found on the Graduate School webpage. Also included in the packet are instructions for how to submit the iThenticate Similarity Report.

- 4.6 The Graduate School will review the proposal for issues of conformity to the manuscript style requirement of the student's discipline and conformity to the Graduate School requirements regarding formatting. Feedback will be provided to the advisor and student within 15 university business days. All issues identified in the proposal review must be resolved prior to the submission of the final thesis.

- 4.7 The Dean of the Graduate School or delegate shall then approve or disapprove the thesis proposal. The thesis proposal must be approved by the Graduate Dean a minimum of one semester prior to the date the thesis defense is conducted. If the proposal is disapproved, the dean shall provide to the student and the thesis advisor a written explanation of the reasons for the disapproval. The proposal may then be revised and resubmitted for review.

5 FINAL ORAL DEFENSE

- 5.1 A satisfactory defense is required for approval of the thesis. The defense is administered upon recommendation of the candidate's advisory committee after course work, comprehensive examinations, and all other requirements have been fulfilled. The defense is both an examination of the thesis and an assessment of the research skills and knowledge of the student's discipline.
- 5.2 When the thesis committee is satisfied with the product, a date acceptable to the thesis advisor, committee members, and student shall be chosen for the final oral defense.
- 5.3 The [Notification of the Thesis Defense](#), notifying the Dean of the Graduate School of the time, date, and place of the defense, should be submitted to the Graduate School one week prior to the defense.*
- 5.4 It is expected that the entire advisory committee will participate in the defense at the appointed time and place of the examination.

6 SUBMITTING THE THESIS FOR REVIEW

- 6.1 Once the thesis is accepted at the departmental/school level, the [Thesis Final Defense Report](#), Advisor's Approval Form to Submit Thesis* and the completed thesis shall be forwarded to the Graduate School for review.* The forms are located in the Final Thesis Submission Packet, which can be found on the Graduate School's webpage. Also included in the packet are instructions for how to submit the iThenticate Similarity Report.
- 6.2 The Graduate School will review the thesis for issues of research methodology and conformity to the manuscript style requirement of the student's discipline. It may be accepted or sent back for revision and resubmission.
- 6.3 The Dean of the Graduate School or delegate shall then approve or disapprove the thesis. If the thesis is disapproved, the dean shall provide to the student and the thesis advisor a written explanation of the reasons for the disapproval. The thesis may then be revised and resubmitted for further evaluation.

*Indicates that a form is to be submitted

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

University Procedure [11.04.99.R0.15 Course Requirements for the Master's Degree](#)

University Procedure [11.04.99.R0.20 Examinations for Graduate Degrees](#)

University Procedure [11.04.99.R0.21 Master's Degree Research Component](#)

University Procedure [11.04.99.R0.32 Course Requirements for Second Master's Degree](#)

University Procedure [15.99.01.R0.01 Human Subjects Protection](#)

University Procedure [15.99.03.R0.03 Animal Care and Use](#)

University Procedure [24.01.01.R0.02 Infectious Biohazards and/or rDNA in Research](#)

University Procedure [12.04.99.R0.02 Graduate Faculty Membership](#)

Appendix

[Thesis Selection Committee Form](#)

[Notification Form for the Thesis Defense](#)

Final [Thesis Submission Packet](#)

Contact Office

The Graduate School
903.886.5163