

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

Approved April 6, 2015
Next Scheduled Review: April 6, 2020



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, students must be registered for the 518 course to receive thesis related assistance from members of the faculty or to use university facilities or services.
- 1.2 Students must be registered in 518 for the semester they graduate. Credit for no more than six hours of 518 is allowed in a degree program and is awarded only upon satisfactory completion of each requirement. 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 at least two other department/school members to serve on the committee and submit the [Thesis Committee Selection Form](#) to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

2.2 All proposed committee appointments shall be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies, 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.

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 all three levels of approval from (1) his/her committee, (2) research compliance, and (3) the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Services (OTDS).

4.5 Proposal Submission:

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

- Thesis Proposal Approval Form*,
- Completed thesis proposal,
- [Advisor's Approval Form to Submit Proposal](#)*
- Copy of research compliance approval (if applicable), and
- Copy of successful completion report for responsible conduct in research training and all other research compliance training applicable

4.6 The staff of the OTDS will review the proposal for issues of research methodology and conformity to the manuscript style requirement of the student's discipline. When an issue is identified as a result of the review by OTDS, consultation with the committee is initiated. Feedback will be provided to the advisor and student within 15 University business days.

4.7 The Dean of Graduate Studies or delegate shall then approve or disapprove the thesis proposal. 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 Graduate Studies of the time, date, and place of the defense, should be submitted to the OTDS 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 OTDS for review.*
- 6.2 The staff of the OTDS 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 Graduate Studies 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](#)

[Thesis Final Defense Report](#)

Contact Office

Office of Graduate Studies
903.886.5163