



# Policy

## University Policy AC-37.01-03/15

**Policy Title:** Graduate Student Thesis/Dissertation Committees

**Originator:** Dr. R. Podemski, Dean

**Responsible Office:** Graduate School

### Reason for Policy/Purpose:

To ensure that members of graduate student committees, including thesis committees and dissertation committees, meet the highest standards of scholarship.

### Who Does this Govern and Who Needs to Know this Policy?

All individuals who provide guidance for graduate culminating experiences such as theses and dissertations.

### Policy Statement:

1. The quality of a graduate student's education depends substantially upon the individuals who advise, assist and supervise a student. Therefore, programs must establish procedures and selection criteria to identify individuals who are distinctively qualified to serve on graduate student committees. Selection criteria shall at a minimum include the Qualifications for Faculty to Teach Graduate Courses (see University Policy AC-22.01-05/14), which provide for qualification of individuals on a basis other than standard academic credentials.

#### 2. Thesis/dissertation Committee Membership:

Each graduate student enrolled in a degree program or a program track or specialization that requires a thesis or dissertation must have a thesis/dissertation committee. The student and the thesis/dissertation supervisor are responsible for the selection of the thesis/dissertation committee members from among eligible individuals by a deadline that allows for compliance with the UWF time to degree policy. The thesis/dissertation committee must be composed of at least two members but preferably three.

The thesis/dissertation supervisor must be a member of the faculty at UWF and serves as chair of the committee. The second member of the committee will have appropriate disciplinary expertise and will be on the faculty in the same department as the student or in a closely related department at UWF. The thesis/dissertation supervisor and the second member of the committee must at a minimum meet the criteria of the policy on Qualifications for Faculty to Teach Graduate Courses (see University Policy AC-

22.01-05/14) and any other criteria for thesis/dissertation committee membership established by the department. The third member of the committee, if present, and any additional committee members may be from outside the department or outside the institution and must at a minimum meet the criteria for thesis/dissertation committee membership established by the department. Programs must keep a record of thesis committee membership. A request by a student for changes in thesis committee membership must be accompanied by a rationale and be signed by the student and the committee member(s) whose status is affected by the request. The request must be approved by the thesis/dissertation supervisor and the individual responsible for the overall leadership of the graduate program, typically the chair of the department.

### 3. Thesis/dissertation Committee Responsibilities:

The thesis/dissertation committee is responsible for planning and directing the work required for the thesis/dissertation. This includes advising the student during preparation of the thesis/dissertation proposal, ensuring that the proposal meets UWF standards concerning the protection of human research participants when applicable, and ensuring that the entire degree program can be accomplished within the time and facilities available. The thesis/dissertation committee also ensures that the student is adequately prepared to do the required work, supervises preparation of the thesis/dissertation, and certifies that the thesis/dissertation is ready for the oral defense prior to formally scheduling the defense. The thesis/dissertation committee is also responsible for conducting the oral defense of the thesis/dissertation. The committee determines whether the thesis/dissertation is properly written, whether the student completed the research independently, whether the thesis/dissertation meets all of the requirements of the University, and whether the student has demonstrated sufficient command of the subject material to pass the defense successfully. All thesis/dissertation committee members must be present at the oral defense and unanimous approval of the committee shall be required for passing. Committee members from outside institutions may attend via electronic media, including but limited to telephone and Skype.

Programs must keep a record of the results of thesis/dissertation defenses, including whether the student passed or failed the defense, any changes in the thesis/dissertation that must be made before it can be approved for submission to the Graduate School, and the date by which those changes must be completed. The chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that the form reporting the results of the defense includes all required signatures, including the acknowledgement of the individual responsible for the overall leadership of the graduate program, typically the chair of the department. If the student does not pass the first defense, the committee must decide if a second defense is justified. Any additional work required before a second defense will be communicated in writing to the student. If a second defense is not held within a year of the first defense, no further opportunity to defend the thesis/dissertation will be allowed unless exceptional circumstances justify that an extension of time be granted by the Dean of the Graduate School.

The final duty of the thesis/dissertation committee is to sign the thesis/dissertation approval page (also called signature page) after making certain that all necessary changes and corrections have been made.

The chair of the thesis/dissertation committee, or any member(s) of the thesis/dissertation committee so designated by the thesis/dissertation committee chair, is/are responsible for verifying that the stipulated changes have been made.

**Authority and Related Documents:**

This policy is related to University Policy AC-22.01-05/14 Qualifications for Faculty to Teach Graduate Courses.

**APPROVED:** Dr. Judith A. Bense, President   **Date:** 3/20/15

**History:** Adopted March 2015.