

MASTER'S THESIS

The master's thesis represents the culminating research of the master's degree program. It is a scholarly presentation of original research that is defended as partial fulfillment of requirements for the master's degree. The college, school or department determines the amount of credit allowed for research and work on the thesis. Students should contact the Office of Graduate Education on instructions regarding how to prepare and format the thesis (instructions found on the OGE website (<https://www.du.edu/graduate-education/current-student-resources/dissertation-thesis-information/>)).

Program-Level Thesis Proposal Committee

All candidates for the master's degree must have a thesis director who is a faculty member in the student's graduate program. Programs may require that thesis proposals be approved by or defended before a committee within the department or program. Programs reserve the right to determine the composition of the thesis proposal committee. However, only those faculty who meet the following University requirements may serve as voting members of the oral defense committee.

Master's Thesis Oral Defense Committee

The masters candidate's thesis oral defense committee will be submitted to the Office of Graduate Education for approval by the Senior Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Education. OGE staff will review the committee to ensure that it meets University policies and the Senior Vice Provost will work with the department/program chair to resolve any concerns that the proposed committee may not adhere to University policies.

Prior to coming to OGE the department/program chair is responsible for confirming the committee membership is appropriate for the thesis subject matter and for supporting the student's academic needs. If rejected by the chair or the Senior Vice Provost, the dean or designee can review an appeal of committee membership. The Thesis/Dissertation Oral Defense Committee Recommendation form (found on the OGE website (<https://www.du.edu/graduate-education/current-student-resources/dissertation-thesis-information/>)) should be returned to the Office of Graduate Education as soon as the thesis proposal has been approved or 30 days following IRB submission but no later than the first day of the quarter in which the student expects to complete the degree.

Composition

Thesis Director

The thesis director is ordinarily a tenure-line or research faculty member of the candidate's graduate program. Under some circumstances, faculty with other designations (e.g., clinical) can serve as the thesis director with approval of the department/program chair and dean/designee. The process for approval is the same as for other committee members (see below).

It is the thesis director's responsibility to ensure that the student's research meets appropriate academic standards for the discipline in which the degree is being conferred. The thesis director is a voting member of the committee.

Committee Members

The committee is composed of a minimum of two and a maximum of five voting members, including the thesis director. This includes the thesis director but does not include the Oral Defense Committee Chair, who is a non-voting committee member. Tenure-line and research faculty from DU, including those outside the student's program, are automatically eligible to serve on thesis committees if the thesis subject is appropriate to their field of expertise.

Faculty with other designations (e.g., clinical, teaching, professor of the practice) are eligible to serve as voting members of the committee if they have been actively^[1] (p.) involved in research and scholarship in a relevant field and meet the following requirements:

1. Possession of the research doctorate, terminal degree in the field, or equivalent record of research, scholarship, or achievement appropriate for the program; and
2. Professional productivity as evidenced by achievement such as:
 - Publication of a book or books recognized in the field as scholarly work;
 - Publication of articles in recognized, peer-reviewed scholarly journals;
 - Publication of articles in conference proceedings;
 - Current award or completion of an externally-funded project (e.g. grant recipient or program manager);
 - Possess national eminence in the topic field;
 - Juried performances, exhibitions, or creative works that have received significant regional, national, or international recognition.

Department/Program chairs should submit the CV of an individual to the dean or designee for approval. Once approved, the Office of Graduate Education will maintain these approved lists for individual programs for three years without additional review.

Individuals from other academic institutions may serve as voting members (not director) of the committee. If in a tenure-track or research faculty position in a relevant field at a university or research position in a National Laboratory, they are automatically eligible; if not, individuals must submit

a current CV through the department chair for approval by the dean/designee. Once approved, the Office of Graduate Education will maintain these approved lists for individual programs. No more than one committee member can come from outside DU

[1] (p.) Actively is defined as contributing to research in the last three to five years

Oral Defense Committee Chair

The role of the oral defense committee chair is to ensure a fair examination process that adheres to the policies outlined in the Graduate Bulletin. The chair should provide a non-specialist's perspective on the quality of the thesis. The chair must be familiar with the standards for master's thesis research and should have some general knowledge of the topic of the student's thesis. The chair is expected to have read the thesis prior to the defense and to participate in the defense as their academic expertise permits, but the chair is not a voting member.

The committee chair must be a tenured member of the DU faculty and must be from a department, school, or college other than that of the candidate. There will be no exceptions to this element of the policy. When a master's degree is interdisciplinary, the defense committee chair should whenever possible be from a discipline not represented in the degree. Exceptions to this policy can be approved by the dean or designee when accompanied by a conflict of interest disclosure. Those faculty holding only courtesy appointments in a program are not considered "within" the program.

It is the responsibility of the student and thesis director to find an appropriate oral defense committee chair who meets these requirements and agrees to serve. In case of difficulty reaching agreement, the chair of the department/program will make a decision. This decision is not appealable.

Emeriti Faculty

- Emeriti faculty may serve as a voting committee member or outside chair.
- They may continue to finish out advising their students as a dissertation/thesis director but cannot take on new students as director. Before retiring, faculty should work with their department chair to confirm the students and their expected graduation term in which they will continue to serve as their director. The department chair should then submit the approved plan to the Office of Graduate Education.

Retired Faculty

- Retired faculty may serve as a voting committee member so long as the associate dean and department chair approve. The Office of Graduate Education will keep these approvals on file for 3 years.
- Retired faculty may serve as an outside chair for up to one year post retirement so long as they had tenure prior to retiring and the associate dean and department chair approve. The Office of Graduate Education will keep these approvals on file for one year.
- They may continue to finish out advising their students as a dissertation/thesis director but cannot take on new students as director. Before retiring, faculty should work with their department chair to confirm the students and their expected graduation term in which they will continue to serve as their director. The department chair should then submit the approved plan to the Office of Graduate Education.

Appeal of Defense Committee Composition

If the department/program chair rejects the composition of the thesis committee, the student can appeal to the dean or designee. The appeal should include CVs of each proposed committee member, along with a statement explaining why the student believes the composition of the committee is appropriate for the project. The appeal must be signed by the thesis director to confirm their agreement with the student's proposed committee.

The dean or designee will review the appeal and respond in writing to approve or reject the committee within 10 business days. The decision is final and not subject to appeal.

Unit-specific Requirements

Schools and departments reserve the right to establish requirements that exceed University standards. It is the student's responsibility to determine whether or not the unit has requirements in addition to University policy and the unit's responsibility to ensure that those requirements have been met before submitting the Oral Defense Committee Recommendation form to the Office of Graduate Education.