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. Students should consult the Office of Graduate Studies for instruction regarding how to prepare and format the thesis.

Program-level Thesis Proposal Committee

All candidates for the master’s degree must have a thesis director who is a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in the student’s graduate program. The program may require that thesis proposals be approved by or defended before a committee within the department or program, which may 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 master’s candidate’s thesis oral defense committee is recommended by the school or program and approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies. The Thesis/Dissertation Oral Defense Committee Recommendation form should be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies as soon as the thesis proposal has been approved or defended but no later than the first day of the quarter in which the student expects to complete his/her degree.

Composition

The committee is composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of five members. Minimally two are voting members, including the thesis director. The chair of the committee is a non-voting member and must be from a department, school or college other than that of the candidate. All voting members of the committee must be full-time appointed faculty at DU and have research records appropriate to the student’s area of specialization.

Faculty from appropriately related programs who hold the terminal degree in their field may serve on the committee as long as the candidate’s graduate program has the majority representation and a majority of the members hold the earned doctorate. When a master’s degree is interdisciplinary, faculty representation from all disciplines must be reflected on the committee.

Oral Defense Committee Chair

The committee member from outside of the student’s graduate department represents the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and serves as chair of the oral defense committee. The oral defense committee chair must be a tenured or tenure-track member of the DU faculty.

It is the responsibility of the student to find an appropriate oral defense committee chair to serve who meets these requirements.

Thesis Director

The thesis director must be a tenured or tenure-track member of the candidate’s graduate program. 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.

Special Members

In rare occasions, students may request to add an adjunct faculty member, post-doctoral appointee, a professor from another institution, or another qualified person—including someone without a doctorate but with other appropriate qualifications—as a special committee member. A special member may not be considered a substitute for one who meets the University requirements; rather, the special member should be considered as an addition to the core committee.

Students also may request that a non-tenure track, full-time appointed DU faculty member serve as committee chair.

These requests must be supported by a strong rationale, have the support of the student’s program and be approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies. The request must include a statement of rationale, the proposed special member’s CV, and the Thesis/Dissertation Oral Defense Committee Recommendation form.

Program-specific Requirements

Schools and departments reserve the right to establish requirements that are more restrictive than the minimal University standards. It is the student’s responsibility to determine whether or not the unit has requirements in addition to University policy and the program’s responsibility to ensure that those requirements have been met before submitting the committee recommendation form to the Office of Graduate Studies.