

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

Revised October 18, 2024

Next Scheduled Review: October 18, 2029



Procedure Summary

The Graduate Council establishes basic standards for thesis and advisory committees at East Texas A&M University (the University).

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

Procedures and Responsibilities

1 THESIS COURSE

- 1.1 All degree programs with a thesis option require the satisfactory completion of six hours of the course numbered 518 in the respective discipline. Upon the completion of comprehensive examinations, a thesis student must be registered for a minimum of three graduate semester credit 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 complete a total of six hours of the 518 course in order to satisfy the thesis requirements of the degree. These six hours of 518 may be taken during any semester after admittance to the thesis program. If a 518 course is taken during the summer term, only one three-hour course is required for the entire summer term.
- 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, the 518 course must be taken in the department/school of the major field of study.

2 THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A thesis advisory committee will be appointed for each student enrolled in the thesis option of a master's or specialist program. In accordance with University Procedure *12.99.99.R0.12 Graduate Faculty Membership*, the chair of the thesis advisory committee must have full graduate faculty membership. In addition, all members of the thesis advisory committee must have graduate faculty membership or temporary graduate faculty status.

- 2.1 The thesis advisory committee oversees the thesis process from the initial proposal to the completion of the final thesis. After consulting with the student and the faculty member in question, the head of the major department/director of school will approve one faculty member from the major field as the thesis advisor (also referred to as the chair of the thesis committee). After consultation with the thesis advisor and the student, the department head/director of school shall approve two other department/school faculty 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 digitally to the Graduate School for approval by the Dean of the Graduate School or a designee a minimum of 30 days prior to the proposal meeting.

The link to the Thesis Committee Selection Form can be found on the Thesis and Dissertation Services (TDS)/Thesis web page (www.tamuc.edu/thesis).

- 2.2 All proposed committee appointments must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School or a designee, 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 of the Graduate School or a designee will provide a written explanation to the head of the major department and the advisor.
- 2.3 In no case will the thesis advisory 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 the 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 constitute 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; and

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 and

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 option 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 thesis advisory committee.

- 4.2 When the advisor and committee conclude that the student is adequately prepared, the student will 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 will investigate the adequacy of the thesis topic, the appropriateness of the proposed methodology, and the student's ability to complete the proposed thesis successfully. Each department/school offering the thesis option will 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 any and all changes 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 advisory 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.

If a study requires research compliance approval, the student cannot collect data for the thesis until approval is received from the applicable research committee and the student's thesis advisory committee.

- 4.5 The proposal document must be submitted to the Graduate School for review and approval at least one semester prior to graduation. The student will submit the digital form, Thesis Proposal Submission Form, uploading to the form the following documents.
 - 4.5.1 Completed thesis proposal saved as a Microsoft Word (or PDF, if using LaTeX),
 - 4.5.2 Copy of research compliance committee approval letter (if applicable),
 - 4.5.3 Copy of successful completion report for responsible conduct in research training and all other research compliance training applicable and
 - 4.5.4 Copy of a current iThenticate Similarity Report.

A link to the Thesis Proposal Submission Form can be found under item 3 on the TDS/Thesis web page (www.tamuc.edu/thesis).

- 4.6 The Graduate School will conduct a one-time review of the proposal for adherence and conformity to the Graduate School formatting requirements. Feedback will be provided via a review checklist that is emailed to the student and the student's advisor (to their university email) to within 15 university business days of confirmed receipt by the TDS. 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 a designee, will then approve or disapprove the thesis proposal. If the proposal is disapproved, the Graduate School Dean or designee will provide the student and the student's thesis advisor with a written explanation of the reasons for the disapproval. The proposal may then be revised and resubmitted for review at a later date.

5 FINAL ORAL DEFENSE

- 5.1 A satisfactory defense is required for approval of the final thesis. The defense is administered upon recommendation of the student's advisory committee after coursework, 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 the student will be chosen for the final oral defense.
- 5.3 The Notification of the Thesis Defense notifies the Graduate School of the time, date, and place of the defense, and it should be submitted to the TDS no less than seven (7) university business days prior to the defense*.

A link to the digital form can be found on the TDS/Thesis web page (www.tamuc.edu/thesis).

- 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 FINAL THESIS FOR REVIEW

- 6.1 Once the final thesis is accepted at the departmental level, the Final Thesis Submission form and the completed thesis, along with a current iThenticate report, shall be digitally submitted to the Graduate School for review*.

A link to the submission form can be found on the TDS/Thesis web page (www.tamuc.edu/thesis).

- 6.2 The Graduate School will review the final thesis for adherence and conformity to the Graduate School's formatting requirements. Feedback is provided via a review checklist that is emailed to the student and the student's advisor (to their university email) within 15

university business days of confirmed receipt by TDS. TDS will provide reviews until the formatting of the final document meets Graduate School requirements.

- 6.3 The Dean of the Graduate School, or a designee, will then approve or disapprove the thesis. If the thesis is disapproved, the Dean of The Graduate School will provide the student and the student's advisor with a written explanation of the reasons for the disapproval. The thesis may then be revised and resubmitted for further evaluation at a later date.

*Indicates that a digital form is to be submitted

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

University Procedure [11.99.99.R0.09 Course Requirements for the Master's and Specialist Degree](#)

University Procedure [11.99.99.R0.13 Examinations for Graduate Degrees](#)

University Procedure [11.99.99.R0.20 Course Requirements for Additional Master's Degree](#)

University Procedure [12.99.99.R0.12 Graduate Faculty Membership](#)

University Procedure [15.99.01.R1 Human Subjects Protection](#)

University Procedure [15.99.03.R1 Use of Vertebrate Animals](#)

University Procedure [15.99.06.R1 Use of Biohazardous Material in Research, Teaching and Testing](#)

Appendix

Thesis and Dissertation Service/Thesis webpage (www.tamuc.edu/thesis)

Revision History

Approved April 6, 2015

Revised February 7, 2019

Revised November 7, 2024 (University Name Update)

Contact Office

The Graduate School
903.886.5163
Graduate.School@tamuc.edu