

THESIS AND DISSERTATION POLICY

POLICY ON THE ADVISEMENT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH AND THE APPOINTMENT OF THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Doctoral Theses

There are two committees that function to advise, approve, and conduct the final doctoral oral examination of the thesis and the student's knowledge of the field in which it lies.

The first committee is called the Thesis Advisory Committee or the Thesis Reading Committee and consists of at least three people, one of whom is the Thesis Advisor. This committee approves the research topic, provides advice and guidance during the research, and is charged with approving the thesis when the research is completed and presented as the doctoral thesis. When the Thesis Advisory Committee considers the thesis to be satisfactory, a recommendation is made to the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education for the appointment of the second committee, which is called the Final Doctoral Examination Committee, and it consists of at least five individuals.

The Thesis Advisory Committee consists of at least three members satisfying the following: (1) the thesis advisor shall be a member of the Graduate Thesis Faculty (which is defined below). If the thesis advisor is an Adjunct Faculty or part-time faculty member, then there must be a co-advisor who is a full-time member of the Graduate Thesis Faculty. (2) the majority of committee members shall be members of the Graduate Thesis Faculty. The Committee is approved by the Graduate Curriculum Committee or its equivalent in the academic program, recommended by the School Chair or the faculty director of graduate studies in the program, and appointed by the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education.

The Final Doctoral Examination Committee consists of at least five persons including at least three members of the Graduate Thesis Faculty. This committee always contains the Thesis Advisory Committee members and others as appropriate, who are recommended by the school or college to the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education for approval. The thesis advisor will serve as the chair of the Final Doctoral Examination Committee. At least one member of the Final Doctoral Examination Committee must be external to the unit in which the student is enrolled. A committee member is eligible to be the "external" member if they have a terminal degree and either 1) are a faculty member from a unit that is distinct from the unit in which the student is enrolled, or 2) are not employed by Georgia Tech and are active in research related to the topic of the dissertation.

It is recognized that some Schools and Colleges may wish to appoint a Thesis Advisory Committee that consists of five or more persons, and to recommend this committee to serve as the Final Doctoral Examination Committee. Where the constraints outlined above are met for both committees, this is permissible.

Master's Theses

For Master's Thesis advisement, the Thesis Advisory Committee consists of at least three members, the majority of whom must be members of the Graduate Thesis Faculty. The thesis advisor who serves as the Chair of the Thesis Advisory Committee must be a member of the Graduate

Thesis Faculty. If the thesis advisor is an Adjunct Faculty or part-time faculty, then there must be a co-advisor who is a full-time member of the Graduate Thesis Faculty. The committee is recommended by the School Chair or the faculty director of graduate studies in the program and appointed by the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education.

Graduate Thesis Faculty

The Graduate Thesis Faculty of an academic program consist of the tenure-track faculty in the program plus any additional faculty (emeritus, academic, research and adjunct) who have been approved to serve as primary thesis advisors by the Graduate Curriculum Committee or equivalent governing faculty committee of that academic program based on the following primary qualifications and any additional criteria established by that academic program faculty:

1. Active in research or scholarly work
2. Experience or training in teaching or mentoring graduate students
3. Terminal degree

In the case of interdisciplinary programs, the governing faculty committee for that program may choose to include both the Graduate Thesis Faculty of a student's home school and the Graduate Thesis Faculty of the academic program when determining the membership of thesis committees.

The Office of Graduate Education will maintain the list of non-tenure track faculty approved to be Graduate Thesis Faculty, as provided to them by the academic units. The Office of Faculty Affairs maintains the list of tenure-track faculty; together these two lists comprise the Graduate Thesis Faculty. This Graduate Thesis Faculty designation is meant for the purposes of this policy only and is not a faculty rank. The designation alone does not carry with it any employment implications or rights as outlined by Georgia Tech Faculty governance.

Note On Joint Degrees and Departments

For joint (inter-institutional) departments or degree programs, committees should have at least one faculty member from each institution, and a majority should be joint program faculty. Joint program faculty will have undergone a nomination and appointment process in the joint program to qualify for the right to advise students in the joint program.

POLICY ON PUBLICATION OF THESES

A policy of the Georgia Institute of Technology is that Doctoral and Master's Theses are openly published. Extraordinary delays are not to be allowed to protect the proprietary interests of sponsors.

It is anticipated that all Ph.D. theses and a significant fraction of master's theses be published in the open, refereed literature.

In all cases, doctoral research should meet the "Guidelines for Ph.D. Dissertation Research", and in no situation should these be compromised to allow for concealing important research results because of security classification or a sponsor's proprietary interest.

Students may routinely elect to have publication of their theses withheld for a period of one year, if recommended by the student's thesis advisor. Requests for extensions beyond one year must be justified and approved by the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education.

A Georgia Tech doctoral dissertation in its final form may not be used or have been used to meet the requirements for a separate degree at another institution.

GUIDELINES FOR PH.D. DISSERTATION RESEARCH

1. The research should provide a useful educational experience for the student emphasizing creativity, independent action and learning, research methodology, and scholarly approach.
2. The research must be relevant to the field in which the student is pursuing a degree.
3. The contributions to knowledge must be original and as such, should represent a substantial addition to the fundamental knowledge of the field or a new and better interpretation of facts already known. The research must demonstrate creativity. Dissertations based on well-known principles, techniques, and models applied to situations only somewhat different from previous applications are not acceptable.
4. The dissertation should contain clear statements about (a) the relevance and importance of the problem and (b) the significance, originality, and generality of the research results. The relationship of the research to the literature of the field should be described.
5. The research should possess the major characteristics of the scientific method, namely objectivity and reproducibility. Assumptions should be clearly stated in both experimental and theoretical research.
6. The dissertation should reflect a level of competence indicative of significant achievement beyond the master's level. Thus, the research is expected to draw directly upon advanced learning in the student's major field and demonstrate mastery of that knowledge.
7. The dissertation must demonstrate understanding of the theory and methodology related to its main thrust. Further the dissertation should reflect knowledge of the application area.
8. The research should result in at least one paper or creative work that is publishable through an external peer review process for the public.
9. The dissertation should demonstrate a high degree of proficiency in written communication of research results. It should conform to the Institute's requirements as outlined in the Office of Graduate Studies and Research "Manual for the Preparation of Graduate Dissertations and Thesis".