

3.x Graduate Advisor

All students in graduate programs must have a graduate advisor who is a member of the graduate faculty in the student's major program. In the case of doctoral programs and master's programs requiring theses and/or final oral examinations, the graduate advisor serves as chair or co-chair of the committee ([see Section 1.3 – Graduate Faculty for the policy regarding chairs who leave NC State](#)).

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3.2 Advisory Committees

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The primary function of the committee is to advise the student in all aspects of the educational program and to monitor and evaluate progress toward completion of the degree. Thus, the committee must be very active throughout the student's program of graduate training, beginning with helping students prepare their Plans of Work. The committee should provide an intellectually stimulating foundation for the student's professional as well as scholarly development and should be sensitive to any difficulties in the student's progress. Advising and guiding the student on how best to fulfill the degree requirements is a critical element of this responsibility. Ultimately, the committee certifies whether the student has met NC State's standards for a graduate degree.

If required by a given program, it is the students' responsibility, in consultation with their graduate advisors, to select graduate advisory committee members. The graduate advisor(s) serves as chair or co-chair of the committee. The Director of Graduate Programs (DGP) approves and electronically submits the advisory committee names to the Graduate School for final approval as part of the Plan of Work (see Section xx).

A. Advisory Committee Requirement and Composition

1. Committee administrative structure

- (a) Every committee shall have a chair or co-chairs.
- (b) Co-chair implies equally shared responsibilities in guiding the student through to degree completion.
- **a. Master's students**
 - (a) For master's students in all programs except Option B, the committee consists of a minimum of three graduate faculty members, inclusive of the graduate major advisor or committee chair. The Graduate School verifies the committee when the DGP submits the Plan of Work.
 - (b) If a minor has not been declared, it is up to the individual program whether to require external representation on the committee.
 - (c) If a minor has been declared, one member of the committee must be from the minor field.
 - (d) In a master's program in which the minor is classified as interdisciplinary, the field(s) encompassed in this minor must be represented by a committee member.

- (e) Option B master's students do not have a committee. The Graduate School will verify the appropriate major advisor when the DGP submits the students' [Plans of Work](#).
- **b. Doctoral students**
 - (a) Doctoral committees require a minimum of four graduate faculty members
 - (b) If a doctoral graduate committee has no external representation of the student's graduate program, a Graduate School Representative is required. This representative is not a voting committee member, but is to ensure that established procedures are followed and that the process is fair.
 - (c) If the student has declared a minor, one of the committee members must be from the minor field.
 - (d) The committee is submitted for approval as part of the Plan of Work
 - (f) At the time that the Plan of Work is approved, the Graduate School appoints the Graduate School Representative (see [Section 1.6](#)) to serve on the doctoral committee, if required.

B. Functions, Responsibilities and Requirements of the Advisory Committee

The chair/co-chair and the other members of the advisory committee are responsible for the following aspects of the thesis or dissertation and the associated research experience:

1. approval of the subject matter and methodology of the thesis or dissertation research;
2. approval of the organization, content and format of the thesis or dissertation according to NC State required and optional formatting guidelines as provided in the [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#);
3. review of and comment on drafts of various sections of the thesis or dissertation, including (a) the quality of data and evidence, (b) logical reasoning, and (c) the editorial, linguistic and bibliographic quality; and
4. evaluation of the thesis or dissertation as a basis for certification that the student has fulfilled that portion of the degree requirements for which he or she is a candidate.

For non-thesis master's degrees that require a final examination, the advisory committee is responsible for administering that exam.

D. Committee Members from Other Institutions

The selection of outside committee members will generally depend upon the student's major interest and research. If the program recommends the appointment of a committee member who is not an NC State graduate faculty member, it should be made clear to that person that he or she will be expected to participate as a full committee member.

There are three types of non-NC State faculty who may be appointed to a graduate committee: inter-institutional faculty, external (voting) members, and technical consultants.

- **1. Interinstitutional Graduate Faculty**

Graduate Faculty from UNC - Chapel Hill, UNC - Greensboro, NC Central University or Duke University. A member of the graduate faculty from UNC-CH, UNC-C, UNC-G, NCCU, and Duke may serve as one of the required committee members when appropriate. These are automatic appointments, although the members are vetted by the DGP of the program, the Associate Dean of the College involved, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Members of professional programs at these institutions, such as faculty at the School of Law or Medical School at UNC or Duke, cannot serve automatically unless their appointment at their respective institution explicitly states that they are on the graduate faculty. A [Graduate Advisory Committee Appointment Form for Interinstitutional Member](#) must be completed for faculty from these institutions. Should their appointment be for that professional school only, then they must follow the guidelines discussed for External Members and/or Technical Consultants (see below).

- **2. External Members.** A faculty member from another university (who is not an interinstitutional graduate faculty member) or a professional from industry or government with credentials comparable to those required for membership on the graduate faculty, may serve as an external member, in addition to the number of committee members normally required (four for doctoral degrees and three for master's degrees).
 - **Appointment.** To appoint an external member, the DGP must submit a [Graduate Advisory Committee Appointment Form for External Member/Technical Consultant](#) along with the proposed external member's curriculum vitae.
 - **Responsibilities.** External members will have full voting privileges and are expected to participate in the student's preliminary and final examinations. They will also be consulted in the development of the student's Plan of Graduate Work and will approve the thesis or dissertation.

- **3. Technical Consultants.** A person from industry, a governmental agency, or a university may, upon recommendation of the committee and the DGP, serve as a technical consultant along with the required committee members.
 - **Appointment.** To appoint a technical consultant, a [Graduate Advisory Committee Appointment Form for External Member/Technical Consultant](#) must be submitted to the Graduate School, along with a statement describing the Technical Consultant's potential contribution to the student's research or project.
 - **Responsibilities.** Technical consultants serve in an advisory capacity to students in the conduct of research for their dissertation, thesis or master's project. Technical consultants are expected to participate in the student's preliminary and final examinations and may sign the thesis/dissertation. However, they will not vote on the outcome of the examinations.

F. Substitution of Committee Members for Exams

Under extenuating circumstances, it may be necessary for a member of a graduate advisory committee to have a substitute at committee meetings or an exam. The substitution of a committee member on an oral examination must be requested in writing by the DGP and approved by the Graduate School in advance of the examination. It is extremely important to

have clear communication between committee members and substitutes so that new expectations or concerns do not arise at the time of the final oral examination.

G. Permanent Changes in Committee Members

- **1. Changes before Final Examinations for Master's Students and before the Preliminary Examination of PhD Students.** Should students, in consultation with their advisors, wish to change any of the committee members, they must submit a revised Plan of Graduate Work with the new members, indicating that this change has been approved by the advisor and by the DGP. Approvals of the students, the committee members, and the DGP must be included. The DGP must submit the revised Plan of Work to the Graduate School.
 - Disagreements within committees or between students and committee members over the quality of students' performance are not grounds for reconstituting the committee. If students believe that they have been unjustly or unfairly treated in efforts to resolve committee conflicts, they have the right to grieve this issue, according to the current [University Grievance Procedures for Graduate Students](#).
- **2. Changes after the Preliminary Examination.** Changes in doctoral committee membership after preliminary exams should only occur under extenuating circumstances. The change requires signatures of both outgoing and incoming committee members and the student, as well as justification for the committee change. Approval by the Graduate School is required prior to holding any examinations.

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