POLICY FOR SERVICE ON MASTER’S THESIS COMMITTEES

The university's criteria for appointment to a thesis committee, as adopted by the SDSU Graduate Council are listed below. Departmental policies on faculty eligibility for thesis committees vary somewhat, as do the procedures for selection of specific faculty to advise a particular student. Students should consult their departmental graduate adviser for information.

1. Normally, the thesis committee is composed of three full-time members of the university faculty. The chair and at least one of the other members should hold permanent (tenure or tenure-track) faculty appointments. The chair and the second member should have a full-time or joint appointment in the department in which the thesis is written. For concurrent-degree programs, instead of a chair and 2nd member, the committee may be composed of a chair and co-chair who will be the two primary faculty from each discipline. The third member of the thesis committee must be from a department other than that of the chair. An individual who has special expertise directly related to the thesis research may serve as a fourth member of the committee. If an individual with special expertise directly related to the thesis research is a faculty member of another institution, s/he may serve as a co-chair.

In special circumstances, a department may designate lecturers or FERP faculty members in the department, or faculty members from another department, who are approved to serve as chair of thesis committees. These faculty members must meet all of the other requirements described below. If the chair of the committee is a faculty member from another department, the committee must include at least two members from the department in which the thesis is written.

2. Normally, all thesis committee members should (a) hold a terminal degree or the equivalent in an appropriate discipline and be current in the field as determined by the department, and (b) regularly teach graduate-level courses.

3. Normally, thesis committee chairs should also have specific expertise (theoretical, methodological, or topical) in the area of the proposed thesis.

4. If a FERP or Emeritus faculty member is to serve either as a chair or 2nd/3rd member of a committee for a thesis/project, the student and faculty member must sign an Agreement for FERP or Emeritus Faculty to Serve as Thesis/Project Chair/Member. That agreement must also be approved by the department. FERP and emeriti faculty must sign this Agreement each time they serve on a student's thesis/project committee.

5. In special circumstances of direct benefit to the student, the department of the committee chair may recommend the appointment of an adjunct faculty member or lecturer to the thesis committee as a second or third member, or as a co-chair. Such faculty must hold a terminal degree or equivalent in an appropriate discipline, be current in the field as determined by the department, and be available for the period required for the student to complete the thesis. Departments should submit to the Dean of the Graduate Division the names and current vitae of any adjunct faculty or lecturers they wish to nominate as participants on thesis committees along with a cover letter from the Department Chair providing justification for the request. Adjunct faculty and lecturers must also sign an Agreement to Serve as a Member of a Thesis Committee each time they serve on a student's thesis/project committee.

6. Final appointment of the membership of thesis committees rests with the Dean of the Graduate Division. If the dean does not approve of the thesis committee recommendation, the dean will confer with the department prior to making any final decision.

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For the forms mentioned in this policy and the procedures for completion and submittal, go to the Dissertation & Thesis Review web site (http://gra.sdsu.edu/grad/thesisreview/dtrmain.html), click on "Thesis Committees" and scroll down to the "Forms and Procedures" section.

Revised and approved by the Graduate Council, November 6, 2012