

Thesis Committee Chair Checklist

First Thesis Committee Meeting

The first thesis committee meeting usually includes two simultaneous formal evaluations required by the Graduate School: the oral preliminary examination and the thesis project approval. Neither event can occur unless all committee members participate in the entire meeting, either in person or via video conference. The Common Reviewer leads the oral exam whereas the Thesis Committee Chair leads the thesis project approval. Only the Common Reviewer signs the Graduate School form reporting the outcome of the oral exam. All committee members sign the Graduate School form approving the project.

Regular Thesis Committee Meetings

If a good faith effort fails to identify a time at which all thesis committee members can meet, then it is permissible to hold a meeting at which one or more thesis committee members are absent, because it is generally more important to meet than to have everyone present. However, the following restrictions apply:

- The thesis committee Chair must attend.
- At least three committee members in attendance must have faculty appointments in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology.
- At least three committee members in attendance must be independent of the advisor (i.e. not spouse/partner and not a member of the advisor's lab).

When in doubt, consult with the Director of Graduate Studies.

At the meeting:

1. Have the student leave the room and ask the research advisor to briefly describe for the committee (i) their perception of the student's progress toward their degree, and (ii) any problems or challenges that may benefit from the advice or intervention of the committee.
2. When the student returns, have the advisor (and their spouse/partner if a committee member) leave the room and ask the student to briefly describe for the committee (i) any concerns they may have concerning their advisor, and (ii) any problems or challenges that may benefit from the advice or intervention of the committee.
3. Ensure that the meeting includes discussion of progress and plans concerning
 - *Research
 - *Publications
 - *Career goals
4. Obtain agreement between the committee, student, and advisor about when the next thesis committee meeting should be held.
5. After the meeting, fill out the Committee Meeting Progress Report form. Write a brief summary of the comments and recommendations made by the committee for the

student. Discuss the summary with the student, after which both parties sign to confirm understanding and agreement.

Minimum Publication Requirement

When ready to verify completion of the Minimum Publication Requirement, it is the responsibility of the student to provide all committee members with a completed Publication Form 1, and the Chair with a blank Publication Form 2. The Chair will lead the committee in a discussion and decision (either in person at a regular committee or via email) about whether the student has fulfilled the requirement. The Chair then fills out and submits Form 2 to the Student Services Specialist and Director of Graduate Studies.

Final Defense

The advisor must approve the dissertation before the student distributes it to the committee, which in turn must occur at least two weeks before the private defense. It is the responsibility of all committee members to read the dissertation before the defense. It is the responsibility of the Chair to postpone/cancel the private defense if there are concerns that the dissertation is not satisfactory.

The private defense cannot occur unless all committee members participate in the entire meeting, either in person or via video conference.

After successful completion of the private defense, all committee members sign the final oral examination portion of the Doctoral Exam Report form. The Chair also initials to certify that the student was registered at the time of the defense.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the final version of the dissertation is satisfactory. Assuming that the dissertation is generally satisfactory, all committee members except the Chair sign the final dissertation portion of the Doctoral Exam Report form at the time of the private defense. The Chair signs and initials approval of the dissertation only after edits required by the committee are completed.

Dispute Resolution

In the unlikely event of a dispute between the student and the research advisor, the Chair acts as an advocate for the student and the Director of Graduate Studies acts as an impartial mediator.