

SELECTING YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

As a graduate student, it's your responsibility to form your thesis or dissertation committee. Working on your final research paper should be an enriching and rewarding experience, and part of that experience is shaped by the faculty you choose to advise your work. It is important to choose your committee wisely. Read on for points to consider when selecting and working with your committee.

TL;DR



- Become familiar with your thesis or dissertation and committee requirements
- Get to know your faculty
- Select your chairperson
- Create a list of potential committee members
- Reach out in writing (via email)
- Report your formed committee to the Office of Graduate Services
- Establish expectations your committee members
- Remain focused yet flexible

BECOME FAMILIAR WITH YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION AND COMMITTEE REQUIREMENTS

Each program is different; refer to your department handbook or the graduate catalog for guidance.

Typically, committees have three (3) to five (5) members—one chair (or sometimes two co-chairs) and additional faculty as readers.

GET TO KNOW YOUR FACULTY

Learn about each faculty member's research interests, strengths, instruction styles, and scholarly reputations.

Ideal committee members will bring insightful and diverse expertise to your research. Use this opportunity to:

- Learn which faculty hold expertise in your topic
- Look for faculty with whom you feel comfortable discussing ideas and receiving critique
- Pay close attention to assignment feedback and the level of support provided by each faculty member



This is a good indicator of the type of comments you might receive on your thesis or dissertation drafts.

Seize every chance to work with potential members prior to formally asking them to sit on your committee.

SELECT YOUR CHAIRPERSON*

When selecting your chairperson, choose someone who is an expert in your topic and who can contribute substantially to your project.

*Please note: Depending upon your program, your chairperson will be your faculty advisor or principal investigator. In this case, your chairperson was decided upon your acceptance to your program.

Your chair will help you:

- Develop and revise your project
- Create a long-term plan for your research and writing
- Determine a realistic completion date



CREATE A LIST OF POTENTIAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ask yourself: Is this potential chair or reader essential to my research project or are they only somewhat knowledgeable about my topic?

Your chair can recommend committee readers based upon your topic and their own professional relationship with other faculty.



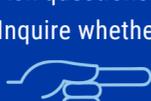
You may consider selecting one non-GSU committee member, but you must receive departmental approval before including them officially. If you have questions about the eligibility of potential members, speak to your Graduate Director for guidance.

REACH OUT IN WRITING (VIA EMAIL IS BEST)

Send each faculty member a polite email explaining why you would like to work with them.

In your email:

- Discuss your topic ideas
- Share your research
- Ask questions
- Inquire whether their schedules allow for committee work



You might not receive the support you need if the member serves on multiple committees.

Keep in mind: Some faculty won't agree to be on your committee unless you've taken a course with them previously.

REPORT YOUR FORMED COMMITTEE TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE SERVICES

Let us know you've completed this milestone by filling out the Appointment of Doctoral Dissertation or Master's Thesis Committee web form.

The web form can be found on GSU's College of Arts & Sciences Office of Graduate Services Milestone page, [here](#).

ESTABLISH EXPECTATIONS WITH YOUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Set expectations and follow up, in writing, to confirm those expectations.

Expectations should include:

- Each committee member's level of engagement with your research and writing process
- The preferred research methodologies
- A realistic timeline for you to submit drafts for review and receive feedback from the chair and committee readers
- A clear understanding of agreed communications so everyone knows how feedback will be shared. Decide whether you will receive critiques through:
 - email exchanges
 - written progress reports
 - comments within the document
 - in-person or virtual meetings



REMAIN FOCUSED YET FLEXIBLE

As you work on your research and chapter drafts, keep your goals and expectations manageable.

Understand that obstacles will arise, so remain flexible if your timeline changes. Be compassionate with yourself and remember to acknowledge your successes as you work toward final submission.



QUESTIONS? [Contact the Office of Graduate Services.](#)