

Statement on the Quality of Theses and Dissertations

At the request of the Faculty Senate, the Graduate Council has reviewed existing policies and practices in an effort to assess and enhance the quality of theses and dissertations. To that end, an ad hoc committee of the Graduate Council has suggested and the Council has approved several policy changes, aligned catalog language, and amended forms in an effort to explicitly define the essential role that the graduate faculty play in promoting, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of theses and dissertations. Additionally, the Faculty Senate charge has provided the Graduate Council with an opportunity to rearticulate the expectations for students as authors. To that end, the Graduate Council affirms the following:

1. **Students** have an obligation to produce high quality research that meets or exceeds the expectations of their thesis and dissertation committee and academic program. Further, students have a responsibility to follow all relevant research policies as they relate to integrity and compliance. Likewise, students are responsible for adhering to the policies and practices outlined in the Graduate Catalog and Thesis and Dissertation Handbook. Most importantly, students are expected to seek the counsel and critique of the graduate faculty, their peers, and the committee in order to produce the highest quality thesis or dissertation possible. Ultimately, the author of the thesis or dissertation is solely responsible for the end product.
2. **Chairs of thesis and dissertation committees** have primary authority for oversight, quality control, and research compliance as it relates to the development of a student's formal proposal, research protocols (inclusive of IRB and IACUC materials), and the final work product. Hence, the committee chair must be an active mentor and sponsor throughout the entire research process. Further, the committee chair is responsible for ensuring that the final document meets or exceeds the expectations of the thesis or dissertation committee as well as the program (i.e., discipline and/or profession). Finally, the committee chair's signature of approval indicates that the final document meets the expectations outlined in the Graduate Catalog inclusive of the University's academic integrity policy.
3. The **at-large committee members** are expected to provide thorough and explicit feedback to both the student and committee chair throughout the process from the initial proposal through the defense. When and where issues of quality may arise as they relate to research quality, disciplinary expectations, and/or the Graduate Catalog, the committee members are expected to inform the student and committee chair. Finally, it is expected that committee members will review and approve any final revisions to proposals and final documents.
4. The **department chair** provides the final departmental review and ensures that all proposals and final documents meet the expectations of the program and department. The role of the department chair is critical to maintaining high standards as he or she often brings to bear a unique discipline-based perspective that seldom resides outside of an academic department. Likewise, he or she is responsible for maintaining consistency across multiple academic programs (if applicable). The department chair may request edits or return the proposal or document to the committee chair for further development prior to issuing a final departmental approval.

5. The “**home**” **college dean’s office** reviews documents to ensure that the quality of proposals and final documents are generally consistent across all programs in the unit. The home college dean (or designee) may request edits.
6. The **College of Graduate and Professional Studies** is responsible for verifying students have advanced to candidacy prior to proposing and defending thesis or dissertation research, ensuring the quality of the graduate faculty under the existing policy, maintaining open public defenses, monitoring research compliance, enforcing the guidelines for theses and dissertations, overseeing the ETD process, and approving the final format.

While the above descriptions generally describe the role of individual signatories on the final approval form, it is expected that all members of the graduate faculty have the unique responsibility of maintaining and enhancing the quality of graduate education at ISU. When and where quality concerns may exist, the signatories or any at-large member of the graduate faculty have a duty to give voice to their concerns and, if necessary, follow up directly with the appropriate office or program.

With respect to key thesis and dissertation policy documents, the Graduate Council encourages all students and faculty to review the items below:

The Graduate Catalog

<http://catalog.indstate.edu>

Thesis and Dissertation Handbook

www.indstate.edu/cgps/graduate/td-handbook.pdf

Responsibilities of Students & Dissertation/Thesis Chairs and Committees

<http://www.indstate.edu/cgps/graduate/td-responsibilities.pdf>

In addition to the policy documents above, the Graduate Council has made numerous changes to thesis and dissertation forms and related catalog copy, as well as outlined more recent efforts in a memorandum to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. Catalog changes more explicitly define thesis and dissertation committee composition and the timeline for proposals and final oral defenses. The approved edits to the Graduate Catalog are **effective Fall 2011** for all current and future students.

Thesis & Dissertation Forms

www.indstate.edu/cgps/graduate/current-students/td-forms

Approved by Graduate Council, November 30, 2010

Approved by Faculty Senate Executive, December 14, 2010

Approved by Faculty Senate, January 20, 2011.