

Responsibilities of Students &  
Dissertation/Thesis Chairs and Committees

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Indiana State University

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The culminating experience of doctoral programs and some masters'-level programs at Indiana State University is the completion of a dissertation or thesis. While the intent and construct of a dissertation/thesis varies by program area, its supervision is universally handled by a member of the ISU Graduate Faculty as chair and a committee of graduate faculty.

By way of guidance to the project, the following are the responsibilities of students, chairs, and committees:

**Responsibilities of Students**

As author of the project, students are ultimately responsible for the crafting and execution of the project through all of its phases including the completion of a final manuscript that has been properly edited and follows all of the expected conventions described in the Handbook for Theses and Dissertations and Graduate Student and Advisor Handbook. In addition, students are expected to:

1. Use the Chair as the central point of contact for the development of ideas, selection of an appropriate committee and development of early drafts; the approval point for submission of materials to the Committee; and the gatekeeper of a final manuscript for submission to the Graduate College.
2. Schedule regular meetings with the Chair to discuss the project and its development and when directed/suggested by the Chair, with members of the Committee.
3. Submit all their own, original work and as appropriate to the conduct of research, properly cite the works of others that inform the study. Students should be familiar with policies on academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Misconduct in these arenas is treated seriously and can result in academic dismissal.
4. Obtain and maintain human subjects research certification; complete IRB and/or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) animal study proposal paperwork, as applicable.
5. Take personal initiative to move the project forward and to discuss with the Chair any problems that may arise. In the event that there are issues that arise with the Chair that cannot get resolved or that are best discussed with another person, the student may opt to discuss them with the Department Chair and then the Dean of the Graduate College.
6. Be intimately familiar with the materials found in the Handbook of Theses and Dissertations as well as the Graduate Student and Advisor Handbook, the core documents that describe what is

expected in a dissertation/thesis including ISU's unique conventions. This would include all post-proposal and post-final defense steps that are required of students.

7. Be aware of and accountable to established defense date and manuscript submission deadlines.
8. To recognize that crafting a dissertation is an iterative process between the student and the Chair, and at key moments, between the student, the Chair, and the Committee. As such, students are expected to be responsive to feedback provided in a timely manner if they are to expect the same from the Chair and/or the Committee. Students need to also be respectful of the fact that Chairs and Committees have many other duties pressing on their time. Thus, realistic expectations around holiday and vacation times as well as normal busy periods (e.g., ends and starts of semesters) are necessary.

Students who feel that they can no longer sustain a collaborative working relationship with either a Committee member or their Committee Chair should consult with their Department Chair to determine appropriate actions.

### **Responsibilities of Chairs**

1. To provide timely and thorough guidance to a student on the various elements necessary for the planning and execution of a dissertation study.
2. To recommend appropriate members to serve on the committee and to approve those moments when the student may circulate the manuscript to members of the committee.
3. To advise on proposal and final defense protocols, to ensure that students and their manuscripts are adequately prepared for the proposal and the defense, to facilitate the defense, to take notes for the student at the defense, and to discuss what revisions may be needed after the defense has been concluded.
4. To advise/remind students on Graduate College manuscript receipt deadlines as well as post-proposal or final defense time needed to get a manuscript ready for review by Department Chairs and/or the Dean's Office as may be the convention of a particular unit<sup>[1]</sup> prior to the manuscript and/or the approval form being sent to the Graduate College.
5. To be accessible to students for dialogue and formal meetings as needed.
6. To respond to student drafts in a timely basis. A reasonable guideline is no more than 10 working days turn around time upon receipt of a draft or a response to a student within that 10 working day window if more time is needed.
7. To be intimately familiar with the materials found in the Handbook of Theses and Dissertations as well as the Graduate Student and Advisor Handbook, the core documents that describe what is expected in a dissertation/thesis including ISU's unique conventions. This would include all post-proposal and post-final defense steps that are required of students.
8. To maintain their Graduate Faculty Status and human subjects research certification, if applicable.
9. To either provide the editorial and citation support that students need to prepare a final, correctly edited manuscript or to make a referral to an outside resource that students can

access for this purpose. Manuscripts with errors that are received by the Graduate College will be returned to the student for corrections with an email sent to the Dissertation/Thesis Chair to make them aware of the problems.

10. To respect the power differential that exists between student and chair and not to abuse the trust placed in them as a member of the Graduate Faculty for the appropriate conduct of a dissertation/thesis project.
11. To be present at graduation to hood the student unless alternative arrangements are made.

Chairs who do not fulfill the above responsibilities may jeopardize their Graduate Faculty Status. Chairs who feel that they can no longer provide collaborative guidance to the student should consult with their Department Chair to determine appropriate actions.

### **Responsibilities of Committee Members**

1. In collaboration with the Dissertation Chair, to provide timely and thorough guidance to a student on project development and/or manuscript drafts.
2. To respond to student drafts in a timely basis. A reasonable guideline is no more than 10 working days turn around time upon receipt of a draft or a response to a student if more time is needed within that 10 working day window. It is also important to keep the Chair informed of feedback being provided to students outside of the formal defense settings.
3. To respect the power differential that exists between student and a committee member and not to abuse the trust placed in them as a member of the Graduate Faculty for the appropriate conduct of a dissertation/thesis project.

Members who do not fulfill the above requirements may jeopardize their Graduate Faculty Status. Members who feel that they can no longer provide collaborative guidance to the student should consult with their Department Chair to determine appropriate actions.

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[1] This issue is especially acute when students have particular near-term graduation moments in mind and do not realize all that is required to be eligible to graduate.