GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE THESIS/ DISSERTATION ORAL DEFENSE

Role of the Oral Defense Committee Chair
As a representative of the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, the chair of the masters oral defense committee must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member of the University of Denver from a different program, department, or discipline than that of the candidate. The chair of the doctoral oral defense committee must be a tenured member of the University of Denver from a different program, department, or discipline than that of the candidate and must hold an earned doctorate from an accredited institution. The role of the chair is to provide a non-specialist’s perspective on the quality of the thesis or dissertation. The chair must be familiar with the standards for doctoral research and should have some general knowledge of the topic of the student’s thesis or dissertation. The chair is expected to have read the document prior to the examination and to participate in the examination as his/ her academic expertise permits, but he/ she does not vote on the committee.

Composition of the Committee
The masters thesis defense committee is comprised of a minimum of three and a maximum of five members. Minimally two are voting members, including the thesis director. The chair of the committee is a non-voting member and must be from a program, department, school or college other than that of the candidate. All members of the committee must be full-time appointed faculty at DU and have research records appropriate to the student’s area of specialization. Faculty from appropriately related units who hold the terminal degree in their field may serve on the committee as long as the candidate’s graduate unit has the majority representation and a majority of the members hold the earned doctorate. When a Master’s degree is interdisciplinary, faculty representation from all disciplines must be reflected on the committee.

The doctoral dissertation defense committee is comprised of a minimum of four and a maximum of seven members. Minimally three are voting members, including the dissertation director. The chair of the oral defense committee is a non-voting member and must be from a program, department, school or college other than that of the candidate. All members of the committee must be full-time appointed faculty at DU and have research records appropriate to the student’s area of specialization. Faculty from appropriately related units who hold the terminal degree in their field may serve on the committee as long as the candidate’s graduate unit has the majority representation and a two-thirds majority of the members, excluding the director, hold the earned doctorate. When a Doctoral degree is interdisciplinary, faculty representation from all disciplines must be reflected on the committee.

Conduct of the Examination
The oral defense committee chair will preside over and manage the defense process. He or she is responsible for making certain that the defense is conducted in a professional manner and that the student has a fair opportunity to defend his/ her thesis/ dissertation. The chair is expected to provide opportunities for each voting member of the oral defense committee to participate in the defense and to ensure that the examination is of high quality while remaining within proper limits of inquiry. Interested faculty members, and in accordance with departmental policy, currently enrolled graduate students also may attend the oral defense. After the oral defense committee has conducted the essential examination of the candidate, questions may be asked by others present if pertinent and appropriate as determined by the defense committee.
Procedures for Making Recommendations

When the defense is completed, the chair will request that the candidate and all other persons not on the defense committee leave the room and will call for a motion to pass or fail the candidate. A recommendation to pass can have no more than one negative vote from members of the committee. If the motion is a recommendation to pass, the committee must then agree on the conditions of the recommendation as follows:

- **Pass with no revisions** means that only grammatical, labeling or numbering changes are required. Only a limited number of sentence additions or deletions should be necessary.

- **Pass with minor revisions** indicates that the candidate will be required to reorganize portions of the manuscript and change some of the content.

- **Pass with major revisions** means that a complete chapter or chapters must be rewritten, additional tables are required and interpreted, or the general format must be changed. Responsibility for seeing that needed revisions are made rests with the thesis/dissertation director, but committee members also may require their approval before final submission.

- **Fail** indicates that the thesis/dissertation content is not of acceptable quality or that the candidate cannot defend the research. In most cases, failing the defense results in the rejection of the student’s thesis and a new or related study usually will need to be undertaken.

However, a candidate who fails the oral defense may petition to the oral defense committee for a maximum of one re-examination. If granted, the re-examination must be scheduled through the Office of Graduate Studies and must occur within the posted deadlines. The Result of Oral Defense Form must be signed by all committee members and returned immediately to the Office of Graduate Studies. All signatures must be original. Faxed, photocopied, or electronic signatures will not be accepted.