



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
GRADUATE COLLEGE

SELECTING A DEFENSE COMMITTEE

PLEASE NOTE: The Defense Examination Committee approved by the Graduate College is different from the Studies Committee, which is appointed by the student's department chairperson or graduate program director. The studies committee and defense examination committee need not be identical.

MASTER'S: Your defense examination committee will require a minimum of 3 members including an advisor and a chairperson. Your advisor and the chairperson must be appointed members of the UVM graduate faculty (a full list of graduate faculty may be found in the Graduate Catalogue). If you have co-advisors, there must be an additional member who is not an advisor or the chairperson. The chairperson must be from outside your and your advisor's department and program including primary and secondary appointments. The chairperson of your defense committee does not have to be from your studies committee. Your defense examination committee must be approved by the Graduate College. You must submit a Defense Examination Committee Membership Form (below) at the beginning of the semester in which you plan on defending and the committee form must still be current at the time of your defense. A new form must be submitted if your committee changes.

DOCTORAL: Your defense examination committee will consist of a minimum of 4 appointed members of the University of Vermont Graduate Faculty including an advisor and a chairperson (a full list of graduate faculty may be found in the Graduate Catalogue). At least two members must be from inside your department. If you have co-advisors, there must be an additional member from the graduate faculty who is not an advisor or the chairperson. The chairperson must be from outside your and your advisor's department and graduate program including primary and secondary appointments. The chairperson of your defense examination committee does not have to be from your studies committee. Your defense examination committee must be approved by the Graduate College. You must submit a Defense Examination Committee Membership Form (below) at the beginning of the semester in which you plan on defending and the committee form must still be current at the time of your defense. A new form must be submitted if your committee changes.

EXCEPTIONS: Check with your department for specific requirements concerning your committee, advisor, and chairperson. Individual departments may require more than 4 committee members or have specific membership requirements. For University-wide interdisciplinary programs, and/or programs that incorporate faculty from multiple departments, the chairperson must be from outside the department of the candidate's advisor.

When appropriate, a non-UVM member or non-graduate faculty member may serve as an additional member on the committee if approved by the Graduate Dean. A written request from the advisor and

current curriculum vitae from the member are required by the Graduate College.

THESIS/DISSERTATION ADVISOR: This advisor is typically your scholarly mentor - a faculty member in your program who works most closely with you as you proceed through all phases of your research. Your advisor usually has specific expertise in the field of your scholarship and offers guidance in the structure, content and methodology of the work. The advisor also assures that you are aware of current standards for the actual thesis or dissertation manuscript, its organization, and format. The additional members of your thesis/dissertation defense committee are typically selected based upon specific types of expertise they hold as well. For example, you may identify a faculty member who has worked extensively with a certain type of experimental design that you are using, or perhaps the individual's scholarship has adopted a different but complementary theoretical perspective. In any case, the committee member might help you consider alternative or more in-depth ways of thinking about certain aspects of your scholarly project.

ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON: The defense examination committee chairperson serves quite a different role. First and foremost, the chairperson is responsible for assuring that the procedures and standards of UVM's Graduate College are met as you complete and defend your thesis/dissertation. This helps to ensure that the UVM degree you earn reflects some common standard of accomplishment across the University. The chairperson is the objective "outsider" (vis-a-vis your program) capable of ascertaining that the thesis or dissertation and defense meet university-wide standards and guidelines. At the same time, the chairperson is there to assure that you, the student, are receiving full and fair attention from the committee--the sort of opportunity and treatment that is due each and every student in UVM's Graduate College. Essentially, the chairperson serves a dual purpose, as a student advocate, and as a bearer of standards for the College as a whole.

A student may choose to identify a chairperson who also has scholarly expertise closely related to the thesis/dissertation; this can be helpful but it is not necessary. In fact, interesting and important contributions can be made by a chairperson who has considerable distance from the field of inquiry. Approaching the issues from a different discipline, an individual can ask insightful questions and offer innovative perspectives that may be overlooked by those who have long been immersed in the traditions.

ADVICE: Be thoughtful and creative as you work to assemble your defense examination committee. Consider your own background - its strengths and its gaps - as well as those of your advisor; ask yourself what sorts of support you would find helpful (scholarly, motivational, practical, psychological, etc.) and try to identify committee members who can contribute accordingly. Then relax and take advantage of the different skills and insights your committee members can bring to bear on your work. The system is designed to support the development of first-rate scholarship on your part.



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DEFENSE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP FORM

When you have selected your committee, please fill out this form and e-mail it as an attachment to the Graduate College at gradcoll@uvm.edu or drop it off at 330 Waterman.

Candidate's Name: _____

Date: _____

Program: _____

Degree: _____

Email: _____

Proposed graduation date of: _____

Year: _____

Please list your committee members below:

Name:

Dept/School

Graduate Faculty?
(check if yes)

Advisor: _____

Co-Advisor (if applicable): _____

Committee member: _____

Committee member: _____

Committee member: _____

Chairperson: _____

Graduate College Approval: _____

Date: _____