

Graduate College Policy Updates for Academic Year 2026-2027

Revision to the Graduate College Policy on Department Format Review for Theses/Dissertations

Approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee on January 20, 2026

With this policy revision, the Graduate College would no longer require that departments complete a format review for theses and dissertations. This policy change allows departments greater flexibility in deciding if they want to continue format reviews, when the reviews take place, and what aspects of the thesis are reviewed. Regardless, the Graduate College will not review a student's dissertation or thesis until the department submits the TDA form, indicating the document has committee and departmental approval.

Full proposal attached.

Proposal to the Graduate College Executive Committee for New/Revised Graduate College Policy

PROPOSAL TITLE: Making departmental format review of the thesis/dissertation optional

SPONSOR: Emily Wuchner, Director of Student Academic Development

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: We would like to make the departmental format review an optional part of the thesis deposit process rather than required.

BACKGROUND: Before a thesis can be reviewed and approved for deposit by the Graduate College, it must be approved by the department in two different ways: 1) content approval from the committee and 2) format approval from the department. Content and format approval is communicated through the submission of the Thesis/Dissertation Approval form (TDA). The Graduate College will not begin its review of a thesis until TDA has been received.

Department formal checks were particularly helpful when students were submitting paper documents that were bound and archived in the Library as it meant another set of eyes looking for typographical errors, but the move to electronic theses has helped catch many of these issues.

Currently, the departmental format review step is interpreted differently across campus and is most often performed by Graduate Contacts.

At some earlier points, the Graduate College has expected that the departmental review process would replicate the Graduate College review process, essentially creating duplicate reviews and causing confusion for students. This proposed change allows departments to identify the elements of a department-level review that add value for their students and program.

Students are often confused by the departmental format approval portion of the deposit process; while this intermediary step between committee approval and Graduate College review is widely publicized, it is often overlooked in the frantic days leading up to the deposit deadline (leading to additional student stress), or a student who has completed the departmental review process mistakenly believes their deposit is complete without submission to the Graduate College.

JUSTIFICATION: This semester, the Graduate College will revise its formatting requirements and begin implementing processes to ensure that dissertations and theses align with Title II digital accessibility requirements.

To streamline the deposit process, the Graduate College would no longer require that departments complete a format review. This policy change seeks to give the department greater flexibility in deciding if it wants to continue format reviews, when the reviews

take place, and what aspects of the thesis are reviewed. Regardless, the Graduate College will not review a student's dissertation or thesis until the department submits the TDA form, indicating the document has committee and departmental approval.

If departments wish to continue the departmental review step, we encourage them to do so earlier in the semester that the student intends to graduate, perhaps at the stage when students are submitting their documents to the committee.

BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS: If departments choose to eliminate or streamline the departmental format review requirement, this could potentially save staff time.

COMMUNICATION PLAN: Graduate programs and students will be notified of the change by email and the Graduate College handbook will be updated to reflect the change with the start of the new academic year. The Graduate College website will also be updated accordingly.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: We would like to recommend that we start communicating now that departments have the latitude to determine when and if they would like to do departmental reviews. The change will be updated in the Fall 2026 handbook.

NEW/REVISED POLICY STATEMENT:

Theses and Dissertations

A thesis or dissertation is an original, significant contribution to the scholarly literature of an academic discipline. In this section, "thesis" refers to both master's theses and doctoral dissertations.

All graduate students whose programs require the completion of a thesis must deposit their manuscript electronically in the Graduate College.

Faculty and departmental approval. The student's adviser (for master's students) ~~and or~~ final exam committee (for doctoral students) as well as the department head (or authorized signatory) must ~~approve the thesis~~ recommend that it be accepted for deposit. ~~Departmental review and approval is also required before the thesis~~ can be deposited with the Graduate College. (In the case of a doctoral student who passed the final exam with one dissenting vote, the dissenting member may, but is not required to, ~~approve~~ recommend the thesis for deposit.)

Format. Only theses that meet the formatting and accessibility requirements set forth by the Graduate College will be accepted. ~~Many departments have additional, discipline-specific format requirements, and the Graduate College requires that all students secure format approval from their department prior to~~

~~format review by the Graduate College Thesis Office.~~

CLEARANCES: *(Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*

Graduate College Unit Representative:

Date:



4/2/2026

Graduate College Dean:

Date:

ADDITIONAL APPROVALS: *(If necessary. Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*

Provost Representative:

Date:

Additional Representative:

Date: