

Department Chair/Program Coordinator FAQ

GRADUATE FACULTY STATUS

What is the easiest and most efficient way to get through the graduate faculty status procedure?

There are five types of members of graduate faculty at TAMU-CC. Full-time tenure/tenure-track faculty members are eligible to be Members of the graduate faculty at TAMU-CC. The four remaining membership types are Associate Member of Graduate Faculty, Adjunct Member of Graduate Faculty, Teaching Member of Graduate Faculty, and Special Appointment to Graduate Faculty. These terms have specific meanings that likely differ from how they are used in most departments/programs. If the nomination is for anyone other than a full-time tenure/tenure-track faculty member (eligible for Member of Graduate Faculty), be sure to check TAMU-CC Rules and Procedures [12.99.99.C0.03](#).

A *complete* package of materials should be sent to gradstudies@tamucc.edu, including the [Graduate Faculty Status Application](#)*, a justification for anyone who is not a renewing regular member, and a current CV. Alternatively, the package can be delivered via hard copy to CGS (FC Suite 151). Materials must be sent through the department chair/program coordinator and Dean for their approval. **Note: Scroll to the bottom of the linked page, click Other, and then open and download the application. It can then be completed and saved to your computer.*

Are there exceptions to needing graduate faculty status to teach or serve on committees for grad students? There is one stated exception. Faculty members who are “responsible for graduate clinical, laboratory, or practicum sections, who are not the instructor of record for the course the clinical, laboratory, or practicum section supports” (TAMUCC Rules and Procedures 12.99.99.C0.03) are not required to have graduate faculty status.

How long does the graduate faculty nomination process take? It depends. Completeness of the nomination package, time of submission relative to Graduate Council meetings, and the number of nominations to be reviewed all impact the time required for approval. Time varies from two weeks to as much as three months or more (e.g., with nominations submitted close to semester breaks).

Do new faculty members automatically have graduate faculty status? It does not *happen* automatically, and it is not *all* new faculty members. New tenure-track faculty “affiliated with a graduate program are appointed to the graduate faculty” and will receive appointment letters from the Dean of CGS *as soon as the complete nomination package is received*. If you are putting forward a nomination like this, the justification is a matter of verifying that the faculty member is affiliated with a graduate program (e.g., teaching graduate courses). This is typically a very quick process because Graduate Council does not have to approve the nomination.

What happens when a thesis or dissertation committee member leaves the university? Graduate faculty status at TAMU-CC ceases when a faculty or staff member leaves the university. If a member of graduate faculty is serving on a dissertation/thesis committee at the time of separation from the university *and* (a) the faculty/staff member has been actively involved in the research process, (b) there is reasonable expectation that the student will complete the research process within a year, and/or (c) the faculty/staff member has expertise not available in the department/college, graduate faculty status may be granted for a period of one year to allow for completion of the student’s research process. The program/department and college should submit the Graduate Faculty Nomination Form, justification for the request including the committee responsibility to be filled, and a current CV. The nominator should

ensure the category of membership is one for which the nominee is eligible and allows for service on a committee. If there are special circumstances regarding the departing faculty member's status, please contact the Associate Dean in the College of Graduate Studies.

STACKED COURSES

What constitutes a stacked course? Do stacked courses have to be approved? Courses offered at a graduate-level (5000 or 6000) in conjunction with an offering at the undergraduate upper level (3000 or 4000) are considered stacked, as are 5000 and 6000 courses offered in conjunction with each other. Stacked courses must be approved each time they are taught. See the [Stacked Course Request Form](#)* for more information. **Note: Scroll to the bottom of the linked page, click Other, and then open and download the form.*

STOP OUTS AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE

What is a stop out? A stop out occurs when a master's student does not register for a course for one year or more. Students are locked out of the registration system (BANNER) at that time but can be reactivated by CGS with permission of the program director. Students who have stopped out for two years or more must reapply to the program and the university unless they have a formal Leave of Absence (see below). The counting of time to degree does not stop.

What is a leave of absence? A formal leave of absence stops the clock – counting of time to degree is suspended during the time of the leave. Leaves are granted for one long semester and may be extended for an additional long semester upon approval of the CGS dean. No more than two leaves of absence can be granted during a program. Students should complete and submit the Request for [Leave of Absence](#) form, which requires approval from the department chair or program coordinator and the academic college dean prior to review by the CGS dean.

DEGREE PLAN EXCEPTIONS

Under what circumstances do changes to the degree plan have to be filed with CGS? A Graduate [Degree Plan Exceptions Form](#) with accompanying documentation must be filed *every time* there is a change to the degree plan. The student's degree plan is the one in effect when they entered the program unless a request has been made and granted to change the catalog year. There are three typical circumstances that require a degree plan exception: (a) substituting a different existing course for a required course, (b) substituting a directed independent study for a required course, and (c) transferring in courses from another institution that will be substituted for a required course at TAMUCC. **Students cannot be cleared for graduation if requests for exceptions have not been filed and approved!*

When should degree plan exceptions be filed?

For all but transfer courses, requests for an exception must be filed *prior* to the semester in which the student plans to take the new or substituted course. Sufficient time should be allowed for the course to be reviewed; otherwise, the student may not be able to count the substituted course towards the degree. Requests for exception should never be made after the fact or after a substituted course has begun.

What needs to be filed?

Along with the Degree Plan Exceptions Form, a memo of explanation and the student's degree plan must be included. Syllabi for the course to be substituted as well as that of the course on the degree plan should also be included.

REQUIRED FORMS

Are all these forms really necessary?

There are forms required for all doctoral students and for master's students completing a thesis that must be submitted before students can be cleared for graduation. In addition, there are forms that are only required in specific circumstances (e.g., leave of absence, change of catalog request) and that can apply to any graduate students. The forms accomplish two things: (a) they provide a *process* for addressing graduate compliance matters, and (b) they provide *documentation* for the university, programs, and students as well as for compliance purposes.

Where are the forms and what do I need to know about them?

All the forms have time requirements that are either relevant to students' progression in a program or relevant to the specific circumstance. A [complete list of forms](#) can be found on the CGS website. Checklists for master's and doctoral students appear under the respective master's program and doctoral program links. Most forms should be downloaded and then completed, saved, and uploaded on the same page where forms are found (scroll to the bottom of the page). The forms will then be routed by CGS for electronic signature.

Forms submitted very late in the semester that require multiple signatures may be delayed, sometimes significantly. Faculty members are often away during breaks between semesters. This can be particularly problematic during winter break and over the summer, when many faculty members are not working. At best, this can and does cause preventable stress for students and staff. In the worst case, it can threaten a student's ability to graduate on time, particularly in the summer when faculty may be away for an extended period. Program coordinators and department chairs can help by reminding faculty members to complete or sign off on any forms needed by students, especially those students in their last semester!

REVALIDATION REQUESTS

All graduate degrees must be completed within the time limit set for that degree. Generally, for master's degrees, the time limit is 7 years and the time limit for doctoral degrees is 10 years. However, individual programs differ (e.g., the MFA and DNP are both terminal degrees and neither allow 10 years). The time period begins the first semester of enrollment and calculated from the date of degree conferral. Only courses completed at TAMU-CC are eligible for revalidation.

Courses that were taken prior to the time period are considered dated and must be repeated or revalidated. For a course to be revalidated, a plan must be developed, usually by the department chair or program coordinator. A [Graduate Degree Plan Revalidation Request](#) must be submitted, along with written justification, an updated degree plan, the revalidation plan, and documentation that will be used to establish completion of the plan.

THESIS/DISSERTATION

What does CGS look for in a submitted thesis or dissertation?

Both theses and dissertations should follow formatting guidelines posted online at http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/current_students/doctoral_dissertation.html. Preliminary page formatting is very detailed and committee chairs should ensure students use the *current* available templates. While a general check to ensure that tables, charts, or other visuals fit page size *may* be done, CGS **only** verifies formatting for the preliminary pages. The College of Graduate Studies does *not* do formatting or editing for students.

At least two dissertation and thesis formatting workshops are held each semester. Dates can be found on the Important Master's/Doctoral Dates (see links above) and on the [GROW Calendar](#).

What about ProQuest?

Submission of the final thesis/project/dissertation to CGS and the TAMU-CC library occurs through ProQuest, as does binding. Once the final document is uploaded through ProQuest, CGS staff reviews it for required formatting. If changes are needed, the student will be sent an email detailing required changes and providing a link to reupload the document. Once approved by the Graduate Dean, the document is accepted in the ProQuest system and sent for printing. *Both faculty and students should be aware that CGS does not do a "final acceptance" in the ProQuest system until all required forms are on file.* [Information regarding copyright](#) and the thesis/dissertation is available on the CGS website. This topic is also covered in the Dissertation/Thesis Formatting Workshops.

For additional information concerning these and other topics, please consult the [Graduate Program Coordinator Handbook](#).