



Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC) Guidelines

*Approved by the Graduate Council & GC Executive Committee, Spring 2018
Approved by the Executive Vice Provost & President's Office, Summer 2018*

What is a GAC?

Graduate Advisory Committees (GAC)s are mandatory for master's theses, professional doctoral projects, and doctoral dissertations. Programs with other culminating experiences may opt to require a GAC, and if so, this information must be in the Graduate Catalog and Program Handbook. The primary purpose of the GAC is to train, support, socialize, and educate graduate students via the mentorship model; promote excellence in research/scholarship/creative activity; ensure full compliance with the norms of the discipline and ethical conduct of research/scholarship and creative activity; elevate students to successful completion of their culminating experience in a timely manner; and to prepare graduate students for career success.

GAC Guidelines

The following guidelines explain GAC requirements and ensure graduate program rigor and ongoing regional accreditation.

1. The GAC is always comprised of a minimum of four graduate faculty filling specific committee roles and responsibilities. These mandatory GAC positions are:
 - a. Chair: Chairs must have Graduate Faculty Status (GFS) with full privileges in the student's home Department/School. This person is the primary advisor and mentor for the student and guarantor of quality and excellence in the final document and defense. This includes but is not limited to:
 - i. maintaining high standards of disciplinary excellence;
 - ii. providing strategic advisement and mentorship to students to help them progress in a timely and successful manner through their graduate programs;
 - iii. overseeing high-quality, original, rigorous and ethical research;
 - iv. making sure that the student is aware of, prepared for, and meets all required program milestones and university requirements over his/her student lifecycle;
 - v. advising students on critical professional development skills and opportunities that align with their career goals and pathways;
 - vi. and preparing students to successfully defend a well-written and appropriately formatted final document.
 - b. Two Department/School Committee Members: D/S Committee Members must have GFS with committee rights in the student's home Department/School. GAC members are also responsible for:

- i. maintaining high standards of disciplinary excellence;
 - ii. supporting the GAC Chair to provide strategic advisement and mentorship to students to help them progress in a timely and successful manner through their graduate programs;
 - iii. overseeing high-quality, original, rigorous and ethical research;
 - iv. coordinating with the GAC Chair to make sure that the student is aware of, prepared for, and meets all required program milestones and university requirements over their student lifecycle;
 - v. advising students on critical professional development skills and opportunities that align with their career goals and pathways;
 - vi. and helping to prepare students to successfully defend a well-written and appropriately formatted final document.
 - c. Graduate College Representative (GCR): Must have GFS with approved GCR rights at UNLV. Faculty holding GFS in the student's home department/school may also serve as GCR ONLY IF the faculty's primary GFS affiliation is outside of the students' home department. See #7 below for additional guidelines regarding the role of the GCR.
2. In addition to the above, students may opt to add extra members to their GAC:
 - a. Co-Chair: Must have GFS somewhere at UNLV (either all privileges or committee member designation). This person shares advising responsibilities with the other co-chair.
 - b. Extra Committee Member: Must hold Graduate Faculty Status. An extra committee member may be a faculty/staff/postdoc, lecturer, part-time instructors (PTI), Faculty-in-Residence (FIRS) or Professor-in-Residence in any graduate/professional program at UNLV; may be an academic faculty member at another university; or may be a highly esteemed and accomplished community member with documented expertise in the student's area of study.
 3. Faculty must hold the terminal degree from the same or a very closely related discipline in which they serve as chair or a school/department committee member for master's or doctoral students.
 - a. Case-by-case exceptions *may* be permitted depending on context (i.e. a DDS chairing an oral biology master's degree; Law professor serving on a Criminal Justice Ph.D. committee; etc.).
 - b. Graduate faculty with non-research-based terminal degrees may not solo chair committees for students earning research degrees; they must co-chair with a faculty member holding a Ph.D.
 4. The GAC chair and school/department committee members must be active researchers/scholars/performers and have some experience or demonstrated capacity to successfully advise graduate students.
 5. Graduate faculty who have never chaired a GAC before should have a faculty mentor in their department who consults with them to ensure full and successful execution of GAC chair duties and strong student mentorship.
 6. GAC chairs and department/school committee members are responsible for ensuring that the student is well-advised, progresses at an appropriate pace, and completes their

degree after successful defense of a rigorous, original, high-quality thesis, project, or dissertation. The GAC must ensure student compliance with university requirements and appropriate, ethical, disciplinary standards and practices. Final documents must be formatted correctly and consistently (using the accepted format -according to their respective disciplines --- APA, Chicago, etc.), and must reflect Graduate College thesis/dissertation formatting requirements.

7. Graduate College representatives (GCR) on the GAC must have GCR privileges in order to serve in this capacity.
 - a. GCR privileges require that the faculty member have a terminal degree in their field, be employed full-time on a multi-year contract, and hold GFS in a graduate degree granting department/school at UNLV.
 - b. The role of the GCR is to be a representative of the Graduate College on the committee, and fully up-to-date on all the policies, procedures, and best practices of student mentorship. The GCR represents the university on committees, and as such must:
 - i. mediate as necessary to ensure appropriate, fair, and equitable treatment of students and graduate faculty on the GAC;
 - ii. ensure appropriate standards of scholarly conduct and research ethics are upheld;
 - iii. attest, to the best of their ability, that the final document is:
 1. original;
 2. academically rigorous;
 3. publication quality, particularly if serving on a doctoral GAC;
 4. well-written;
 5. appropriately formatted (per both the applicable style guide, i.e. APA, and UNLV thesis/dissertation formatting requirements).
 - c. GCRs may have substantive expertise related to some or all of the student's project, but this is not required because their role on the GAC is to ensure general rigor, quality of writing, propriety, fairness, and compliance with all university policies and processes.

8. Any concerns witnessed by anyone on a GAC should be reported to the Graduate College dean or associate dean, and if necessary, also simultaneously to the appropriate office on campus (i.e. Compliance, IRB, Student Conduct, Risk Management, Disability Resources, etc.).

Changes to the GAC

It is not uncommon for GAC membership to change for a variety of reasons, including faculty leaving UNLV, particularly for doctoral students. If a student needs to replace any members of a GAC this can be done easily with the Change of Advisory Committee Form.