

# Policy for Graduate Student Advising and Graduate Advisory Committee Composition in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife

The revised guidelines will read as follows, with the additional recommendations and requirements for unusual situations (voting blocs, conflicts of interest, retired advisors, etc.) appearing immediately afterwards.

## 1. Master of Science (thesis-based)

The student's committee for the M.Sc. consists of a minimum of four Graduate Faculty members: two from Fisheries and Wildlife including the Major Professor(s); a Graduate Council representative who participates only during the Final Exam, and a fourth member who represents the minor field of study, if one is declared. If no minor is declared the Department recommends that the fourth member be drawn from outside FW, such as a faculty member in another department at OSU, faculty at another university, or agency personnel. If not already a member of OSU's Graduate Faculty, such a person can be appointed to the Graduate Faculty by consultation with the Department Head. One member of the graduate advisory committee must have previously served as Major Professor or Co-Major Professor for a student who has previously earned a M.Sc. degree from the Department. If Co-Major Professors are declared, one must be eligible to serve as sole Major Professor.

## 2. Doctor of Philosophy

The student's committee for the Ph.D. consists of a minimum of five Graduate Faculty members: two from Fisheries and Wildlife including the Major Professor(s); one member outside of Fisheries and Wildlife; a Graduate Council representative, and a fifth member who can be from inside or outside the Department. The outside faculty member(s) may represent another department at OSU, faculty at another university, or agency personnel. If not already a member of OSU's Graduate Faculty, such persons can be appointed to the Graduate Faculty by consultation with the Department Head. If a graduate minor is declared, the student's graduate advisory committee must include a Graduate Faculty member representing the minor, and this person will count as the outside member. The Graduate Council representative can be obtained by contacting the Graduate School. One member of the graduate advisory committee must have previously served as Major Professor or Co-Major Professor for a student who has previously earned a Ph.D. degree from the Department. If Co-Major Professors are declared, one must be eligible to serve as sole Major Professor.

Signed,

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Selina Heppell, Department Head

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Date

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Brian Sidlauskas, Co-Chair of the Graduate Committee

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Date

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Susie Dunham, Co-Chair of the Graduate Committee

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Date

### **How was this policy adopted?**

The department's Graduate Committee drafted and distributed an initial version of this policy early in 2018, and revised that policy during the 2018-2019 academic year in response to the feedback received. The final proposed version of the policy was distributed to the FW Faculty on April 29, 2019, discussed at the May 3, 2019 faculty meeting and approved by an online vote on May 10, 2019.

### **When does this policy take effect?**

This policy takes effect for all committees forming in the 2019-2020 academic year or later.

### **Why have we adopted this policy?**

This document outlines several revisions to the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife's (FW) policy for the formation of graduate advisory committees, resulting from extended debate by the Department's Graduate Committee from 2017 to 2019. A request by the Graduate School to develop and explain policies related to the service of Courtesy and Emeritus faculty on graduate advisory committees sparked the revision. As part of this process, the FW Department Head tasked the FW Graduate Committee to clarify graduate student advising roles for all position types in the Department. In addition, questions repeatedly posed by new graduate students about the Department's rules regarding the composition of graduate advisory committees indicated that the guidelines in the FW Graduate Student Guide lacked clarity. This document revises and clarifies those guidelines.

Overall, the Graduate Committee intends the guidelines presented herein to offer diverse members of the Departmental community the opportunity to participate in graduate advising, to offer students clear guidance about their choices in committee composition, and to ensure that committees include at least one member who is well-versed in the Graduate School's and FW's procedural rules and expectations.

Our Program Goals for Graduate Committee composition include the following:

- Provide students with the expertise needed to assist with, critically evaluate, and provide feedback on their research, ensuring breadth and academic rigor
- Provide students with the guidance they need in order to follow degree program policies
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of graduate advisory committee members
- Provide opportunities for state and federal agency partners to commit time to collaborative projects formally
- Connect with other academic programs at OSU and elsewhere to increase outreach and collaboration

### **Types of Committee Service: Definitions and Responsibilities**

The **Major Professor** serves as the primary academic advisor, principal thesis advisor, and general mentor for a graduate student's academic program. A Major Professor must be a graduate faculty member who is approved to direct students at the appropriate level (i.e. MSc/PhD) in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. In our department, this is the faculty member who puts the student forward for admission consideration and assumes primary

responsibility for directing all aspects of graduate student support, research, and scholarship. For thesis-based programs, the Department expects Major Professors to have a financial plan for supporting each student through their entire program and requires Major Professors to demonstrate at least one year of available funding prior to accepting a student. Major Professors are responsible for knowing FW Department and Graduate School policies regarding graduate student advising. A Major Professor new to advising in our department should work with the FW Graduate Program Coordinator to understand the application, review, and acceptance procedures for graduate students.

**Co-Major Professors** are two members of the graduate faculty who agree to share the rights and responsibility of the Major Professor position as outlined above, including shared financial responsibility for supporting the graduate student. At least one of the two Co-Major Professors must be eligible to serve as a sole Major Professor in Fisheries and Wildlife. As outlined below, some members of the FW graduate faculty who are ineligible to serve as sole Major Professor can still serve as Co-Major Professor.

**Committee Members** are members of the graduate faculty who help provide scientific and professional advice to graduate students, participate in regular meetings of the graduate advisory committee, and agree to read, comment upon, and evaluate the thesis.

### **Types of Graduate Programs**

**A Thesis-based Master's or Doctoral Program** requires a Major Professor (or two Co-Major Professors), a Graduate Advisory Committee, and a clear plan for financial support of the student in question. These committees have the most stringent rules for composition of the graduate advisory committee, which this document details below.

**A Non-thesis Master's Program** requires a Major Professor (or two Co-Major Professors) and a Graduate Advisory Committee, but does not require a plan of financial support and has fewer program requirements than the thesis-based programs. As such, a broader array of people are eligible to serve as sole Major Professors for these students.

**A Graduate Certificate Program** requires neither a Major Professor nor a Graduate Advisory Committee; a wide variety of FW employees and affiliates can mentor capstone projects for these students with approval from the FW Graduate Program Coordinator.

*NOTE: All OSU faculty, courtesy faculty, and instructors who work with graduate students as Major Professors, Co-Major Professors, or Committee members must be nominated to the Graduate Faculty by the FW Department Head and Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences. In most cases, a PhD degree is required.*

### **Advisor Eligibility**

**Assistant, Associate, or Full Professors, Courtesy Faculty in the USGS Cooperative Research Unit, and Senior Research Faculty with advising in their position descriptions** can advise graduate students in any program. Such faculty who leave OSU but retain a Departmental appointment and wish to continue advising FW graduate students should arrange for a Co-Major Professor for their students once they leave the University.

***Emeritus Faculty*** may continue to serve as Major Professors for students admitted to their lab prior to retirement. After retirement, Emeritus Faculty can serve as Committee Members and Co-Major Professors, but may not serve as sole Major Professor for any new students taken on after the transition to emeritus status.

***Courtesy Faculty outside the USGS Cooperative Research Unit and Research Associates*** in Fisheries and Wildlife may serve as Co-Major Professors or Committee members for students in any program, and as Major Professors for non-thesis master's students.

***Adjunct Faculty*** in Fisheries and Wildlife may serve as Co-Major Professors or Committee members for students in any program. The graduate school requires that students have a major professor from their major, and so adjunct faculty in FW cannot serve as sole major professors for FW non-thesis master's students.

***Faculty Research Assistants*** are eligible to serve as Major Professor for non-thesis master's degree students and to serve on graduate committees if they hold a PhD. Faculty Research Assistants without a PhD must be further reviewed and approved by the Department Head and Graduate School to serve as Major Professors.

***Affiliate Faculty*** may serve on MSc and PhD graduate advisory committees, but are not eligible to serve as Major Professors or Co-Major Professors in any programs.

***Senior Instructors and Professors of Practice*** are eligible to serve as Major Professor for non-thesis master's degree students and to serve on graduate advisory committees if they hold a PhD. Senior instructors without a PhD must be further reviewed and approved by the Department Head and Graduate School to serve as Major Professors.

***Instructors, Postdoctoral Scholars, Postdoctoral Associates, and Professional Faculty (Advisors)*** are not eligible to serve as Major Professors or Co-Major Professors for graduate students seeking thesis-based degrees. They can serve as a member of graduate advisory committees if they hold a PhD and have approval from the FW Department Head to do so. People in these categories who wish to serve on graduate committees should discuss that time commitment with the Department Head before agreeing to serve.

**Summary of Permitted Roles on FW Graduate Advisory Committees:**

Position	Thesis-based MSc or PhD			Non-thesis MSc	All programs
	Can serve as Sole Major Professor*	Can serve as Co-Major Professor	Needs a Co-Major Professor eligible to be a Sole Major Professor	Can serve as Sole Major Professor**	Can serve on Graduate Advisory Committees**
Assistant, Associate, Full Professors – Tenure-track	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Assistant, Associate, Full Professors – Senior Research	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Courtesy Faculty – Coop. Res. Unit	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Courtesy Faculty – non-Coop. Unit	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Emeritus Faculty	Yes, for students who started before retirement	Yes	Yes, if student accepted post-retirement	Yes	Yes
Emeritus Courtesy Faculty	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjunct Faculty	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Research Associates	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Professors of Practice	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes
Faculty Research Assistants	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes
Senior Instructors	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes
Instructors	No	No	N/A	No	Yes
Postdoctoral Associates and Scholars	No	No	N/A	No	Yes
Professional Faculty (Advisors)	No	No	N/A	No	Yes
Affiliate Faculty	No	No	N/A	No	Yes

\* must be OSU employee (or USGS Coop. Res. Unit) with graduate advising specified in Position Description

\*\* by Graduate School rules, a Committee Member must have the degree that the student is seeking; in other words, MSc degree holders cannot serve on PhD committees, except by petition

Exceptions to these eligibility requirements can be made by the Department Head on a case-by-case basis.

# **Rules for Graduate Advisory Committee Composition**

The FW department's current rules for graduate advisory committee composition read as follows:

## **1. Master of Science**

The student's committee for the M.S. consists of a minimum of four Graduate Faculty members: two from the major field of study including the Major Professor; one from the minor field of study; and a Graduate Council representative who participates only during the Final Exam. If no minor is declared a student must have at least one committee member representing a non-FW related discipline (Statistics, GIS, Sociology). This person can be an OSU employee and who does not have a regular, courtesy, or adjunct appointment in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife or can be appointed to the graduate faculty by the Department Head.

## **2. Doctor of Philosophy**

The student's committee for the Ph.D. consists of a minimum of five Graduate Faculty members: two from the major field of study including the Major Professor; two from an academic department other than the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (one may be from outside OSU); and a Graduate Council representative. If a graduate minor is declared, the student's Graduate Committee must include a Graduate Faculty member representing the minor. The graduate council representative can be obtained by contacting the Graduate School. Except as noted above, all members of a student's committee must be OSU employees.

The diversity of faculty appointments in FW has caused substantial confusion regarding these rules, and this document establishes several revisions. The first revision ensures that all committees include an experienced member of the Graduate Faculty, the second clarifies longstanding confusion about which appointment types count as inside versus outside the Department, and the third relaxes the outside member requirement for Master's thesis committees, but not Ph.D. committees. Under the newly adopted policy, the Department also recommends (but does not require) disciplinary breadth on all graduate advisory committees.

## **New Rule: Requirement for an experienced member of the committee**

Under the old rules, it was possible to assemble a graduate advisory committee composed entirely of faculty who have not previously advised in FW, and who may not be familiar with Departmental policies, procedures, and benchmarks. As such, the new policy adds the requirement that all committees must include at least one member who has previously served as a Major Professor or Co-Major Professor for at least one student who has graduated from the program in question. This can be the Major Professor, if the Major Professor has such experience. In cases where the Major Professor is new to advising in that program, one of the other committee members should fill this role.

## **Clarification of the Outside Member Requirement**

The section of the previous version of the FW Graduate Student Guide regarding formation of graduate advisory committees that caused the most confusion concerned the definition of faculty who are “inside” versus “outside” our department. With the growth in the number of Courtesy, Adjunct, and Affiliate faculty with FW appointments, the substantial overlap of disciplinary expertise with faculty in other departments, and the number of our own graduates now employed in local agencies or in other departments, it became clear that those guidelines needed revision. The new policy adopts this categorization.

### **Inside the department**

- OSU tenured and tenure-track faculty with any percentage of their tenure line in FW
- USGS Coop. Res. Unit faculty
- Senior Research faculty with an FW appointment
- Courtesy faculty with an FW appointment
- Emeritus faculty with an FW appointment
- Research Associates with an FW appointment
- Faculty Research Assistants with an FW appointment
- Instructors and Senior Instructors with an FW appointment
- Professors of Practice with an FW appointment
- Postdocs with an FW appointment
- Advisors with an FW appointment

### **Outside the department**

- Members of the OSU graduate faculty with **no appointment in FW**
- Non-OSU employees with **courtesy appointments in other OSU departments**
- Members of the OSU graduate faculty with an **adjunct** appointment in FW
- Members of the OSU graduate faculty with an **affiliate** appointment in FW

Adjunct Professors in FW tend to be OSU faculty members with 100% of their tenure line in a non-FW department, but who are eligible to serve as Co-Major Professors in FW. While these people contribute substantially to FW, they also bring enough diversity of perspective and departmental culture that the Department considers them as outside the Department for the purposes of evaluating the composition of a student’s graduate advisory committee membership.

In cases where a single person holds appointments that fit the definitions of being inside and outside the department simultaneous (for example, a FW postdoc with an affiliate FW appointment to the graduate faculty), that person shall be considered as inside the department for the purposes of evaluating the composition of a graduate advisory committee.

### **Relaxation of the Outside Member Requirement for Master's Committees**

The requirement to include a representative of a “non-FW discipline” was originally intended to bring diversity of perspective to each student’s graduate advisory committee and to strengthen connections with other departments across campus. The FW Department upholds that goal as important, but also recognizes that Master’s committees typically include only three members (plus a GCR) and that some Master’s students seek focused training best provided by people affiliated with FW. Thus, requiring one of the three committee members to have a non-FW appointment may be overly prescriptive. Under the newly adopted policy, the Department recommends, but does not require, an outside member on Master’s committees unless a graduate minor is declared, in which case the Graduate School requires inclusion of a representative of the minor discipline.

### **Reduction of the Outside Member Requirement for Doctoral Committees**

An outside member is still required on all doctoral committees, whether or not a minor is declared, but this new policy reduces that requirement from two people to one person.

### **Recommendation for Disciplinary Breadth in Composition of Graduate Advisory Committees**

Regardless of the formal appointments held by the members of their graduate advisory committees, all students can benefit from receiving advice from a diversity of perspectives. Thus, the Department recommends that all graduate advisory committees include a member who represents a disciplinary and/or taxonomic perspective substantially different from the immediate focus of the thesis project. For example, a student specializing in fish ecology could include a member focusing on avian ecology (thereby adding taxonomic breadth), a member focusing on fish developmental biology (thereby adding disciplinary breadth), or a member focusing on mammalian systematics (thereby adding taxonomic *and* disciplinary breadth).

Students should discuss this recommendation with their Major Professor during the process of selecting potential committee members and are encouraged to visit with the Graduate Program Coordinator or the Chair of the FW Graduate Committee if they have questions as they assemble their committee. They should note that membership in another department or agency does not automatically mean that an individual will substantially expand the disciplinary or taxonomic expertise of the committee. Similarly, someone inside FW might diversify the committee substantially.

The Department recommend that students locate their project within the following disciplinary and taxonomic categories and select at least one committee member whose primary expertise falls in another. These lists are intended to help calibrate the level of recommended breadth, not to represent a comprehensive or proscriptive list.

- Taxonomic: mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles, fishes, invertebrate animals, plants, other
- Disciplinary: Ecology, systematics and evolution, cell and molecular biology, genetics, anatomy and physiology, development, chemistry, physics, geology, oceanography, statistics, mathematics, computational biology, sociology, policy, liberal arts, history, philosophy, etc.

## **Other Considerations for FW Graduate Advisory Committee Formation**

**Conflicts of Interest** - The previous version of the FW Graduate Student Guide stated:

“Conflicts of Interest may occur with Graduate Faculty members appointed from outside the university in cases where the Graduate Faculty member is directly responsible with funding the student’s research or if they serve as the student’s supervisor for a job with an agency or organization. Graduate Faculty members from outside the university will not be allowed to serve on a student’s graduate committee if a conflict of interest exists.”

The new policy maintains the current prohibition on including a student’s direct supervisor for a job outside OSU on that student’s graduate advisory committee. However, the Department also acknowledges that funders from management agencies have required placement of a person on FW graduate advisory committees in the past. In many such cases, the person in question has lobbied within the agency to secure funding for a particular collaborative project and has intellectual investment in the science. The Department has not traditionally enforced the blanket prohibition for such arrangements, and the majority of the department’s graduate committee considered enforcement of the rule to be unrealistic, given the number of graduate advisory committees that include agency personnel. Thus, rather than prohibiting such an arrangement this new policy holds that any conflicts of interest stemming from service on a graduate student’s committee should be declared at the time of committee formation, debated by the student’s committee and the departmental research reviewer during the research review meeting, and reviewed by the FW Department Head. The Department also recommends that students, major professors and committee members review OSU’s policy on Research and Development of Inventions and Materials with Outside Organizations available under section 6.220 of the university’s policy on intellectual property, available at <https://policy.oregonstate.edu/policy/intellectual-property-imd>

The revised text now reads:

- Due to conflicts of interest, Graduate Faculty members from outside the university may not serve on a student’s graduate committee if they also serve as the student’s direct supervisor for a job with an agency or organization.
- The Department recommends against including agency personnel or industry partners who are directly responsible for funding a graduate student’s research on that student’s committee. If such a person is appointed to a committee, any potential conflicts of interest must be declared at the time of committee formation, discussed and documented during the research review meeting, and ultimately approved or disallowed by the FW Department Head.

**Voting blocs** - Certain faculty combinations can create actual or perceived voting blocs on a student’s graduate advisory committee. Examples would include, but not be limited to faculty members who are married or partnered to each other, a faculty member and one of their current or recent supervisees, or a faculty member who is financially supporting another member of the committee. The department’s graduate committee recommends that any potential for a perceived voting bloc should be declared at the time of committee formation, debated by the student’s committee and the departmental research reviewer during the research review meeting, and ultimately reviewed by the FW Department Head.

The revised text would read:

- Certain personal and professional relationships among faculty members serving on graduate advisory committees may create actual or perceived voting blocs. Examples would include, but not be limited to faculty members who are married or partnered to one another other, a faculty member and one of their current or recent supervisees, or a faculty member who is financially supporting another member of the committee. If such a pair of people are appointed to a graduate advisory

committee, any potential conflicts of interest must be declared at the time of committee formation, discussed and documented during the research review meeting, and ultimately approved or disallowed by the FW Department Head.

### **Mechanism of Review**

Students will submit a single form to seek approval of their graduate advisory committee and to request a list of potential Research Reviewers relatively early in their programs (recommended: end of 2<sup>nd</sup> term for Master's students, 4<sup>th</sup> term for PhD students). The FW Graduate Coordinator (currently Susie Dunham) will review all proposed committees for compliance with this policy during the process of assigning a Research Reviewer. The FW Graduate Committee discussed whether to have the Chair of the FW Graduate Committee perform this review, and concluded that it makes the most sense to have the Graduate Coordinator perform the review, since that position turns over much less frequently than the Chair of the FW Graduate Committee. This arrangement allows the position of Chair of the FW Graduate Committee to rotate, and interpretation to stay constant. It also avoids having faculty members of equal rank policing Departmental policy for each other. The FW Graduate Coordinator's job is to flag graduate advisory committees that do not appear to meet Departmental requirements. The ultimate authority to approve or disapprove a student's committee rests with the Department Head.

Under the new policy, the job of providing students with a list of potential Research Reviewers also falls to the FW Graduate Coordinator (not the head of the graduate committee) thereby streamlining the process for graduate students.

# Summary of Changes to FW Graduate Advisory Committee Formation Guidelines

(to be included in the FW Graduate Student Guide).

This policy aligns the Department's basic requirements for committee composition to those set down by the Graduate School, and adds some requirements and recommendations.

The Graduate School's requirements are:

- **PhD:** A minimum of five members of the Graduate Faculty, including two from the major department/program, one from each declared minor field, and a Graduate Council Representative are required. The Major Professor is one of the two members representing the major department/program.
- **MSc with Thesis:** The examining committee consists of at least four members of the Graduate Faculty, including two in the major field, one in the minor field if a minor is declared, and a Graduate Council representative. When a minor is not declared, the fourth member may be from the Graduate Faculty at large.

This policy adds the following **requirements**:

- All committees must include a member who has previously served as Major Professor or Co-Major Professor for a student who has earned the degree in question.
- In any Co-Major Professor arrangement, one of the two must be eligible to be a sole Major Professor.
- PhD committees must include a member outside of FW.
- Due to conflicts of interest, Graduate Faculty members from outside the University may not serve on a student's graduate advisory committee if they also serve as the student's direct supervisor for a job with an agency or organization.
- If a person from an agency responsible for funding a graduate student's research is appointed to that student's graduate advisory committee, that potential conflict of interest must be declared, discussed, and documented during the Research Review meeting.
- Certain personal and professional relationships among faculty members serving on graduate advisory committees may create actual or perceived voting blocs. Examples would include, but not be limited to faculty members who are married or partnered to one another other, a faculty member and one of their current or recent supervisees, or a faculty member who is financially supporting another member of the committee. If such a pair of people are appointed to a graduate advisory committee, any potential conflicts of interest must be declared at the time of committee formation, discussed and documented during the research review meeting, and ultimately approved or disallowed by the FW Department Head.

This policy adds the following **recommendations**:

- The Department recommends that MSc committees include a member outside of FW.
- The Department recommends that all graduate advisory committees include at least one member, other than the GCR or Departmental Research Reviewer, who represents a discipline or taxonomic focus substantially different from that of the student and Major Professor's primary discipline and taxonomic focus. This person can be inside or outside FW.

- The Department recommends against including agency personnel responsible for funding a student's graduate research or pairs of faculty forming a potential voting bloc on a graduate advisory committee.