

Absent Committee Member Procedures

While it is desirable that all members of a student's supervisory committee be present with the student at the final oral defense of a thesis or dissertation, there are situations (e.g. faculty travel, faculty emergencies and/or faculty leave) that may necessitate holding a defense with one or more committee member(s) absent. The Graduate College office has established the following policies and procedures for such cases.

1. In addition to the student, a minimum of 50% of the student's official committee must attend the defense, excluding any members that require a substitution. If at least 50% of the official committee cannot be in attendance excluding substitutions, the defense must be rescheduled.
2. The chair or one co-chair must attend the defense. If this is not possible, the defense must be rescheduled. The student cannot submit a committee change after the defense is scheduled.
3. A committee co-chair or member who cannot physically attend a defense, or attend via video or teleconference, may assign a substitute to attend (approved by the committee chair, the head of the academic unit & the Graduate College) for the defense only. The substitute must be someone who is approved to serve on graduate supervisory committees for that program. The absent committee member should provide the substitute questions, in writing, to be asked at the defense. The substitute, although respecting the opinions expressed by the regular committee, must be free to use his/her judgment in voting on whether the student passes or fails the defense. Students must provide a copy of their document and any other supporting presentation materials to the substitute committee member at least 5 working days in advance of the defense.

*An in-person defense location must have the necessary equipment to accommodate video/teleconference materials.

Absent Committee Member Signature Instructions

If a committee member will be absent from the defense, the academic staff advisor or committee chair/co-chair must notify the Graduate College as quickly as possible at (480) 965-3521 or by emailing grad-gps@asu.edu before the defense takes place. In order to assign a substitute, the full name and email address of the faculty member who will serve as the substitute must be provided to the Graduate College.

Please contact the Graduate College office at (480) 965-3521 or send an email to grad-gps@asu.edu if you have questions or concerns regarding these procedures.