

CLASS Guidelines for External Thesis and Dissertation Committee Members

The purpose of an external member of a thesis or dissertation committee is to provide expertise to students, enhance the transparency and validity of the thesis/dissertation approval process, and expand the student's professional network. This document outlines best practices for selecting external committee members in CLASS, based on common practices in CLASS and at other universities. Individual departments may have more specific guidelines that they deem appropriate in certain field(s). In some special circumstances, an external member may not fulfill one or more of the criteria outlined below. In these cases, the thesis or dissertation committee chair must explain why the external member is the best candidate in the rationale section of the CLASS Dissertation Committee Appointment form.

1. An external committee member is defined as someone who is either a) not a current faculty member at UH; or b) someone who is a current faculty member at UH but who does not have an appointment in the student's department.
2. External members of PhD dissertation committees must possess a PhD. External members of MA thesis committees must have at least a Master's degree.
3. It is desirable that the external member should have an academic appointment at an institution of higher education. In the case of PhD committees, the institution should grant PhDs.
4. The external member should possess suitable expertise to support the student's research.
5. Emeritus faculty may serve on committees if departments allow this, but they are considered "internal" for the department(s) in which they held their faculty appointment.
6. When in doubt, it is possible to put more than one external reader on a committee, to ensure that at least one of them possesses the standard qualifications.

Adopted by the CLASS Graduate Affairs Committee March, 2021