

Thesis Policy

8/1/25

Guidelines for Primary Thesis Advisors (PTAs)

While each thesis project entails a tailored approach, general expectations and guidelines are provided below:

- MA/MS written thesis should be approximately 30-60 pages in length
- Primary Thesis Advisors (PTAs) will devote approximately 15 total hours to the role, per advisee
- PTAs with relevant expertise should advise students as to the relevancy and feasibility of the selected thesis topic
- PTAs should provide guidance on refinement of the topic, developing a research approach, and theoretical/methodological framework
- An important part of serving as a PTA is the setting of clear deadlines for students for each component of the thesis.
- PTAs should respond promptly to students' questions and/or requests for meetings, provide clear written comments on students' drafts, and inform their advisees in advance of any time periods during which they will be unavailable for consultations.

I. Overview & Eligibility

The Dean of Graduate Studies and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with Departmental Chairs/Directors, will monitor the involvement of faculty in graduate thesis advising.

Primary Thesis Advisors: All tenured and tenure-track faculty are eligible to serve as Primary Thesis Advisors (PTAs; also known as first readers). On occasion, NTT faculty members may fill this role if they have relevant expertise that is not possessed by an available full-time faculty member. Neither full- nor NTT faculty may serve as a PTA for more than 5 students per academic year. PTAs accrue one thesis point upon formally submitting a grade for each graduate student advisee in the required three-credit thesis course. Thesis points are earned even if the submitted grade is IP or NCR.

Second and Third Readers: Departments are strongly encouraged to utilize the expertise of full-time faculty across SAIC as second and third readers. On occasion, NTT faculty members may fill this role, if they have relevant expertise that is not possessed by an available full-time faculty member.

II. Compensation - Full-Time Faculty

Primary Thesis Advisors: For each student advised in a given academic year, PTAs accrue one thesis point. The points are awarded upon the submission of a grade for each graduate student advisee in the required three-credit thesis course. Thesis points are earned even if the submitted grade is IP or NCR. Earned thesis points are tracked. Once a faculty member reaches a total of 8 incremental points, they'll receive a course release that they may take in consultation with their chair. Faculty have the option of banking the course release for up to three years, after which any unused releases expire.

Second and Third Readers: Full-time faculty are not compensated for serving as second or third thesis readers.

III. Compensation – NTT Faculty

Primary Thesis Advisors: NTT faculty members serving as PTAs will be compensated at 1/8 of their current per-course rate for 5 meetings for each student they advise. Faculty Employment Services will process a one-time payment after the grade is submitted by the faculty member. This expense is charged to 501-50126-5390.

Second Readers: NTT faculty members and/or independent contractors serving as second or third thesis readers are compensated \$500 for 2 meetings for each student they advise. For NTT faculty serving as second readers, the department administrative staff will enter the payment in the one-time payment form after the grade is submitted by the faculty member. For independent contractors, the department administrative staff will process the payment through Accounts Payable. This expense is charged to 501-50126-5390.

Third Readers: NTT faculty members and/or independent contractors serving as second or third thesis readers are compensated \$200 for 1 meeting for each student they advise. For NTT faculty serving as third readers, the department administrative staff will enter the payment in the one-time payment form after the grade is submitted by the faculty member. For independent contractors, the department administrative staff will process the payment through Accounts Payable. This expense is charged to 501-50126-5390.