

**Absent Committee Member Procedures**

While it is desirable that all members of a student's supervisory committee be physically 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. A minimum of 50% of the student's official committee must be physically present with the student at the defense. If at least 50% of the committee cannot be physically present, the defense must be rescheduled.
2. The chair or one co-chair must be physically present at 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 be physically present at the defense may participate in the defense in one of three ways. These options are listed in the order of preference:
  - a. The absent committee member videoconferences into the defense location.\*
  - b. The absent committee member teleconferences into the defense location.\*
  - c. The absent committee member provides a substitute to be physically present (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.

*\*The defense location must have the necessary equipment to accommodate video/teleconference materials.*

*\*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.*

**Absent Committee Member Signature Instructions**

If a committee member will be absent from the defense, the academic advisor or committee chair/co-chair must notify the Graduate College as quickly as possible and before the defense takes place. In order to assign a substitute, please be prepared to provide the Graduate College with the full name and email address of the faculty member who will serve as the substitute.

**Please contact the Graduate College office at (480) 965-3521 or send an email to [Grad-GPS@asu.edu](mailto:Grad-GPS@asu.edu) if you have questions or concerns regarding these procedures.**