

**SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY
ONE WASHINGTON SQUARE
SAN JOSE, CA 95192**

S14-10, University Policy, Master’s Committee Structure and Processes and Thesis Embargoes

Legislative History:

Rescinds S87-6

Amends S94-8

At its meeting of May 12, 2014, the Academic Senate approved the following policy recommendation presented by Senator Gleixner for the Curriculum and Research Committee. Issues have arisen about the composition of thesis and project committees and the current policy needs greater detail in this area. In addition, current policy does not allow for flexibility in the publishing timeline. There are reasons why embargoes may be in the best interest of the student or faculty.

Effective Fall 2014

Action by University President:

**Approved by President
Mohammad Qayoumi on
June 11, 2014**

University Policy:

Master's Committee Structure and Processes and Thesis Embargoes

Whereas Issues around the composition of thesis and project committees have highlighted that the existing policy on thesis committee membership (S87-6) needs greater detail on the make-up of committees for other types of culminating experiences (such as projects) and on procedures for removal of committee members; and

Whereas There is an obligation to provide all master’s students an opportunity to attempt the culminating experience but there is no guarantee of successful completion; and

Whereas Current policy (S94-8) states that all theses must be published but does not allow for flexibility in the publishing timeline. There are reasons why embargoes (delays in publishing thesis) may be in the best interest of the

student or faculty; and

Whereas SJSU is a public institution funded by public monies, and the products of its faculty and students are to be made available to the public. Students have received value in their research or creative activities and are not entitled to completely suppress the thesis content as if the thesis is a commercial entity. Thus, ultimately that work should be publicly available; therefore, be it

Resolved S87-6 be rescinded and S94-8 be amended to remove the sections "Results of all research approved by the university must be freely publishable. In special circumstances (e.g., a for-profit corporation as sponsor when proprietary data are involved), the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research may negotiate in advance to delay publication and/or presentation for a modest period--not to exceed 180 days." and "Students must be permitted to disclose fully the results of work required for courses, theses and master's projects. The protection of proprietary data for a period not to exceed 180 days may be applied to student publication.", and be it further

Resolved The attached policy be enacted effective Fall 2014.

Approved (C&R): April 21, 2014

Vote: 11-0-0

Present: Buzanski, Desalvo, Gleixner (Chair), Hart, Jaehne, Kohn, Schultz-Krohn, Sibley, Stacks, Swanson, Trulio

Absent: Cheruzel, Sujitparapitaya

Financial Impact: There is minimal financial impact in the changes made in this policy.

Workload Impact: There is additional workload to committee chairs, graduate coordinators, department chairs, and Graduate Studies and Research in assisting students with issues that may arise with their master's committees. There is additional workload to Graduate Studies and Research to approve and monitor thesis embargoes.

I. Thesis (Plan A) Committee Composition

- A. A master's thesis committee will be composed of between three and five members. Exceptions can be made only with the approval of Graduate Studies and Research.
- B. The chairperson of the thesis committee must hold a permanent (tenured or tenure track) San José State University faculty appointment. Emeritus and FERPing (those in the Faculty Early Retirement Program) San José State University faculty may serve as chairs with the consent of their department chairs or school directors.
- C. Qualified individuals, including part-time temporary faculty and non-faculty with expertise related to the thesis topic, may serve as thesis committee members.
- D. At least half of the thesis committee must hold a San José State University faculty appointment.
- E. The department will determine the qualifications of those serving on the thesis committee in terms of degree required and area expertise. If there are contentions on the qualifications that cannot be resolved within the department, the decision will be made by the college dean or designee.

II. Project (Plan B) or Creative Project (Plan C) Committee Composition

- A. Rules governing creative projects (Plan C) committees or project, orals, comprehensive exam, and other Plan B committees should be explicitly stated on program websites, in graduate student handbooks, and in other advising material to ensure student awareness.

III. Failure to Form a Committee

- A. No individual can be compelled to serve on a committee. Should a student be unable to form a committee, the department chairperson or school director and graduate coordinator should aid the student in finding willing participants or exploring other culminating experience options (e.g., project or comprehensive exams), if available in the program.
- B. Eligibility to advance to candidacy is contingent on having an approved committee.
- C. Failure to form the committee is equivalent to a failure to make satisfactory progress through the graduate program and subjects the student to administrative-academic probation and disqualification. The procedures for this are defined in S10-6.

IV. Removal of Committee Members

- A. Students may request changes in the committee membership. Changes are made by the committee chair and graduate coordinator or department chair or school director.
- B. Committee chairs can also be added or removed with the stipulation that the particular area of study may have to be forfeited.
- C. If the committee chair can reasonably contend that the work of the student was part of a comprehensive project by the chair, was developed by the chair,

and should be protected as the intellectual property of the chair, then the student who dismisses that chair cannot continue to work on the project or publish it as a thesis or other publication without the chair's consent (other than in the special case of a leave, as described below).

- D. If a committee chair abandons a thesis committee without just cause once a student is well along in his or her thesis research, the student will not be restricted from including that research in his or her thesis and other publications.
- E. Disputes of this nature, if not resolved by the graduate coordinator or department chair/school director, will ultimately rest with the Associate Vice President and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.
- F. Committee chairs may, but are not required to, serve when on leave as long as the leave is less than 100% medical or family leave. If the leave is 100% medical or family leave, committee chairs shall not serve. If, after reasonable attempts at contact, the faculty member is unavailable due to leave or retirement for approval of the final draft, the graduate student has the right to replace that faculty member with another qualified individual so long as the requirements for the composition of the committee as a whole are maintained. Permission for replacement of the committee chair for this reason must be obtained from the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

V. Thesis Publication Delays (Embargoes)

- A. The university reserves the right to publish all theses. While it will permit delays under certain circumstances, permanent embargoes are prohibited.
- B. A number of conditions may motivate and justify a desire to delay (embargo) the public release of theses:
 - 1. thesis research conducted in association with or funded by a corporate sponsor that utilizes proprietary methodology, generates proprietary data, or is contractually subject to review by the sponsor
 - 2. findings produced by a team or as a component of a series of research blocks that would ideally be finished as a whole before any one part is released for public consumption
 - 3. research that will be published in a different form, such as a journal or conference proceedings, and for which prior release as a thesis would prevent subsequent publication or for which the publicized information would be premature
 - 4. creative works, such as novels, poetry, or short stories, or works to appear as part of a book of research findings for which a delay would allow commercial publication, and thesis publication by a commercial provider of theses such as Proquest would be viewed by commercial publishers to be the same as commercial publication
 - 5. research material for which a patent will be sought

6. other situations not mentioned above.

C. Sponsor-Mandated Embargo

1. Results of all research approved by the university must ultimately be freely publishable. The university encourages student involvement in research, including that sponsored by a corporation. In cases in which the sponsored thesis will contain proprietary information, a sponsor-mandated embargo may be imposed on its public release.
2. The delay in publication and/ or presentation is subject to the authorization of the Associate Vice President of Graduate Studies and Research, should be negotiated in advance as part of a contractual agreement between the sponsor and authorized contracting arm of the university, and is not to exceed six months. After that point, students may petition the Associate Vice President of Graduate Studies and Research for extensions in increments of six months.
3. University personnel may sign confidentiality agreements allowing access to privileged material critical to a research project but must be free to report on the results of the research project within a reasonable time period.

D. Student-Directed Embargo

1. Students may elect to embargo their theses from university library publication and publication by external agencies (commercial provider of theses such as Proquest) with which the university associates for up to five years without special permission. A form for this purpose is made available to each student by the Office of Graduate Studies and Research at the point of thesis submission. After that point, students may petition the Associate Vice President of Graduate Studies and Research for extensions in increments of five years for the University Library embargo.
2. An embargo would bar the University Library from making public in any fashion any information about the thesis. It would, therefore, require the concealment of meta-data, which includes the author, title, and abstract. Once the library embargo expires, the student will have the option of choosing to allow local SJSU access, which would include viewing and downloading capability to all SJSU personnel, including registered students. Commercial providers of theses, such as Proquest, can be permanently embargoed. The distinction between the library and outside agencies is made because the university maintains its rights to showcase theses resulting from its own efforts and support.

E. Faculty-Directed Embargo

1. The thesis chair may implement an embargo period without the consent of the student for a limited period of up to six months.
2. This provision is entered in recognition of the frequent need for a reasonable period following thesis submission for the chair to publish the same material in a journal or other scholarly publication before data are released on the internet.
3. Rarely, the faculty-imposed embargo period can be extended for up to two years total by the chair through a request to the Associate Vice President of Graduate Studies and Research. The faculty-imposed period is limited because a student may have a legitimate reason for wanting the thesis material to be made public, for example, for application to Ph.D. programs, and the initial two years is usually sufficient for outside publication. With student consent, the provisions of E.1. apply so that the embargo period can be lengthened.

VI. Doctoral Programs

- A. This policy applies to doctoral committees and theses except in cases where specific or stricter policies are approved and adopted by the programs overseeing them.