



Research Methods in Science in Engineering

Choosing a Committee

Slide 1

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Purpose of the Committee

- The Committee is composed of a panel of experts
- Evaluate if your research and accomplishments are sufficient for your degree and your conclusions are scientifically sound.
- Help and guide you while in graduate school. They are your personal science advisory board.
- Champion you if your advisor develops unreasonably expectations.

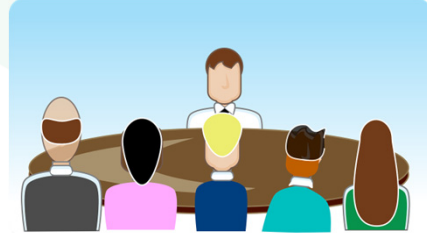


Slide 2

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Who Serves on the Committee

- Your main advisor that chairs the committee.
- Topic experts who can best mentor and evaluate your research.
- Out of topic expert(s) that evaluate your research at a higher level and ensure the ethics and procedures of the committee.
- Consider inviting professionals from industry or from other universities!

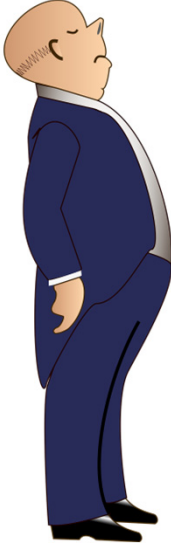


The Ideal Committee Member

- **A Rising Star** – Your committee members can be mentors, collaborators, and help you network and get jobs.
- **Friendly and Helpful** – You want committee member that will be helpful and not give you a hard time.
- **Knowledgeable in a Useful Area** – Committee members can mentor and advise you better if they are experts in areas that are useful to your research.
- **Likes You** – The ideal committee member likes you and is always willing to help.



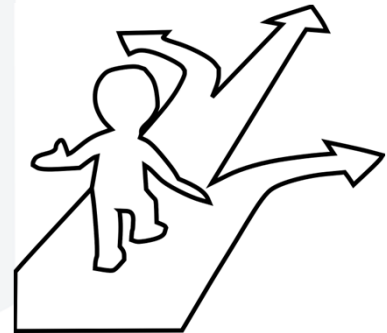
Committee Members to Avoid



- **Superstars** – They tend to be very busy and will not be able to devote time to you.
- **Egos/Talkers** – Faculty with egos or that like to hear themselves talk may choose to prove themselves by giving you a hard time.
- **Retirement/Leaving** – Ensure your committee member will be retiring or leave the university before you defend.
- **Politics/Tension** – Ensure there is no politics or tension between your various committee members.
- **Overly Passive** – These people may not champion you if you run into trouble.

How to Choose a Committee Member

- Lean on your advisor to help pick committee members, but remember it is your choice and not theirs.
- Do some research about a potential member
 - Read their web pages, publications, etc.
 - Ensure their work and expertise align with your research.
 - Ask other graduate students about the potential members
 - Be sure they will be friendly, easy to work with, and not give you a hard time.
- Consider members that may be better readers or outside your field to evaluation your research at a higher level.



How to Approach a Potential Committee Member



- Considering interviewing potential committee members
 - Inform them you are choosing committee members
 - You have identified them as a potential member.
 - Clearly express your needs and expectations.
 - This is your career do don't be afraid to ask them difficult questions.
- If you reach out by e-mail:
 - Your name, and affiliation
 - Layman two-sentence description of your research
 - Connect the potential member to your research
 - Ask the potential member to be part of your committee
 - Identify why that person would be valuable and helpful

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Your Mentality Approaching Potential Committee Members

- It is your career on the line, not theirs.
- They are not doing you a favor to serve on your committee. It is their job.
- It is their privilege to serve on your committee and help an up-and-coming scholar.
- Regardless, be polite, respectful, and thankful.



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Realistic Expectations

- What You Deserve
 - They will read your documents and provide meaningful feedback.
 - They will occasionally provide help and mentorship.
 - They will be friendly, helpful, and not be a problem for you.
 - They will get along with the other committee members.
 - They will champion you if your advisor develops unreasonable expectations.
- In Practice
 - Most committee members will only attend the proposal and defense.
 - Most committee members will not read your proposal document or dissertation.
 - Most committee members will not reach out to help you.



Dealing with a Difficult Committee Member

- Listen to what that person is saying.
 - Put your emotion aside.
 - Are they making valid points?
- Replace difficult committee members
 - It is always possible to replace committee members.
 - Do not be too quick to do this as you may ruin some relationships.
- Replacing not an option for you...
 - Involve those difficult people in every aspect of your research.
 - Give the illusion to them they are helping you.
 - They will be less likely to give you a hard time at your defense if they were helping and guiding you the whole time.