B. The Master’s Advisory Committee

The advisory committee guides the student through the master’s program, advises the student on required coursework, oversees the student’s scholarly activities or research, reviews progress toward degree, and conducts the final exam. The master’s advisory committee is formed through the Program of Study. If not already determined at the time of matriculation, during the first semester of enrollment, the chair/director of the major program should, in conjunction with the student, appoint an advisor from the Faculty of the Graduate School with membership as a Graduate Faculty or Associate Graduate Faculty to serve as chair of the student's master's advisory committee until a permanent chair is obtained. Ultimately, it is the student’s responsibility to obtain a permanent chair and advisory committee members for the graduate program.

For a professionally oriented master’s program only, the advisory committee may be a predetermined committee selected by program faculty (in consultation with the chair or director in the academic program, department, or school) that is used for an entire cohort, with a predetermined advisory committee chair. A student may petition the chair or director (in the academic program, department, or school) for changes in the predetermined committee composition if there are legitimate reasons for the change (e.g., a conflict of interest).

Master’s advisory committee composition must meet the following minimum requirements:

- All members of the advisory committee must hold a degree of comparable level to the degree sought by the student (WAC 250-61-100).
- The advisory committee must include at least three current WSU faculty members.
- Two of the members of the advisory committee must be current members of the Faculty of the Graduate School.
- Two of the members must be graduate program faculty in the student’s master’s degree program.
  - At least one of these two members must be a member of the Graduate Faculty.

Advisory committees may have more than three members; however, the majority must be members of the Faculty of the Graduate School. Individuals who are not WSU faculty may be considered as additional (beyond three) advisory committee members on an ad hoc basis.

- External advisory committee members must hold a degree comparable to that sought by the student and have specific expertise that is particularly important to the student’s proposed program.
- Examples of external advisory committee members would include faculty from another university or individuals from an appropriate government, business, or industry organization.
- Such an individual must be nominated to serve on an advisory committee by the graduate program director to the vice provost for graduate and professional education, who makes the final decision. A current curriculum vita and nomination form must be included with the request, which is submitted through the GRM along with the Program of Study or Change of Committee form.

Potential conflicts of interest should be acknowledged when forming a graduate student’s advisory committee. Examples of potential perceived or real conflicts of interest include: 1) a new faculty member who was a former graduate school peer; 2) a faculty member who is the employer or supervisor of a staff member pursuing a degree, and 3) faculty members whose impartiality may be impacted because of close professional or personal relationships that are separate from their WSU faculty roles.

The student is responsible for establishing and maintaining an advisory committee. WSU faculty have the right to decline to serve on any specific student's advisory committee. All advisory committee members and the graduate program director must sign the Program of Study. Once the Program of Study has been filed with the Graduate School, changes may be made to the advisory committee composition by completing the Committee Change form.

The vice provost for graduate and professional education has the final approval for all advisory committees. The vice provost also has the authority to remove a faculty member from a student’s advisory committee after consultation with the program/department chair, the dean of the college, and the provost, when it is in the best interest of the student and the program.