

1. PURPOSE

This purpose of this policy is to inform students, faculty, and staff of the administrative steps required to successfully register and complete the thesis component of any graduate degree. Additionally, in order to ensure fairness and consistency, this policy clearly defines the rules and restrictions concerning thesis supervisors and second readers, as well as all information concerning conflicts of interest.

2. WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

Graduate Students, Faculty, Staff, any parties involved in the thesis process.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

I. ARTICLE I - REGISTRATION POLICY

- a. Students register themselves into the generic 5095 thesis course during the registration period.
- b. Students must submit thesis application to the graduate program coordinator on the first Friday of classes.
 - i. **Thesis Application:** This document must have the abstract attached, along with signatures of the thesis supervisor, academic advisor and program director. The graduate program coordinator will take it to the provost for approval.
- c. Before the student submits his or her thesis, he or she must turn in a signed [Ready to Submit form](#) to the graduate program coordinator. It is at this point that the student declares his or her second reader. *Academic Affairs reserves the right to deny any second reader request.*

II. ARTICLE II – THESIS SUPERVISOR AND SECOND READER POLICY

- a. Thesis supervisors must be AUP faculty members who are on a permanent contract. They must have the status of *enseignant chercheur*. For more information about what constitutes an *enseignant chercheur*, please refer to the *definitions* section at the end of this policy.
- b. Second readers should also meet the same criteria as first readers. To declare the second reader, the student is required to submit the [Ready to Submit form](#). If the student feels very strongly that an external reader is needed, he or she must note this in the form and write a request to Academic Affairs. Academic Affairs reserves the right to deny any petition for an external second reader.
 - i. The written proposal must be 500 words minimum and must be accompanied by the CV of the external second reader.
 - ii. If the proposal is not accepted, the student must be prepared and have chosen another internal reader that meets the guidelines of this policy.
- c. Most module instructors are on fixed-term contracts and are considered external readers. They *cannot* be thesis supervisors. Any specific queries about the eligibility of a potential thesis supervisor and/or second reader should be sent to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs, Elizabeth Guinel, at eguinel@aup.edu.

III. ARTICLE III – CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

a. Conflict of Interest Definition

- i. A conflict of interest between a student and a supervisor is defined as any personal or professional situation that would influence a supervisor's ability to make a non-biased decision towards the student's work. This bias can either be in or against the student's interest. Some examples include, but are not limited to:
 1. **Personal Relationship**
 - a. The supervisor or second reader is a relative of the student.

- b. The supervisor or second reader is the spouse of or has a close personal relationship with the student.
 - 2. **Professional Relationship**
 - a. The supervisor or second reader has ever employed or been employed by the student.
 - b. The supervisor or second reader is in negotiation to directly employ or be employed by the student.
 - 3. **Research/Publication**
 - a. The supervisor or second reader has a direct commercial interest in the outcomes of the research.
 - b. The supervisor or second reader has published work critical to the student's research (specifically naming student).
- b. **When to Declare a Conflict of Interest**
 - i. Any member of the school should promote the values that are represented at AUP and should therefore declare any potential or perceived conflict of interest. In the interest of transparency, all perceived conflicts of interest should be declared.
- c. **How to Declare a Conflict of Interest**
 - i. By signing this document, it is the primary duty of the individual involved to declare any potential conflict of interest as soon as the conflict arises. If the individual does not make the declaration of the conflict of interest, others, such as a colleague or manager, may become aware of the conflict of interest and should make a declaration.
 - ii. **To declare a conflict of interest:**
 - 1. An individual should declare any potential conflict of interest in writing to the program director, before the thesis application deadline.
 - 2. If an individual recognizes a conflict of interest after having signed the thesis application or ready to submit form, said individual should immediately contact his or her program director, who will then notify the Provost.
 - iii. When in doubt, please declare the conflict of interest. If the conflict is discovered and was not declared, all individuals involved are subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with the Student Handbook and Faculty Manual [page 25].
- d. **Procedure for Reviewing and Resolving Potential Conflicts of Interest**
 - i. All cases involving a potential conflict of interest will be brought before the Graduate Program Review Board.
 - ii. If the conflict of interest involves a member of the Graduate Program Review Board, he or she will recuse his or herself from the review and resolution process
 - 1. **NO CONFLICT EXISTS**-Where it is determined that there is no conflict of interest, this will be officially recorded by the Graduate Program Review Board. An explanation and any supporting documentation should be included as to why it was concluded that no conflict arose.
 - 2. **CONFLICT DOES EXIST**-Once a conflict of interest is declared, the school will determine the course of action. This may include requesting that the supervisor/second reader:
 - a. be permitted to continue, where the conflict is considered to be insignificant
 - b. request the consent from all impacted parties that they can continue with their involvement
 - c. withdraw from any discussions in relation to the thesis project
 - d. withdraw from making any decisions in relation to the thesis project
 - e. stand aside from any involvement in the thesis project
 - iii. If any conflict of interest between the thesis supervisor/second reader and the student is found, the supervisor/second reader will not be remunerated for his or her work on the project. They will also be subject to any necessary action as detailed in the Faculty Manual. In appropriate cases, disciplinary action will be taken against the student as stated in the academic integrity section of the Student Handbook.

IV. ARTICLE IV – THESIS EXTENSION POLICY

a. Thesis Extensions A & B

- i. From the start of the semester in which any thesis is registered, all graduate students will have three semesters (fall, spring, and summer) in which to research, write, submit, defend, and give a bound final copy of the project to the AUP library in order to be awarded their Master's degree. Within the administrative envelope of this year, the actual dates of submission and timeframes for marking and thesis defense are set by the thesis supervisor in consultation with graduate program director.
- ii. Graduate students pay tuition for the thesis or research project when it is first registered, at the per-credit tuition rate. The number of credits a thesis or research project carries is defined by the graduate program.
- iii. For the subsequent two semesters, until the thesis grade is submitted, the student will be automatically registered for a zero-credit extension, known as extension A (first extension semester) and extension B (second extension semester). There will be no administrative charges for this extension, apart from the mandatory health insurance fees.
- iv. The official graduation date will be at the end of the semester of the last registration- all 0-credit extensions included.

b. Thesis Registration C

- i. After this period of administrative extension is over, if no final grade has been awarded by the grade submission date, as published in the Academic Calendar, the student may request an extension of one final semester for late completion by submitting [a thesis extension request](#) to the associate dean, signed by the student, the project supervisor, and the program director.
- ii. The student must be able to document satisfactory academic progress on the thesis/research project, and provide a detailed timeline for completion of the thesis/research project before the end of the extension semester. Adequate progress at this stage is defined as completing a 10,000-word draft of the thesis to the satisfaction of the supervisor and program director.
- iii. The prefecture de police can request to see this form at any moment, including when the student requests a renewal of his or her titre de séjour. Extension for late completion incurs an administrative fee of 1000€.
- iv. Any student who is living in France must pay the minimum required health insurance fees through AUP.

c. Administrative Withdrawal

- i. If the extension registration request form is not submitted by 5pm on the Friday of the first week of class, or if the extension request is denied, the student is administratively withdrawn from their thesis registration. If no final grade has been awarded by the grade submission date, as published in the Academic Calendar, the student is administratively withdrawn from their thesis registration. In both cases a grade of W is entered for the thesis/research project.
- ii. Any student who has been administratively withdrawn and wishes to return and finish their master's degree will be obliged to apply to re-register for the thesis/research project and for any outstanding course work. The application to re-register must be submitted to the program director, the associate dean of academic affairs, and the graduate program coordinator.
- iii. Students who are permitted to re-register pay the current per-credit hour tuition rate for all outstanding requirements.

d. Leave of Absence

- i. Students occasionally have serious personal or health reasons for being unable to complete their thesis or research project in a timely fashion. At any stage of the work on the thesis or research project, a student may request a leave of absence, and defer the completion of their thesis or research project.
- ii. To [apply for a leave of absence](#) a student must submit a written request to the graduate program director and the graduate program coordinator, detailing the period of leave requested and stating the reasons for the request. He or she encloses a copy of the work they have completed on his or her thesis or research project, signed by the supervisor.
- iii. A student may [request a leave of absence](#) for a maximum of 6 months.
- iv. When the student is ready to return and to complete the thesis/research project, he or she must contact the director of the graduate program, the graduate program coordinator, and the office of the registrar to re-register the thesis. There is a fee of €1000 for this re-registration valid for one semester only.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- I. **Student:** The student must respect the rules as defined in this policy and finish his or her thesis to the standards of the program, within the given timeline. He or she must also declare any conflict of interest.
- II. **Thesis Supervisor:** The thesis supervisor is responsible for the overall academic supervision of the thesis. This includes (in collaboration with the student) the timeline for thesis completion. He or she also must thoroughly check the thesis application before approval, as well as declare any conflict of interest with the student.
- III. **Second Reader:** The second reader is responsible for evaluating the work of the student, and following the appropriate administrative steps for any conflict of interest
- IV. **Program Director:** The program director is responsible for verifying that the first reader is eligible, as defined in *Article II.a* of this policy. He or she will confirm this when approving the student's thesis application. The program director also must approve the thesis project and timeline as presented to him or her in the thesis application. He or she must approve or deny any thesis extension C request (*Article III.b*), administrative withdrawal (*Article III.c*) or leave of absence request (*Article III.d*) submitted by the student. Finally, he or she is responsible for vetting all readers, and verifying that there is no conflict or interest.
- V. **Provost:** The provost approves or denies the thesis application. He or she is also makes the final decision on any academic or administrative issue concerning the thesis. This includes exceptional cases, and any matter of academic integrity. The provost is also responsible for handling any case where there is a conflict of interest.
- VI. **Associate Dean of Academic Affairs:** The dean of academic affairs checks all administrative withdrawals (*Article III.c*) and thesis extension c requests (*Article III.b*).
- VII. **Graduate Program Coordinator:** The graduate program coordinator insures that all administrative elements of this policy are properly completed. It is his or her responsibility to verify all thesis readers, applications, extensions, as well as any other extenuating circumstances.
- VIII. **Registrar's Office:** The registrar's office approves leave of absences, and finalizes any administrative withdrawal.

5. DEFINITIONS

- I. **Enseignant Chercheur:** An enseignant chercheur is a professor who teaches, does service, and research for the university.
- II. **Internal First and Second Reader:** By the standards defined in this policy, an internal first or second reader must be on a permanent contract at the American University of Paris and have the status of *enseignant chercheur*.
- III. **External Second Reader:** An external reader is considered to be anyone who does not work at the American University of Paris. Anyone who works at AUP on fixed term contract (such as most module instructors) are also considered to be external readers.
- IV. **Conflict of Interest- Close Personal Relationship between a student and thesis supervisor/second reader:** A close personal relationship between the student and thesis supervisor or second reader is defined as any relationship that inhibits the supervisor or second reader from having a non-bias view towards the project and grade. Examples include but are not limited to: spouse, immediate family member, close family friend, significant other, etc.
- V. **Conflict of Interest- Stand aside from any involvement in the thesis project:** *Any involvement in the thesis* is defined as any interaction concerning the project. This ranges from the slightest involvement, to being the supervisor.

6. APPROVALS & HISTORY

This policy was presented to the Graduate Program Review Board on Tuesday, 17 October 2017 for edits. Its final version was approved on 13 November 2017. On June 13, 2019 the Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs confirmed that this version is still current. Next review in November 2022.

7. ISSUING OFFICE AND CONTACT

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