

East Tennessee State University
Graduate Council

**Outside Observers for Thesis and Dissertation Defenses
Information for Faculty**

All members of the East Tennessee State University graduate faculty have a responsibility to serve as outside observers for thesis and dissertation defenses. As objective representatives of the graduate faculty, outside observers report to the Graduate School on the fairness and rigor of thesis and dissertation defenses. Outside observers are not members of the defense committee; therefore, they do not read and comment on the draft of the thesis or dissertation nor do they participate in the deliberations or vote on the outcome of the defense. Instead, they read the abstract provided and attend the entire defense, including any committee deliberations, and report on the process used.

The outside observation confirms that the university's procedures are properly followed, that students are treated fairly, and that the rigor of graduate defenses/presentations are appropriate to the degree sought. Furthermore, the outside observation contributes to the university's scholarly community, builds connections across disciplines, and provides an opportunity for graduate faculty to learn about the scholarship done outside of their area.

The outside observer provides details of the defense on an electronic form that is submitted to the Graduate School. The Graduate Dean reads and reviews each outside observation form submitted. Outside observers will receive an email noting their service that can be included in their annual Faculty Activity Report and/or tenure and promotion materials.

Suggested Rubric for Outside Observers

This rubric, developed by a graduate faculty member, is a guide to help outside observers during the defense process.

	YES	NO	Comments
Did all members of the dissertation committee participate in the defense?	Yes – all members of the dissertation committee participated in the defense appropriately	No - not all members of the defense participated in the defense: (List who did not)	
Were the questions asked of the candidate appropriate for the topic of the thesis/dissertation?	Yes – all questions asked of the candidate were appropriate for the degree earned.	No - not all the questions asked of the candidate were appropriate for the degree earned. Provide a note.	
Was the student able to effectively respond to the questions asked by the committee?	Yes – the student was able to effectively responds to the questions asked by the committee.	No - the student was not able to effectively respond to the questions asked by the committee.	
Was the organization of the defense appropriate for the degree earned?	Yes – the organization of the defense was appropriate for the degree earned.	No - the organization of the defense was appropriate for the degree earned. Provide a brief note.	
Was the length of the defense appropriate for the degree earned?	Yes – the length of the defense was appropriate for the degree earned. Provide approximate time.	No – the length of the defense was appropriate for the degree earned. Provide time.	