

Contingency procedure for authorizing the unilateral removal of a member/advisor from a graduate advisory committee

This contingency procedure is meant to address circumstances when a student seeks to change the makeup of their graduate advisory committee, but a member or advisor is either unable or unwilling to provide the required authorization. One example is when a student unilaterally seeks disassociation from their thesis or dissertation advisor.

Proposed solution: We propose a contingency procedure through which unilateral removal of an advisor or member of a graduate advisory committee can be authorized after due diligence is carried out to ensure that the circumstances warrant the removal.

Academic unit responsibilities to carry out the contingency procedure:

Department level - Each department with a graduate program is responsible for designating a committee of at least three department faculty members for adjudicating unilateral removal requests that are not resolved at the graduate advisory committee level. These individuals should be designated at the start of each academic year, prior to initiation of any contingency removal procedures. Any member of the committee who has a conflict of interest with a particular contingency removal case should recuse themselves from that case and a replacement should be designated by the department.

College level - Each college is responsible for designating a committee of at least two college faculty members for adjudicating unilateral removal requests that are not resolved at the department level. These individuals should be designated at the start of each academic year, prior to initiation of any contingency removal procedures. Any member of this committee who has a conflict of interest with a particular contingency removal case should recuse themselves from that case and a replacement should be designated by the college. At the time of initiation of a case, a third member will be added from the degree-granting department.

Process:

The following requirements need to be met before the contingency procedure can be initiated:

- 1) The student is required to provide evidence of seeking authorization from the committee member or advisor to be removed. At least two independent attempts should be documented, with at least five business days allowed for a response after each attempt. It is recommended that two different methods be used, for example phone and email. Additional time (up to 15 business days) should be allowed for known circumstances that could delay the response. For example, if the individual is known by the university to be traveling, at a conference, out of touch for university business, or unable to respond due to illness; but is expected to return in a reasonable time.
- 2) Allegations of academic misconduct must be adjudicated prior to starting the contingency removal procedure.

Contingency removal procedure:

Step 1 – Review by graduate advisory committee

- 1) The student should make a written (email or paper) request to the department chair for initiating the contingency procedure. The request should contain justification and evidence that supports the unilateral removal request. Evidence of the aforementioned communication attempts should also be included with the request.
- 2) Within five business days of receiving the request, the department chair should attempt to contact the individual to be removed, allowing five business days for a response.
- 3) In the absence of an affirmative response, the department chair should ensure that any academic misconduct cases involving the student have been adjudicated.
- 4) The department chair should convene the student's thesis/dissertation committee for a vote on the removal within ten business days of receiving the request.
 - a. A majority vote in favor of the removal allows the department chair to authorize the removal of the committee member or advisor.
 - b. The absence of a majority vote initiates Step 2.
 - c. The graduate advisory committee should inform the department chair of the outcome of the vote within five business days, through a written report that includes a summary of their deliberations.
 - d. Within five business days of receiving this report, the department chair should share the report with the student and the committee member or advisor, inform the Office of Graduate Studies of the outcome of Step 1, and initiate Step 2 if needed.
 - e. The individual to be removed may appeal the decision in Step 1 by submitting a written request to the department chair within five days of being notified of the decision to remove them from the committee.

Step 2 – Review by departmental committee

- 1) This committee should be convened by the department chair for a vote on the removal within five business days of the conclusion of Step 1 or five business days of receiving the appeal.
 - a. All supporting documentation from Step 1, including the final report, should be forwarded to the departmental committee by the graduate advisory committee. The departmental committee has discretion to request any information or supporting documentation from the student and/or the committee member or advisor being removed.
 - b. A majority vote in favor of the removal allows the department chair to authorize the removal of the committee member or advisor.
 - c. The absence of a majority vote initiates Step 3.
 - d. The departmental committee should inform the department chair of the outcome of the vote within five days, through a written report that includes a summary of their deliberations.
 - e. Within five business days of receiving this report, the department chair should share the report with the student and the committee member or advisor, inform the Office of Graduate Studies of the outcome of Step 2, and initiate Step 3 if needed.

Approved by Graduate Council – November 2, 2022

Approved by Graduate Faculty – November 28, 2022 (see minutes and supporting information at <https://gradfac.mst.edu/graduate-faculty/>)

Step 3 – Review by college-level committee

- 1) The department chair should contact the Dean to initiate Step 3 within five business days of the conclusion of Step 2. All supporting documentation from Steps 1 and 2, including the final reports, should accompany the request. The Dean has discretion to request any information or supporting documentation from the student and/or the committee member or advisor being removed.
- 2) The case should be adjudicated at the college level within ten business days of receiving a request from the department chair. The Dean has the discretion of personally adjudicating each case or referring it to the committee designated prior to initiation of any cases.
- 3) If the case is referred to committee, in addition to at least two pre-designated members, the Dean should appoint an additional committee member from the degree-granting department. A majority vote decides the outcome.
- 4) The Dean is responsible for informing the student, the committee member or advisor, the department chair, and the Office of Graduate Studies of the decision within five business days of the conclusion of Step 3. This decision will be final and binding for all parties involved.