



2024-2025 Guidelines to Begin Research and for Prospectus

I. Design your Project

A. Limits on Registration:

- In the Design phase of the project, Master's students may enroll in a **maximum of three (3) thesis credits** before the Prospectus is approved.
- In the Design phase of the project, Doctoral students may enroll in a **maximum of six (6) dissertation credits** before the Prospectus is approved.

B. **Review Board Approvals:** Determine if you will need approval by a research review board for work involving humans, non-human vertebrate animals and cephalopods or recombinant DNA. Your mentor should help, and this step requires planning. Collection of data, and work on the project may not begin until the project has been approved by the appropriate research review board if needed. See more below.

C. **Committee Composition:** Identify the members of your committee with the help of your advisor. Before you begin collecting data, you will need to write a prospectus that has been approved by your committee chair, committee members, the department chairperson/program director, and by the Director of Graduate Studies.

D. **Plan Ahead:** Projects undertaken prior to appropriate review board approval and approval of the prospectus by the Director of Graduate Studies may be denied and the project deemed invalid and not allowed to be used as part of the thesis or dissertation.

II. Research Review Board Approvals

A. If your project involves humans, animals, or recombinant DNA, you may need approval from the appropriate committee before beginning your research and before submission of the prospectus.

B. To ensure compliance with federal, state, and university requirements for conducting research, CMU has several boards charged with oversight of research conducted in their respective areas. Contact the Office of Research Compliance (989-774-1152).

- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves research with human subjects
- Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC) approves research with non-human vertebrate animals and cephalopods
- Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) approves research with recombinant DNA

III. Committee Selection and Graduate Faculty Status

- A. All committee chairs and committee members must possess graduate faculty status. Students can contact Graduate Studies (989-774-3873) to verify a committee member's status. Graduate Faculty Status applications are available on the [Graduate Studies website](#).
- B. Students should consult their Advisor and/or their Program Handbook for the process in selecting a committee chairperson and at least two additional committee members.
- C. The advisor may, or may not, be the committee chairperson depending on the academic discipline. The committee chair must be in the student's research discipline.
- D. In addition to the chair, at least one more committee member must be a CMU faculty member; however, this person can be from outside of the student's department.
- E. Additional committee members may be non-CMU faculty members who have been awarded Graduate Faculty status.

IV. Writing and Submitting the Prospectus

- A. Students write a two-part Prospectus for Graduate Studies.
 - Technical Synopsis (2-page maximum, include information on the samples/data/information to be collected, no references)
 - Layperson Summary (one-paragraph maximum, no technical language)
 - **NOTE:** the Graduate Studies Prospectus is not the same format as your program's Prospectus. It is not linked to the defense of your prospectus if required by your Program.
- B. Submission Requirements
 - a. Approval memo/letter/email from the appropriate review board (if applicable)
 - b. The prospectus form must be submitted and completed through DocuSign. A link to the form is available on the [Graduate Studies website](#). Make sure you have all of the items in part A and B ready prior to routing the form.