

Moderating the Live Dissertation Defense

Chairs are encouraged to meet with their candidate beforehand to go over these details and expectations.

1 Opening the defense

- The Committee Chair starts the meeting a few minutes past the scheduled time so all audience members can finish logging in.
- The Chair introduces the student and the committee, then goes over the entire defense logistics.
- **The Committee Chair is required to record the defense.**

2 Committee questions

- Once the defense is over, the Chair reintroduces the committee.
- The Chair may ask their questions first, then invites each Member to ask theirs.
- Chairs are encouraged to prepare for this and may take notes during the student's defense as they see fit.

IMPORTANT

After committee questions, please be sure to ask the **Program Chair / present faculty** next.

3 General audience questions

- Once the committee is satisfied with its questions and the student's responses, the Chair opens the floor to dissertation-specific questions from the general audience.
- Limit this to approximately **10 minutes**.

4 Committee confers on the defense opinion

- Held in a **Zoom Breakout Room** created by the Chair, or by conference call — phone numbers exchanged between participants, with the Chair initiating the call.
- **Pause the recording** while the committee confers, and resume it upon return.

THE COMMITTEE SHAPES ITS DECISION ON

Four possible outcomes

1 Pass, no edits

All substantive questions raised during the oral defense must **already be addressed** in the written dissertation. If a new question is raised that the written document does not already cover, it may NOT be approved with no changes.

2 Pass, minor edits

Grammatical changes, incorrect dates, transposed numbers in data, incorrect titles on graphs, charts or images. May also cover a minor point raised orally — for example an IRB process question, easily answered but not in the written dissertation.

3 Conditional pass

Any error in **written** factual details, results, findings, methods or design is a major edit — errors in the writing of the material, not in the work. Any substantive question raised during the question portion, by a committee member, the fulltime doctoral studies & academic research core team, or any observer, **must** be answered in full during the oral defense **and** be included in the final written dissertation.

4 Does not pass the oral defense

The written dissertation is accepted with or without minor edits — or it is not accepted because major edits are needed.

5 Announcing the decision, and closing

- The Chair presents the committee's decision and outcome; the other members then have time for their comments.
- The Chair calls on the **Program Chair** to share their thoughts and congratulations, and then the **Dean**.
- Finally, the Chair may ask the student whether they wish to share their thoughts.
- **The Chair ends the defense recording at the close of the defense.**