

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

The oral dissertation defense is scheduled by the chair of the committee and the coordinator of doctoral programs. For scheduling to take place, the student must submit the **REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO SCHEDULE DISSERTATION DEFENSE** form with signatures of all committee members. Signatures on this form indicate that the committee members have received the final draft of the dissertation and have committed to attend and participate in the defense at the indicated date and time.

Announcement of the defense will be made in the appropriate university news media and communicated to appropriate members of the university community through the Office of Doctoral Programs in Education. The oral defense is open to the public; the university community and all interested individuals are encouraged to attend.

The defense is chaired by the Dissertation Committee Chair who, acting as moderator, rules on questions of procedure and protocol that may arise during the defense. The overall goal is the public presentation and defense of the study. During the defense, the committee will explore, with the candidate, research methods employed in conducting the study, findings and conclusions revealed by the study and contributions the study is expected to offer in the decision making processes. In this way, the candidate and examiners reach a more extensive insight into the candidate's research area.

During the oral defense, all members of the Dissertation Committee must be present and must render a judgment on the candidate's performance. Should any member of the committee be unable to attend, a substitute for the oral defense may be provided. Specific requirements for this substitution are noted in the Student and Faculty Handbook on the website (www.marshall.edu/gsepd/edd).

1. Once assembled, the chairperson should introduce the committee and the candidate
 - a. Introductions should be non – biased toward the oral defense.
 - b. The committee chair should explain the purpose of the session and the decisions to be made.
 - c. The committee chair should introduce the candidate giving brief details of prior degrees, research experience and other relevant information.
 - d. As moderator, the chair should indicate the candidate's allotted presentation time, question and answer session for the committee, question and answer time for the public and whether the candidate can be interrupted during the presentation.
 - e. Any handouts etc. should be distributed prior to beginning the oral presentation.

2. Dissertation Defense Result
 - a. The candidate and non-committee attendees will be dismissed after all questions for the candidate have been addressed.

- b. Committee members will discuss and vote on the pass / fail status of (1) the oral defense and (2) the written document. The decision to pass a candidate in either category may include no more than one negative committee member vote. After the decisions have been made, the chair should call the candidate back into the room to privately discuss the decision(s) with the committee.
 - c. Signatures should be obtained on both the Approval of the Oral Dissertation and the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation forms. If extensive editing of the writing document is required of the candidate, committee members may withhold their signatures pending the required changes, or the members may sign to approve the written document, while the chair withholds his or her signature, pending final approval of the corrected document.
 - d. In the event that the committee votes not to pass the student on either or both the written document or oral defense, the committee is under no obligation to permit the candidate to repeat either portion of the defense. A decision to allow another defense must be made by the committee, and should be documented in writing to the student and to the Office of Doctoral Programs in Education. Specific requirements should be clearly delineated.
 - e. A second opportunity to present a dissertation defense may occur no sooner than one month after the first attempt, and no later than two semesters (including summer) after the first attempt. During this time, the student must continue to register for Dissertation Research Hours (LS 797 or CI 797). Failure to pass the second defense will result in the termination of the student's enrollment in the Doctoral Program.
3. After a successful defense, the student should work with the chair to prepare the document for publication.

Checklist for the Dissertation Defense

Prior to the Day of Defense:

Has the candidate prepared a complete document to the satisfaction of the chair?

Has the student provided the committee members the complete document three weeks prior to the requested date?

Has the student applied for graduation?

Has the student completed a REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO SCHEDULE DISSERTATION DEFENSE form?

Is the room for the defense scheduled, along with needed equipment?

On the Day of Defense:

Welcome the committee and guests to the dissertation defense

Introduce members of the committee

Introduce the candidate to the guests

Introduce guests if appropriate

Explain the process of the defense

The candidate's presentation

Question and answers from the committee

Question and answers from guests

Committee meets privately to make two decisions

Candidate returns to meet privately with committee

Proceed with defense. Note: the chairperson is "in charge" of the defense and should take the leading role in assuring the smooth completion of process.

Sample Script

Good afternoon (morning) and welcome to the doctoral defense of

Our purpose today is twofold. We will be hearing the presentation of the research study, and the committee will discuss the written document which we have in hand.

(The candidate's) committee members are with us today. They are.....(introduce members by name with committee role, program assignment, or other information as appropriate).

We are also glad to have with us today family, friends and other interested people who are here in support of (the candidate).

(If desired, guests can be introduced at this time.)

Now, I'd like to introduce you to (the candidate), a candidate for the doctoral degree in Education with a major in..... and an area of emphasis of.....

(The candidate) has previous degrees in..... and currently is working as.....

After (the candidate) spends the next (20) minutes presenting his/her research, the committee members will take a few minutes to question and discuss the information and research. At the conclusion of the committee members' questions, the candidate will take questions from the guest. Questions and comments from the guests should be held until this time. After this, the candidate and all those not on the committee will be excused, while the committee meets to discuss the outcome of the defense.

(The candidate), we are ready for your presentation.

(Candidate makes oral presentation).

Thank you! If you'd like to be seated, the committee has questions for you .