PhD Thesis Defence Process

January 2024
Agenda

What to Expect:

- Before You Initiate
- Initiating the Defence
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  - Standard (Traditional)
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Are You Ready?
Before You Initiate

- Has your Supervisor run your thesis through iThenticate?
  - Required effective December 1, 2023.
- Does your Supervisory Committee agree that you are ready to defend?
  - Circulate dissertation
- Work backward from a proposed defence date to target your initiation date
  - Decide if you are targeting a particular convocation
  - Sessional dates: [https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=48&navoid=9532](https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=48&navoid=9532)
- Attend other defences (if permitted)
- Know your subject matter
Initiating the Thesis Defense Process

Process is initiated online in the Mosaic. Log into Student Centre and under ‘Academics’ select ‘other academics’:
Initiating the Thesis Defense Process

Select Thesis Intent -> Defend my Thesis:
Initiating the Thesis Defense Process

Select Degree and Program before selecting “Next” button:
Initiating the Thesis Defense Process

Review your Supervisory Committee (names, roles, emails). If incorrect or incomplete, please contact your program Graduate Administrator. If correct, select “Next”: 

![Thesis Defence Submission](image-url)
Initiating the Thesis Defense Process

Enter the intended date for submission of your pre-defence thesis to SGS. You must select a date no less than 2 weeks away from the date of initiation. Enter your thesis title as well abstract (optional) before selecting “Submit”:
Initiating the Thesis Defense Process

Mosaic will prompt you to review your entered details to ensure accuracy before selecting “Submit” one final time:
Initiating the Thesis Defense Process

Once you have initiated the defence online:

• 3 Emails are sent:
  o One to you to confirm the initiation
  o One to your Supervisor for their input
  o One to your Grad Admin to check your committee in Mosaic

• Your Supervisor will have to select either:
  o Standard (Traditional) Stream
  o Accelerated Stream
Thesis Defence Timelines

Standard Stream

• After initiation, Supervisor nominates Externals, to be approved by Committee and Dept. Chair
• SGS reaches out to approved Externals (randomly selected)
• Student proposes date and time as well as uploads thesis
• Committee approves date
• SGS selects External, sends thesis with corresponding report
• SGS finds a Chair for the defence

Accelerated Stream

• After initiation, Supervisor nominates External, to be approved by Committee and Dept. Chair
• Once approved, Supervisor selects External, identifies the date, time, location, Chair for the defence and uploads thesis
• Committee approves date
• External is sent thesis with corresponding report
Standard Thesis Defence Timeline
Standard Thesis Defence Timeline

- Selecting the date:
Preparing for the Defence

For the defence to proceed, it needs to have the following:

- A positive report from the External one week in advance
- A Chair for the defence
  - A faculty member who has supervised a student to completion
- A minimum of 3 members from the Supervisory Committee
  - Supervisor and 2 Committee Members
- The External Examiner
  - Can be represented by an Internal Examiner if they are unable to attend
Online Defence

SGS has adapted the existing process to an online model:

- The web meeting must be conducted through either Zoom or MSTeams
- The Chair and Supervisor will receive a package including instructions and forms, and they will decide who will serve as “host” of the web meeting
- As part of the scheduling process, the “host” will need to know if attendees will be invited and will send the invitation accordingly
- Attendees should be cautioned to avoid interfering with the process
The Day of the Defence

It has finally come!

• You will receive a set of instructions from SGS to set expectations for the defence

• The Chair will ensure all participants join the web meeting and have a set of contingencies should anyone not arrive

• You will be moved to the “waiting room” so the Chair can discuss the proceedings with the Examining Committee

• Once you are invited back, you will begin with a brief statement, typically 15-20 mins
  ○ Stress the main points of your contribution and any difficulties you overcame

• This will be followed by rounds of questions by the Committee and External
  ○ The Chair will moderate the discussion

• You will be moved to the “waiting room” (and attendees removed) so that they can discuss your results

• You will be brought back to hear the results

• Either the Chair or your Supervisor should provide you with the necessary forms
Becoming Cleared to Graduate

The final steps to be completed:

• Complete your Final Thesis Submission Sheet
  o Decide whether or not you need to Embargo your thesis
  o Get sign off from Supervisor that your thesis has been run through iThenticate
  o Get sign off on the completion of changes (if required)
  o Hand it in to your Grad Admin so they can submit a Service Request
• Upload your thesis to MacSphere [https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/](https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/)
  o You cannot make changes after it has been uploaded
  o The date of your upload will be used as your cleared to graduate date
• Verify that all your program’s milestones have been met by running your advisement report
  o Your final thesis will be added as a milestone
Resources

To help with your preparations:

• School of Graduate Studies website
  https://gs.mcmaster.ca/doctoral-degree

• Guide for the Preparation of Master’s and Doctoral Theses

• Graduate Calendar - Section 3.2 Thesis
  https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catid=48&navoid=9526#3-2-theses

• Graduate Writing Resources
  https://gs.mcmaster.ca/current-students/resources/graduate-writing/