PhD Thesis Defence Process

January 2024

McMaster University

Agenda

What to Expect:

- o Before You Initiate

- o Initiating the Defence

- o Thesis Defence Timeline

  - Standard (Traditional)

  - Accelerated

- o Preparing for the Defence

- o Online Defence

- o The Day of the Defence

- o Becoming Cleared to Graduate

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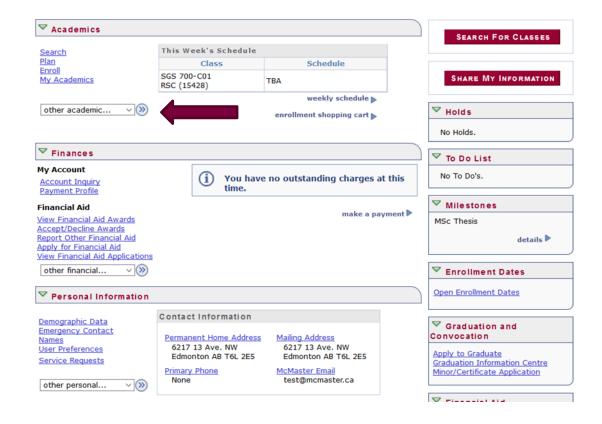# Are You Ready?

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
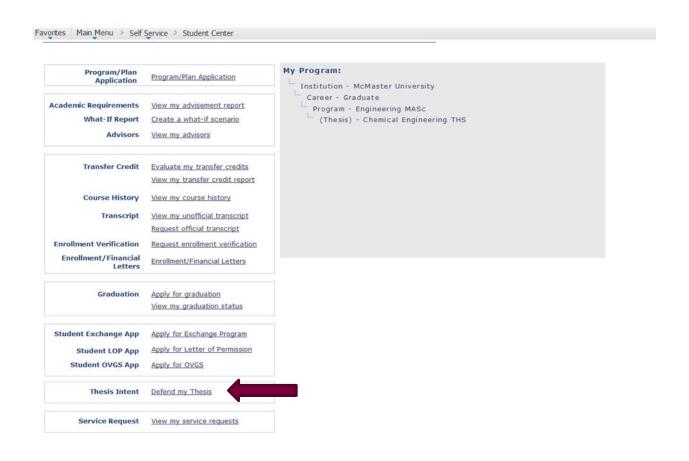- Attend other defences (if permitted)
- Know your subject matter

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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
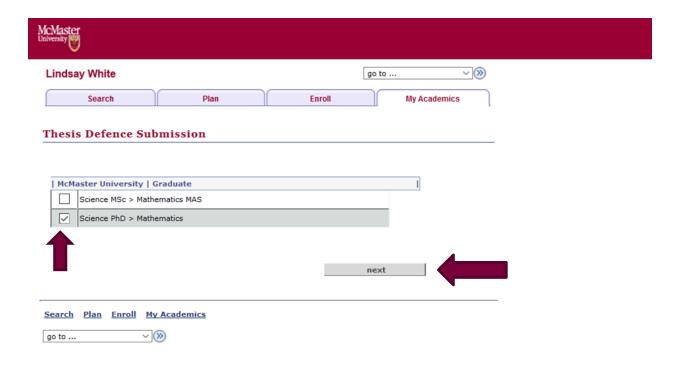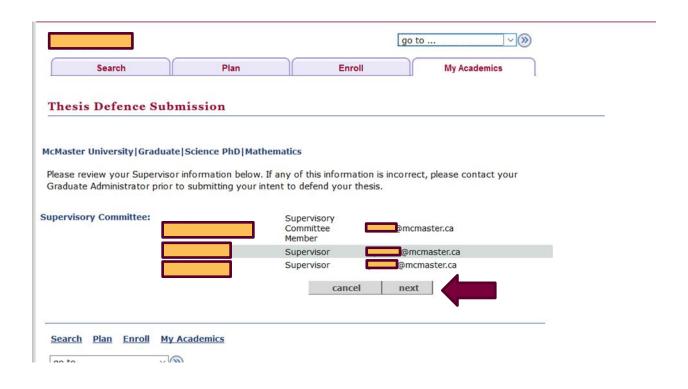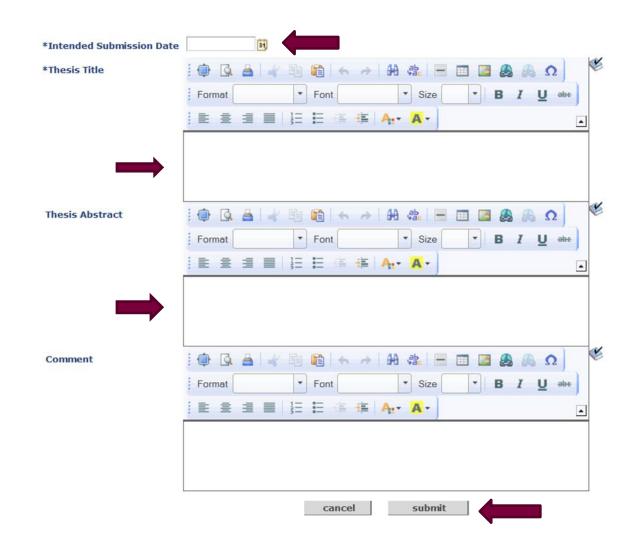
Select Thesis Intent -> Defend my Thesis:

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":
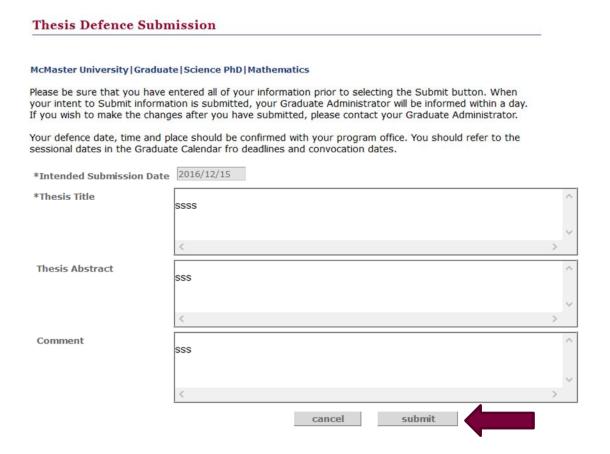
Initiating the Thesis Defense Process

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":

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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:
  - One to you to confirm the initiation
  - One to your Supervisor for their input
  - One to your Grad Admin to check your committee in Mosaic

- Your Supervisor will have to select either:
  - Standard (Traditional) Stream
  - Accelerated Stream

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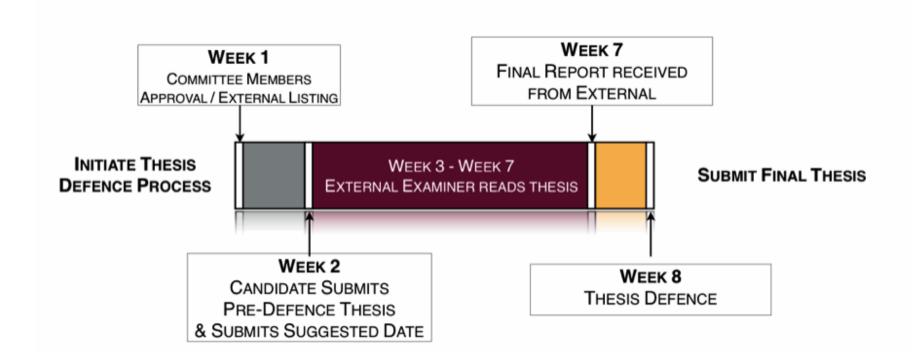
Thesis Defence Timelines

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

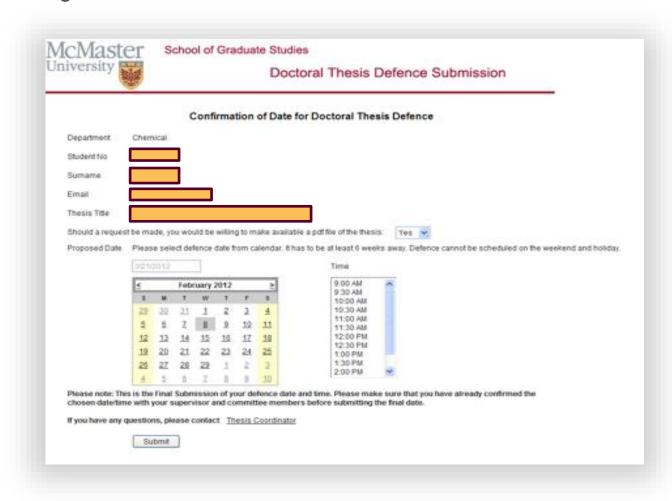- External is sent thesis with corresponding report

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Standard Thesis Defence Timeline

WEEK 1
COMMITTEE MEMBERS
APPROVAL / EXTERNAL LISTING

WEEK 7
FINAL REPORT RECEIVED
FROM EXTERNAL

**INITIATE THESIS
DEFENCE PROCESS**

WEEK 3 - WEEK 7
EXTERNAL EXAMINER READS THESIS

SUBMIT FINAL THESIS

WEEK 2
CANDIDATE SUBMITS
PRE-DEFENCE THESIS
& SUBMITS SUGGESTED DATE

WEEK 8
THESIS DEFENCE

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Standard Thesis Defence Timeline

- Selecting the date:

Preparing for the Defence

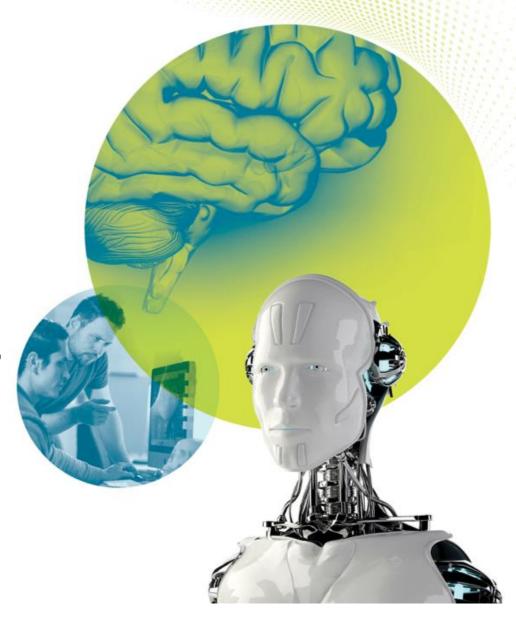For the defence to proceed, it needs to have the following:

- 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

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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

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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

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Becoming Cleared to Graduate

The final steps to be completed:

- Complete your Final Thesis Submission Sheet
  - Decide whether or not you need to Embargo your thesis
  - Get sign off from Supervisor that your thesis has been run through iThenticate
  - Get sign off on the completion of changes (if required)
  - Hand it in to your Grad Admin so they can submit a Service Request
- Upload your thesis to MacSphere https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/
  - You cannot make changes after it has been uploaded
  - 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
  - Your final thesis will be added as a milestone

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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
  https://gs.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/10/Prep_Guide_Masters_and_Doctoral_Theses_August-2021.pdf

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

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

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GOOD LUCK!

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