PhD in Translational Health Science (THS)

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (GW)
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES (SMHS)
CLINICAL RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP (CRL)

Washington, D.C.

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**DISSERTATION DEFENSE PROCEDURES**

The dissertation defense for the PhD in Translational Health Sciences includes some components that are required and other that are at the discretion of the dissertation chair. Those that are required are in regular type face; those that are at the chair’s discretion are in italics.

1. **Defense Attendees**

The dissertation defense is an open proceeding meaning any members of the GW community can attend and listen to the oral presentation and examination. Whether the audience is permitted to ask questions is at the discretion of the chair, in consultation with the candidate. The oral examination is conducted by the dissertation committee and led by the dissertation chair. Two readers who are knowledgeable about the topic and have not been directly involved in the dissertation research read and critique the written dissertation as well as participate in the oral questioning. Only the dissertation committee and chair vote on the outcome of the oral defense. The Director of Doctoral Research (DoDR) participates in the oral defense as an independent advocate and adjudicator on questions of procedure and protocol. In the event that the DoDR is a committee member or chair of the dissertation, the Academic Program Director will serve in that role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Attends Oral Exam.</th>
<th>Asks Questions at Exam.</th>
<th>Reads/Critiques Written Dissertation</th>
<th>Votes on Outcome of Exam.</th>
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<td>Chair</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Advocate</td>
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2. **Pre-examination Preparation**

The timeline below is a recommended guide to assist the candidate, Chair, and committee members in preparing for the defense.

- **6 Weeks Prior to Defense**: The Chair files the Request for Defense form (CP1), confirming to the DoDR the committee have all agreed that the written portion of the dissertation is acceptable to proceed to defense. No materials should be circulated to the Readers until the DoDR has counter-signed this form.

- **5 Weeks Prior to Defense**: The Chair and candidate identify the readers and invite their participation in the oral defense. Upon securing agreement to participate, file the Designation of Dissertation Readers form (CP2).

The Program Administrator and Conference Coordinator will work with the candidate and Chair to set up the virtual conference and create a link that can be distributed in the announcement. The IMPACT team has developed a ‘run of show’ guide (included in this document) that should be modified as appropriate by the Chair and candidate and shared with committee members, and readers.

- **4 Weeks Prior to Defense**: The version of the dissertation that is to be defended should be circulated to all examination committee members and readers at least one month prior to the examination.

- **3 Weeks Prior to Defense**: The candidate provides the Program Administrator with the announcement details, which include the names of the candidate and chair, dissertation title, and a brief (2-3 sentences) description in lay language. An example is provided later in this document.

- **2 Weeks Prior to Defense**: The Program Administrator posts the announcement. The candidate, Chair, and Conference Coordinator should schedule a ‘trial run’ of the webinar within the next 10 days to
ensure video and audio capabilities are functioning.

- **1 Week Prior to Defense:** The candidate should prepare and send introductory remarks for the DoDR and Chair. At this time, the Program Administrator will send a reminder announcement of the event to the committee members, readers, and wider community.

- **Day of Defense:** The Chair, candidate, and Conference Coordinator should plan to initiate the virtual meeting link 30 minutes prior to the start of the defense to allow time for the committee and readers to join and start promptly at the scheduled time.

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<tr>
<th>6 weeks prior to exam</th>
<th>5 weeks prior to exam</th>
<th>4 weeks prior to exam</th>
<th>3 weeks prior to exam</th>
<th>2 weeks prior to exam</th>
<th>1 week prior to exam</th>
<th>Day of exam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submit Request for Dissertation Defense form</td>
<td>Latest time to identify readers</td>
<td>Circulate version of dissertation to be defended</td>
<td>Submit announcement information to Program Administrator</td>
<td>Announcement distributed with virtual meeting information</td>
<td>Schedule trial Zoom run with Conference Coordinator</td>
<td>Send reminder to Committee &amp; Readers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request to Graduate form is filed separately 6 weeks prior to end of semester</td>
<td>File Designation of Dissertation Readers</td>
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<td>2021: HS 2022: SMHS 2023: GW</td>
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### 3. Examination Procedures

The letter/email inviting the committee and readers to participate in the oral examination should outline the expectations of these members. The Chair should review these expectations with the members on the day of the exam prior to starting the exam and the general audience being admitted.

The Chair has some latitude in how the oral examination proceeds. Some chairs prefer highly structured procedures while others design more open conversations. The overall goal of the oral defense is for the candidate to demonstrate the ability to respond critically and thoughtfully about the design and implementation of their study, limitations of the study and the impact of these on interpretation of results, and future implications of the research. In other words, the candidate demonstrates the highest levels of learning: creating, evaluation, analyzing.

A traditional approach may include: a brief presentation from the candidate, two rounds of questioning, the outside examiner questioning the candidate first, and each committee member questioning the candidate for 10-15 minutes per round. The dissertation Chair does not participate in the questioning.

A more contemporary approach may include: a 30-40-minute presentation from the candidate that is appropriate for the wider research community in attendance, followed by open questioning from the readers and committee, concluding questions from the chair.

In selecting a format, be mindful that these defenses are open to members of the wider community and a presentation that is too brief, too scant on details, or assumes the audience has already read the dissertation,
will be less likely to be understood by the audience.

Regardless of the format chosen, the chair should cover the following issues with the committee at the time of invitation and again at prior to the start of the exam:
1. the format of questioning
2. the order of questioning
3. time allocated for questioning
4. the time when the audience will leave the proceedings


In the PhD in THS program, oral examinations may be conducted in virtually. There is no expectation that the candidate, chair, committee, or readers be physically present but all must have audio and video capabilities on their computer so that they can be both seen and heard by others at all times. The program manager will work with the candidate to ensure the committee are able to log in to the virtual conference. It is recommended that the audience observes the candidate presentation and reader/committee questions only and does not ask questions. However, if the candidate and chair determine audience engagement is appropriate they should work with the program manager to coordinate this.

1. Opening the examination: It is recommended that the Director of Doctoral Research welcomes the audience, family members & friends of the candidate and announces that this is a final examination in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a PhD in Translational Health Sciences. The Director then introduces the chair of the research briefly and invites the Chair to introduce the candidate.

2. Chair’s Welcome: The Chair introduces the candidate briefly with information about their background, their study.

3. Candidate’s Welcome: The candidate thanks the Chair, thanks/welcomes the audience, and introduces the committee members and readers. This should be brief but sufficient so the audience appreciates these individuals’ expertise and role in the examination.

4. Candidate’s Presentation: The candidate presents their work using PowerPoint and other digital audio-visual material as appropriate. The length of the presentation should be between 20-30 minutes and no longer than 45 minutes. The length and content are determined between the Chair and the candidate but should reflect the following considerations:
   a) Readers have read the written material but have not been engaged in the study so may need context for why methodological decisions were made
   b) The audience may be knowledgeable about the conduct of research but new to issues in health sciences so will need some context relative to the gap in knowledge/practice the study attempts to fill
   c) The concept of translational health sciences and the way in which the candidate’s study advances the field of THS should play a central role in the presentation.

5. The Oral Examination: At the conclusion of the presentation, the Chair thanks the candidate and calls on the readers and committee members to begin the questioning. The order of questioning is determined by the chair. Some chairs prefer to begin with the readers, others prefer to begin with committee members. In general, because of the Chair’s close involvement in the design and implementation of the study, her/his questions should be minimal and asked when all other questioning is completed. The Chair should generally avoid answering questions for the candidate. However, this is a public defense, the goal of which is for the candidate to demonstrate mastery of the intellectual domain and their methodology,
analytic procedures and interpretation. As such, the Chair is charged with ensuring the examination is rigorous, fair, and collegial. Questioning is not designed to ‘trip’ the candidate up and should reflect the goals and spirit of translational research which embodies the principles of team science, including integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, collaboration, and the inclusion of stakeholder voices. The Chair should determine to what extent collegial conversation and questioning among committee members and readers is part of the proceedings.

6. Concluding the Public Portion of the Examination: When the questioning is completed, the Chair thanks the audience and concludes the public portion of the examination. The Conference Coordinator will close the webinar and cease the recording of that portion of the examination. The Conference Coordinator will also coordinate with the Chair to place the candidate in a ‘waiting room.’

7. Determining the Outcome of the Examination: The Chair summarizes the merits of the dissertation and the student’s performance at the examination. Each reader and dissertation committee member offers an evaluation of the dissertation and examination.

The examination committee decides separately on the outcome of the oral examination and the written dissertation. The outcomes of the oral examination are pass or fail. The outcomes of the written dissertation are pass, conditional pass, and fail. The decisions to pass the dissertation and the oral examination are reached by a majority vote. In rare cases, where there is a tie, the Director of Doctoral Research (or appointee) casts the deciding vote. The Chair records the committee’s decision and all members sign the Outcome of Written Dissertation and Oral Examination form (CP3). Readers may contribute to the discussion but do not cast a vote and do not sign the form. Generally, the readers stay in the meeting while the voting occurs in order to be present when the candidate is invited back into the meeting to hear the outcome. Whether the readers participate in the committee’s deliberation and/or remain on the call during voting is at the discretion of the chair.

For the dissertation decision of conditional pass, the committee should clearly detail what revisions need to be made. The examination committee must also decide which members wish to see and approve the revised dissertation, as well as the deadline by which revisions must be submitted. This information is included in the Outcome of Written Dissertation and Oral Examination form. Ordinarily, only the dissertation chair reviews the revisions, but other committee members can be involved if they wish. Regardless, the chair records clear instructions on the Outcome of Written Dissertation and Oral Examination form.

8. Announcing the Outcome to the Candidate: Once these matters have been decided, the candidate is invited back with the committee. The chair coordinates with the Conference Coordinator to readmit the student (or can do this themselves). The chair announces the results of the examination, reviews any required revisions to the written dissertation and the timeframe for completing these. The dissertation chair submits Outcome of Written Dissertation and Oral Examination form. This form routes through all committee members, and DoDR for signature, and to candidate for acknowledgement of receipt.

9. Announcing the Outcome to the Audience: Once the Committee has concluded its work, they, the Readers, and the candidate rejoin the audience, where the Chair announces the result and the audience can congratulate the candidate.

Once the student submits all the corrections and the Chair and requested committee members approve the revisions, the Chair and committee members sign the Final Approval of Requested Dissertation Revisions form (CP4).
ENSURING THE QUALITY AND TRANSLATIONAL NATURE OF THE DISSERTATION AND ORAL DEFENSE
FOR THE PHD IN TRANSLATIONAL HEALTH SCIENCES

To graduate, the candidate completes a written dissertation and an oral examination regarding their dissertation research. Ensuring the quality of both written dissertation and the oral defense is the primary concern of the committee. The quality of the defense is enhanced by including readers who bring perspectives of those not involved in the research.

The dissertation research must address a tangible problem in contemporary healthcare and make a significant contribution to the knowledge base of translational health science. The dissertation topic and scope are agreed to by the candidate, chair, and committee members and must reflect excellence in application of theory/conceptual model, research methods, and team science.

The purpose of both the written dissertation and the oral examination is for the candidate to demonstrate the highest levels of learning: creating, evaluating, analyzing. The conduct of the research must have scientific merit and employ rigorous research methods. The translation of knowledge to practice must be the central question addressed by the dissertation research. In completing the dissertation and oral examination, the candidate should demonstrate the ability to critically synthesize literature in multiple domains relevant to the research topic, discuss the theoretical and translational importance of the topic, discuss and demonstrate the principles of translational health science including team science, and discuss the relevance and implications of the findings for future research in the area. In all aspects the research must demonstrate the core principles of translational health science including integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, team science, and the inclusion of stakeholder voices throughout the research process from problem definition to interpretation of results, and where applicable, publication.

The core competencies this program expects students to achieve by the conclusion of their dissertation are:

a) Create new knowledge through cross-disciplinary inquiry including: 1) Conduct systematic reviews of the literature to describe the evidence practice gap and 2) Utilize critical appraisals of the literature to inform translational research in health care.

b) Appraise barriers and facilitators to translating research in practice and policy

c) Communicate effectively across diverse setting and stakeholder groups to include 1) conflict management and resolving matters in dispute and 2) interpersonal relationship skills for team effectiveness

d) Engage in collaborative leadership including: 1) Demonstrate strategies for establishing a collaborative environment 2) Practice behaviors that facilitate adaptation to changing environments and expectations and 3) Apply strategies that facilitate goal attainment across the research team

e) Facilitate the development of shared mental models which is the shared knowledge that members of the research team use in order to collaborate in the conduct of their science.

f) Incorporate diverse perspectives within the planning and implementation of a translational research project in a way which accounts for diversity in all aspects of the research process.
g) Design an evidence-based research proposal: 1) Formulate research questions that yield insights for health, clinical practice and/or policy innovation; 2) Appraise how stakeholders will engage in translational research; 3) Integrate appropriate regulatory and professional standards; 4) Select valid study designs; 5) Formulate an evaluation approach that integrates process and outcomes

h) Implement, manage, and monitor a translational research project in a professional and ethical manner

i) Interpret the evaluation results to derive conclusions about intervention/innovation efficacy and effectiveness make recommendations that inform future research, practice and policy

j) Facilitate the dissemination of knowledge to future research, practice and policy
PhD in THS Dissertation Defense

RUN OF SHOW

30 minutes to ETA: Initiate Zoom meeting
- Conference Coordinator starts Zoom meeting, everyone except the audience joins

INSERT ZOOM Meeting information here

30 mins to ETA: Preparations
- Conference Coordinator makes chair and herself Co-Hosts
- Conduct mic checks
- Student tests sharing of slides/screen
- Committee members rename themselves for sorting (e.g. @Firstname LastName)
  - Feature found as option in list of participants window panel
  - Using the @ puts all those names at the top and makes them easier to identify

5-15 mins to ETA: Chair reviews procedures with the committee
- Conference Coordinator places student in breakout/waiting room
- Committee reviews questions to be asked and order and assures there are no duplicate questions
- Readmit student for final preparations
- Proposed Order of Questioning
  - Use this space to list the order in which committee members and readers will ask questions

5 mins to ETA: Audience is admitted from Waiting Room
- Conference Coordinator asks them to please remain on mute
- Conference Coordinator mutes anyone who hasn't muted themselves by the start of the defense.

Defense: Director of Doctoral Research (or Program Director) begins the defense proceeding
- DoDR tells the audience how things will work.
  - Good morning everyone. I am Dr. Trudy Mallinson, and I am the Director of Doctoral Studies for the PhD in Translational Health Sciences. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the doctoral defense of [INSERT CANDIDATE NAME] in partial completion of the requirements of the PhD in Translational Health Sciences in the Department of Clinical Research and Leadership in the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences. We are honored to welcome so many of CANDIDATE’s family, friends, and colleagues to this exciting event.
  - Some housekeeping notes as we get started. Your microphones have been placed on mute; we ask that you remain on mute throughout the presentation by the candidate and oral questioning by the committee. We also ask that you do not use the chat feature during the presentation or oral questioning. We ask that you do not join the webinar by phone. Once the dissertation presentation has begun no one will be admitted to the presentation. If you lose your connection, you will not be readmitted. We are not asking you to turn off your videos but please be mindful of distracting backgrounds and movement so as to avoid distracting the candidate. Today’s presentation is being recorded so please keep your microphones muted throughout.
  - The Doctoral dissertation defense is the culminating event in a candidate’s progress towards being awarded the degree of doctor of philosophy in Translational Health Sciences. To reach this stage, the committee has already positively reviewed and assessed the written dissertation material and determined that the candidate is ready for the oral defense. The purpose of this oral dissertation defense is for the candidate to demonstrate mastery of the
A Guide to Planning the Dissertation Defense

material. A successful defense and submission of the written dissertation represent an important transition from student to member of the Academy.

- The purpose of both the written dissertation and the oral examination is for the candidate to demonstrate the highest levels of learning: creating, evaluating, analyzing. The candidate must demonstrate that they have conducted research that has scientific merit using rigorous research methods. The translation of knowledge to practice must be the central question addressed by the dissertation research. The candidate must demonstrate that s/he can critically synthesize literature in multiple domains relevant to the research topic, discuss the theoretical and translational importance of the topic, discuss and demonstrate the principles of translational health science including team science, and discuss the relevance and implications of the findings for future research in the area. In all aspects, the research must demonstrate the core principles of translational health science including integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, team science, and the inclusion of stakeholder voices throughout the research process from problem definition to interpretation and dissemination of results. Unlike PhDs in other disciplines, research in translational health sciences is not a solitary endeavor but involves multi-disciplinary and collaborative relationships, skilled communication, systems thinking, and boundary crossing in order to solve challenging health care problems. We hope that you will see these skills of reflected in the collegial exchanges our candidate enjoys with his/her committee members during this defense.

Without further ado, I would like to introduce Dr. CHAIR’S NAME, who is the chair for the doctoral dissertation. Dr. CHAIR’S NAME is RANK in the DEPARTMENT, COLLEGE. ANY RELEVANT DETAILS.

CHAIR: Thank you, Dr. Mallinson. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you CANDIDATE’S NAME. CANDIDATE will present her doctoral dissertation research titled: DISSERTATION FULL TITLE. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS. Today s/he will present her/his research that examines BRIEF LAY DESCRIPTION OF STUDY.

The following may be modified by the chair as appropriate

- This doctoral defense provides both the committee members and readers the opportunity to reflect on the candidate’s work as a whole and how it will inform future academic research. Readers serve an important role in this regard by bringing new perspectives and insights to the work. I want to extend my gratitude to our esteemed readers for today’s defense who will be introduced to you shortly. We know the time and effort you have put into your thoughtful reviews and we are grateful for your commitment to our program.

- The procedure for today’s defense will be as follows: PROVIDE DETAILS OF THE PROCEDURE. AN EXAMPLE IS PROVIDED BELOW BUT THIS IS JUST AN EXAMPLE.

Jen will introduce her committee and readers to you. Then she will present to the committee the results of her research for about 30-35 minutes. At the conclusion of her presentation, each committee member will, in turn, ask her a specific question. The order of questioning will be: Dr. Davidson, Dr. Papdimitriou, Dr. Van der Wees, Dr. Carlozzi, and Dr. Schultz. After a committee member asks a question and Jen responds, other committee members may ask clarifying and follow-up questions. When that line of questioning is complete, I will ask the next committee member or reader to ask their question. Each round of questions will take about 10 minutes. When all questions have been asked, the committee will retire to a break out room to deliberate. Jen will be placed in another breakout room, and you the audience, will remain in this main room. When the committee has determined their decision, Jen will join them in the break out room to receive the decision. After that, the committee and candidate will return to the main room to share the results with you all. Without more ado, I will turn the proceedings over to Jennifer. Karen, can you please begin the recording.
Chair indicates to Conference Coordinator when to begin recording.
Conference Coordinator continues to admit any other audience members Waiting Room who are a few minutes late and immediately mutes them.

5 mins: Candidate begins defense presentation

- Begin sharing slides.
- Conference Coordinator turns OFF chat.
- No one else enters the meeting until after candidate finishes defense.

40 mins: (approx) - Committee / discussion / Q&A begins.

- The Chair is free to arrange this however they wish and example is provided below. This is just an example.
- **EXAMPLE**
  - Chair: Thank you Jen for an excellent presentation. I will turn the floor to Dr. Leslie Davidson, who will ask her question.
  - Are there other questions from the committee or readers?
  - Thank you Dr. Davidson. Dr. Papadimitrou, will you ask your question?
  - Are there other questions from the committee or readers?
  - Thank you Dr. Papadimitrou. Dr. Van Der Wees, will you ask your question?
  - Are there other questions from the committee or readers?
  - Thank you Dr. Van Der Wees. Dr. Carlozzi, will you ask your question?
  - Are there other questions from the committee or readers?
  - Thank you Dr. Carlozzi. Dr. Schulz, will you ask your question?
  - Are there other questions from the committee or readers?
  - Chairs question ...
  - As chair, I want to thank our candidate, the committee, and readers for an excellent discussion today. Jen, you will now be placed in a break out room by yourself. Committee and readers, we will now be placed in the break out room.

1 hour 15 mins (approx): Committee retires to deliberate

- Conference Coordinator moves committee into their own breakout room
- Conference Coordinator moves candidate into her/his solo breakout room.
- Audience remains in main room

1 hour 15 mins – 1 hour 45 mins (approx.): Deliberations.

- Chair takes notes and summarizes the committee’s comments.
- Committee makes two votes, one for doctoral dissertation, one for oral defense.
- When the committee is done, Chair texts Conference Coordinator they are ready.
- Conference Coordinator admits candidate to the committee room and they announce the results to candidate

1 hour 45 mins (approx.): Results announced

- Conference Coordinator ends breakout rooms
- Chair announces the results to audience
ANNOUNCEMENT INFORMATION

Provide the Program Administrator with the following details:

1. Candidate’s Name
2. Dissertation Chair’s Name and Degree
3. Date and Time of the Dissertation Defense
4. Full Dissertation Title
5. Brief description of the research (2-3 sentences) in lay language

Note: An example of how the Announcement will look is provided below.

The PhD in Translational Health Sciences Program is proud to announce the Dissertation Proposal Defense of:

PhD Candidate: Kevin Bugin

Modelling Cross-Disciplinary Integration in FDA Multidisciplinary and Integrated Reviews for New Drug Products: A phenomenological descriptive comparative case study

Dissertation Committee Chair: Gaetano Lotrecchiano, PhD

December 21, 2020, 3-5 pm ET

Cross-disciplinary integration is a key feature of interdisciplinary research and the collaborative form is often a desired outcome of Team Science endeavors. In recent years, FDA has sought to increase cross-disciplinary integration in its new drug product marketing application reviews, going as far as developing and implementing in 2019 a new interdisciplinary focused process and integrated review document. While increased cross-disciplinary integration is sought, FDA and in fact the Science of Team Science, lacks an approach to objectively evaluate integration and enable comparisons. This phenomenological descriptive comparative case study has identified, modelled, and comparatively analyzed instances of collaborative integration occurring in FDA review teams from a case involving the new interdisciplinary review and a case involving the prior multidisciplinary review.

This dissertation defense is open and will be held virtually. Participants are requested to RSVP to receive the link to the presentation.
## Roles and Responsibilities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Committee Members</th>
<th>Readers</th>
<th>DoD/R/Program Director</th>
<th>Program Administrator</th>
<th>Conference Coordinator</th>
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### Forms

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<tr>
<th>Form Description</th>
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### Scheduling Defense

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<td>Creating digital announcement and distributing</td>
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### Setting Up the Virtual Conference

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<th>Readers</th>
<th>DoD/R/Program Director</th>
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<td>Creating the Zoom meeting link</td>
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<td>Opening Zoom meeting 30 mins prior on day of defense</td>
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<td>Setting up &amp; managing waiting rooms</td>
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### Managing the Defense

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Committee Members</th>
<th>Readers</th>
<th>DoD/R/Program Director</th>
<th>Program Administrator</th>
<th>Conference Coordinator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revising and distributing the Run-of-Show</td>
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<td>Introduction to PhD in THS, Welcome, meeting etiquette</td>
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<td>Introduction of the candidate</td>
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<td>Introduction of the committee and readers</td>
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<td>Setting rules for conversation</td>
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<td>Calling the votes</td>
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<td>Summarizing and recording comments and required revisions</td>
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<td>Announcing result to candidate</td>
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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Administrator</td>
<td>Melanie Trask</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mtrask@gwu.edu">mtrask@gwu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Coordinator</td>
<td>Ernestine Yarborough</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eyarborough@gwu.edu">eyarborough@gwu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Doctoral Research</td>
<td>Trudy Mallinson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:trudy@gwu.edu">trudy@gwu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>Samar Nasser</td>
<td><a href="mailto:snasser@gwu.edu">snasser@gwu.edu</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

How soon should I start planning for the dissertation proposal defense?
You should start planning at least six weeks before the planned defense date.

Who sends out the final dissertation draft to the committee?
Once the Chair and committee have decided the candidate is ready to defend the dissertation, the Chair should send the draft version of the dissertation to the committee and to the designated readers. This should be accompanied by a cover letter/email that includes the date and time of the defense, the roles and responsibilities of the committee member or reader, and the Zoom link information. Any other information the Chair deems necessary should be included in the letter/email.

How is the defense held?
At this time all PhD in THS dissertation defenses are held virtually using Zoom. The Program Administrator and Conference Coordinator will help you arrange this when you file the Request for Dissertation Defense form.

Who will set up the links and send out invitations with access information to the committee and reader?
The Program Coordinator will send out the Zoom link to the student and Chair. The Chair will distribute this information to the committee members and readers.

Who presides over the dissertation defense?
The Chair leads the dissertation defense. See roles and responsibilities table for further details.

How does the defense proceed? What is the order of events?
See the defense procedures and the Run of Show procedures for guidance on how order of events.

What are our options for passing the defense?
There are two decisions that are made by the Chair and committee members. For the oral examination (defense) the decisions are pass or fail. For the written dissertation, the decisions are pass, conditional pass, and fail. For conditional pass, the Chair specifies the required changes and revisions that are needed in order to pass and the timeframe in which the changes should be submitted.

What are the responsibilities during and following the defense and who takes the lead for each? For example, do we record or just document our deliberations?
See the roles and responsibilities table.

Who checks all the items for graduation?
Students must apply for graduation by the required time in the semester in which they plan to graduate. Spring: April 15 Summer: July 15 Fall: November 15

Am I forgetting anything?
This guideline is designed to help navigate planning and conduct the dissertation defense. If you have questions
that are not answered by this guide, or you have suggestions for improving the guide, please contact the Director of Doctoral Research.