

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ORAL DEFENSE

An oral defense of the dissertation is required and is conducted by the candidate's oral defense committee. The defense is concerned primarily with the dissertation or research project but also may include other information in the major field as the committee deems pertinent. The defense must be held at least three weeks before the end of the quarter in which the degree is to be granted. All members of the defense committee must receive a copy of the candidate's dissertation at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense.

The defense is expected to be held with the student present in person at DU unless extenuating circumstances make it impossible for the student to be physically present. Permission to hold a defense with the student participating by conference call, webcast or other medium should be obtained by petitioning the Senior Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Education. Petitions for faculty members to participate by conference call or other medium are not required.

Scheduling of the Oral Defense

Prior to scheduling the defense, the student and dissertation director must have established the candidate's oral defense committee in compliance with the associated policies and have submitted the Thesis/Dissertation Oral Defense Committee Recommendation form (<https://www.du.edu/graduate-education/current-student-resources/dissertation-thesis-information/>) to the Office of Graduate Education for review.

The student must make arrangements for the date and time of the oral defense with the dissertation director, committee and oral defense committee chair. Students must submit a completed Schedule of Oral Defense form (<https://www.du.edu/graduate-education/current-student-resources/dissertation-thesis-information/>) to their academic program and the Office of Graduate Education no later than four weeks prior to the date of the defense.

Conducting the Defense

The Oral Defense Committee Chair will preside over and manage the defense process. The chair is responsible for making certain that the defense is conducted in a professional manner and that the student has a fair opportunity to defend the dissertation. The chair is expected to provide opportunities for each voting member of the oral defense committee to participate in the defense and to ensure that the defense is of high quality while remaining within proper limits of inquiry. Interested faculty members, and in accordance with departmental policy, currently enrolled graduate students also may attend the oral defense. After the oral defense committee has conducted the essential examination of the candidate, questions may be asked by others present if pertinent and appropriate, as determined by the Oral Defense Committee Chair and common practice in the discipline.

When the defense is completed, the chair will request that the candidate and all other persons not on the defense committee leave the room and will call for a motion to pass or fail the candidate. A recommendation to pass can have no more than one negative vote from members of the committee. If the motion is a recommendation to pass, the committee must then agree on the conditions of the recommendation as follows:

- **Pass with no revisions** means that only grammatical, labeling or numbering changes are required. Only a limited number of sentence additions or deletions should be necessary.
- **Pass with minor revisions** indicates that the candidate will be required to reorganize portions of the manuscript and change some of the content.
- **Pass with major revisions** means that a complete chapter or chapters must be rewritten, additional tables are required and interpreted, or the general format must be changed. Responsibility for seeing that needed revisions are made rests with the dissertation director, but committee members also may require their approval before final submission.
- **Fail** indicates that the dissertation content is not of acceptable quality or that the candidate cannot defend the research. In most cases, failing the defense results in the rejection of the student's dissertation and a new or related study usually will need to be undertaken.

A candidate who fails the oral defense may petition the department/program chair for a maximum of one re-examination. The petition should include the reason for the request and committee composition. The Chair of the program will solicit input from the committee before rendering a decision. In the case the Chair is a member of the committee the petition goes to the Dean or their designee. If granted, the re-defense must be scheduled through the Office of Graduate Education and must occur within normal timelines.

The *Result of Oral Defense* form must be signed by all committee members and returned immediately to the Office of Graduate Education. The form cannot be submitted by the student. All signatures must be original. In rare occasions, when a committee member participates remotely, a faxed or scanned signature will be accepted.