

What to expect in the final weeks and/or months before your M.S. or Ph.D. Defense

1. Work with your major advisor on drafts of your thesis until the draft is ready to go to your committee.
2. Work with each of your committee members on drafts of your thesis. After the first round of comments, discuss with them a possible defense date. You should expect to work on drafts of your thesis with your committee members for as long as it takes for them to feel comfortable with your work.
3. File defense paperwork with graduate college and book a room on campus for a 3 hour window.
4. Prepare a final draft of your thesis to give to your committee at least 2 weeks in advance of your defense date. Earlier is even better.
5. Talk to your committee members to ask them if there is anything specific that they'd like you to prepare for in your defense (beyond revisions they've already given you).
6. Prepare a 40 minute public powerpoint presentation of your research. Practice your presentation well beforehand with your friends and peers. Show your major advisor the final, practiced presentation at least a week before your defense.
7. After your defense, expect 1-2 hours of questions from your committee members about your thesis and whatever else they have asked you to prepare.
8. The committee will decide whether you have earned a pass on your thesis defense. If you have earned a pass, you will be asked to make revisions, either minor or major.
9. If you have passed, your committee will give you revisions on your final draft at the end of your defense. You have a few days or so to make revisions and hand it back to your committee, or just to the committee chair, for approval.
10. If your committee chair and/or your committee approve of your final revisions, they will sign the final paperwork to certify that the thesis meets their satisfaction.
11. You will file the final paperwork for your degree.
12. When the paperwork is finalized within the graduate college, you are done! Congratulations!

Prepared by S.J. Hall, 1/14/2011