

Procedural Guidelines for the Dissertation and Ph.D. defense

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The guidelines below are intended to inform Department of Molecular & Cellular Biochemistry doctoral candidates and their advisors as to what is required by the Department and by the Graduate School for a successful dissertation defense. The procedure is somewhat complex. The items in **boldface type** are Graduate School rules that need to be adhered to as closely as possible. The lighter face type indicates additional requirements and/or suggestions based on the collective experience of the Department.

Note: At the end of this document is a summary/timeline of the actions you need to perform to complete the final steps of the PhD process, which includes links to the forms you need to submit.

Application for the degree. To be eligible for a degree, students must file an Application for Degree form in the Graduate School within 30 days after the beginning of the semester, or 15 days into the eight-week Summer Session, in which they expect to complete their work (see last page for link to submission form). Applications for degrees are valid for one year, so obviously if you don't finish within that time you will need to file it again. A good time to file this form is immediately after your committee has agreed in the Final Committee Meeting (see below) that your research phase is complete. No student may graduate if an "I" or "S" grade remains on his/her record. (Exceptions: "S" in 748, 749, 768, 769 or in graduate courses which carry no credit.)

Final committee meeting. Once the dissertation research is complete, the candidate should call a meeting of their Advisory Committee. At this meeting, the candidate should outline the contents of the proposed dissertation. Special attention should be paid to demonstrating the scope and quality of the research, the hypothesis being tested, and the conclusions that have been reached. This meeting will be greatly facilitated if the Advisory Committee has been kept informed of the candidate's research progress on a regular (at least annual) basis. If the committee is in agreement that the research phase is complete, the candidate usually begins to write the dissertation full-time. It should be noted, however, that the writing can begin at any time in the graduate student's career and that bench work can continue during the writing phase. At this time, two members of the Advisory Committee should be designated as "Readers." Along with the student's mentor, the Readers will have the special duty of ensuring that the dissertation upon which the final examination is a suitable document for the defense.

After the advisory committee has agreed that the research phase is complete, the chair of the committee should inform the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the student should file a **“Notification of Intent to Schedule a Final Exam”** online form (see last page for link). **Note that this form must be received by the Graduate School at least 8 weeks before the earliest anticipated date of the defense.** Once the Graduate School has been notified, the Dean of the Graduate School appoints an Outside Examiner. (Note: this Outside Examiner is not the same person as the Advisory Committee Member from outside the Department that has been on the candidate's committee from the beginning, but is an additional committee member that represents the Graduate School's interests). **Following the appointment of the Outside Examiner, the final examination date may be set.** Although the final exam date may be set at this time, this is usually not done until the written dissertation itself is complete. **The final exam date cannot be set until the Outside Examiner is appointed, however.**

Requirement for paper submission/publication before filing the “Notification of Intent to Schedule a Final Exam” form. The department has had an informal policy that graduate students should have at least one first author, peer-reviewed research paper published, or at least submitted for publication, before the student proceeds to the dissertation defense. This policy was put in place because of the recognized importance of publications as a measure of a successful graduate career and for the ability of the student to compete for future

positions. Starting with students that enter the Biochemistry graduate program in June 2011 and thereafter, the department will require that students must have at least one first-authored, peer-reviewed research paper published or submitted for publication before the student can submit the Notification of Intent to Schedule a Final Doctoral Examination form. Requests for exceptions to this policy by the student or the student's mentor should be brought to the attention of the DGS, who after consulting with the student, the student's mentor, and the members of the student's dissertation committee, will recommend to the department chair whether or not to allow the requested exception. The chair will then make a final decision and transmit the decision to the DGS, the student, the student's mentor, and the members of the student's dissertation committee.

The written dissertation must follow a format set by the graduate school. This format is described at the web sites: www.rgs.uky.edu/gs/ and http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/CurrentStudents/theses_prep.html. These web sites also contain up-to-date information on copyright law, plagiarism and electronic theses. You are strongly advised to visit this site as you approach the time that you will need to write the thesis. Some notes regarding the guidelines about allowable inclusion in the dissertation of cartoons/diagrams from others' published work and about inclusion of data from other member's of your laboratory are presented near the end of this document.

Once the dissertation writing is complete, the student provides copies to all members of the committee (including the outside examiner) for them to examine and determine if it meets their standards with respect to the quality of the data, writing, and figures. If it does not, the student must correct the deficiencies and provide revised copies to all committee members. Also, the student should not give the dissertation to the committee members unless it contains, in the proper format, all the elements that make up a dissertation (see detailed guidelines at http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/CurrentStudents/theses_prep.html).

Once approved, the dissertation should **NOT** be further revised until after the final examination is held. It is important that all committee members have the same version of the dissertation at the defense.

At this point, the candidate contacts all members of the Advisory Committee and the Outside Examiner and schedules a date for the exam. Once a date is found to be acceptable by all committee members, the student files the online form called the "Request for Final Doctoral Examination" (see last page for link). **The Outside Examiner and all members of the Advisory Committee must be present at the Final Exam. The Request for Final Doctoral Examination must be approved by the Graduate School at least two weeks before the scheduled date for the Final Exam. However, because the on-line request has to be reviewed and approved both by the DGS and the Graduate School, which takes time, department policy is that students must submit the online Final Exam Request form at least 3 weeks before the requested final exam date. Also, at least 17 days before the requested final exam date the DGS must receive e-mails from a majority (typically 3) of the committee members indicating that they think the dissertation is "in defensible form", which means that it contains all of the essential elements (different text sections, figures, legends, citations, etc.) required for them to evaluate the dissertation.** (Note: the best way for the DGS to receive these confirmations from the committee members is for the student to collect the e-mails and then send them to the DGS at the same time once three are obtained). The Graduate School will send announcements of the examination to all committee members and the student. The Final Exam card is sent to the DGS, who will forward it to the mentor.

The student must also schedule a room and date in which a final, public seminar is held. The campus community must be notified of the date, time, place and title of this seminar. Normally, this seminar is held immediately prior to the Final Examination, but it is permissible (with the pre-approval of the Advisory Committee and Outside Examiner) to present the seminar at a date prior to the Final Examination. All members of the Advisory Committee and the Outside Examiner must be able to attend the final seminar.

At the Final Examination, all members of the examination committee must have been given identical copies of the dissertation. The candidate is expected to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the candidate's field of study and to defend the conclusions of the dissertation. The examining committee may (and often does) require revisions of the dissertation as a consequence of this exam. At the conclusion of the examination, all members of the exam committee sign the Final Exam Card and indicate whether the student passes or fails. A simple majority of the committee need to indicate pass to enable the candidate to receive a doctorate. If the student

passes he/she must make any changes requested by committee members and then turn it into the graduate school for the official format check (send an e-mail to Kami Dibble at kami@uky.edu to schedule an appointment for the dissertation check). **The final copy of the dissertation** incorporating any revisions required by the examining committee **must be presented to the Graduate School within sixty (60) days of the Final Exam or on the last day to present a dissertation for a graduate candidate** (as defined by the Application for a Degree) **whichever is earlier. Failure to present the dissertation within 60 days may result in the student's having to be re-examined. The final copy of the dissertation must contain an Approval Sheet signed by the dissertation director and the DGS when it is submitted to the Graduate School.** Side note: The department has a policy that it will pay for the binding of three copies of the final version of your dissertation, one for the department library and the other two typically for your mentor and yourself. These copies should be presented to the DGS Staff Assistant. Also, please provide a CD containing an electronic copy of your thesis to the DGS.

Additional assorted rules:

- **FIVE YEAR RULE. All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed within 5 (five) years of the semester or summer session in which the candidate passes the qualifying exam. If this deadline is not met, the student must retake (and pass) the qualifying examination as it is currently administered by the department. Failure to pass results in the termination of degree candidacy. After passing the requalifying examination, the DGS must then petition the Graduate Council for an extension. A single extension of no more than 5 years may be granted.**
- **The Advisory Committee may be changed at the time that the Notification of Intent to Schedule a Final Exam is filed only with the approval of the Graduate Dean.**
- **A student will not be allowed to sit for the Final Examination until all "S" or "I" grades have been removed from the record.**
- **The format of the dissertation (margins, etc.) has to be approved by the library before a doctorate will be awarded.**

Rules regarding allowable inclusion of others' figures/data in your dissertation

Below are some guidelines concerning the inclusion in your dissertation of figures such as cartoons or diagrams from other people's published work and also about the use of data from experiments done by other members of your lab.

1. Using a limited number of cartoons, diagrams, etc. from reviews or papers published by other labs is permitted (these are typically found in the Introduction to the Dissertation), as long as you include a sentence at the end of the figure legend saying something like "This figure is from XXXXXX et al. (2005)" if you are using the whole figure or "This figure is modified from XXXXXX et al. (2005)" if you are using only a part of the figure.
2. Regarding using research data generated by others, this should be VERY limited and done only where it is absolutely necessary for your results to make sense, and should only be data from another member of the same laboratory. For example, if you have 4 or more figures in a chapter from your own data, maybe one other figure could be from the work of someone else in the lab (current or past member), and should be noted in the Figure legend by the sentence "This figure is from XXXXXX et al. (2005)" if it is published or "This figure is from XXXXXX et al. (submitted/in preparation)", whatever the case may be. The UK Grad School rule is that if you want to use data from a paper from your lab on which you are not first author, at the time you submit your Dissertation Approval Sheet you must also submit a signed letter from the DGS approving the inclusion of this data in the dissertation.

See the following web links for more information:

UK Grad School page that presents guidelines about how to on how to prepare dissertations:
<http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/ETDDissertationInstructions.html>

Web page describing what constitutes “Fair Use” of copyrighted material in your dissertation:
http://www.umi.com/products_umi/dissertations/copyright/AppxB.html

The Outside Examiner

As mentioned above, the Outside Examiner is appointed by the Graduate School Dean without a specific recommendation from the Biochemistry Department. The Graduate School attempts to appoint someone who has understanding of and interest in the topic of the dissertation. The role of the outside examiner is to:

- Assure that only qualified candidates receive degrees
- Insure that program standards are adequate
- Assure that the exam is administered in a fair and impartial manner

Towards this end, the Outside Examiner is given a questionnaire with the following questions:

1. The dissertation submitted was:
 - Of acceptable quality
 - Of marginally acceptable quality
 - Of unacceptable quality
2. The defense of the dissertation was:
 - Adequate
 - Marginally adequate
 - Inadequate
3. The oral examination process was conducted in such a manner as to: (multiple responses possible)
 - Require the demonstration of intellectual capacity and rigor
 - Require the demonstration of a true understanding of the dissertation and its area
 - Make manifest any weak points in the candidate's dissertation
 - Suggest a lack of intellectual capacity and rigor
4. The candidates responses to the questioning in the examination demonstrated:
 - A high degree of intellectual competence
 - An adequate degree of intellectual competence
 - A marginally acceptable degree of intellectual competence
 - An unacceptable degree of intellectual competence
5. During this examination , the candidate was treated:
 - With fairness
 - Unfairly
6. Were all members of candidate's committee present for the examination?
 - Yes
 - No

In addition, the Outside Examiner is asked to provide written comments. Summaries of these questionnaires are sent to the DGS and the Medical School Dean.

Graduate School Ph.D. Defense Requirements

Procedures, Forms, Applicable Deadlines

- ⇒ Final committee meeting After dissertation research is complete

- ⇒ Application for Degree Must be submitted to the Graduate School within 30 days after the beginning of the semester (or 15 days into the 8-week summer session)
submit via myUK : <https://myuk.uky.edu/irj/portal>

- ⇒ Notification of Intent to Schedule a Final Exam Must be submitted to the Graduate School at least 8 weeks before the earliest anticipated defense date; Graduate School will appoint an Outside Examiner.
submit via online form : http://www.research.uky.edu/cfdocs/gS/DoctoralCommittee/Selection_Screen.cfm

- Following the appointment of the Outside Examiner, the final examination date may be set

- Contact all committee members and Outside Examiner and schedule date for final exam (Outside Examiner and all committee members must be present for final exam)

- Written dissertation must follow the format set by the Graduate School (*see links at bottom of page*)

- Completed dissertation must be given to committee members for approval at least 3 weeks before exam date.

- ⇒ Copy of dissertation to Outside Examiner At least 3 weeks before the exam date (the earlier the better)

- ⇒ Request for Final Doctoral Examination Must be submitted to the Graduate School at least 3 weeks before the scheduled date for the Final Exam
submit via online form: http://www.research.uky.edu/cfdocs/gS/DoctoralCommittee/Selection_Screen.cfm

- DGS must receive written confirmation from committee majority that dissertation is “in a defensible form” at least 17 days before the expected Final Exam date.

- Schedule a room and date in which a final, public seminar is held (Outside Examiner and all committee members must be able to attend the final seminar)
Any of the office staff can schedule rooms for you, or room coordinator for your building if not in BBSRB

- ⇒ Final copies of dissertation signed by your dissertation director and the DGS Must be presented to the Graduate School within 60 days of the Final Exam or on the last day to present a dissertation for a graduate candidate
(Be sure to make appointments for your first format check [1 copy, plain paper] and final format check [2 copies, archival paper] before final deadline!)

Dissertation Preparation: http://www.research.uky.edu/gS/CurrentStudents/theses_prep.html

The menu on the right side of this page provides links to dissertation preparation assistance and an explanation of the dissertation process.

Please see DGS Assistant for archival paper