

## How to Prepare for your Dissertation Defense

### **Important links:**

Graduate Board: <https://homewoodgrad.jhu.edu/academics/graduate-board/graduate-board-oral-exams/>

Sheridan Libraries Electronic Thesis & Dissertation (ETD): <https://www.library.jhu.edu/library-services/electronic-theses-dissertations/>

### **General rules for defense scheduling:**

- Defenses may be scheduled at any time of the year.
- Students must be enrolled (registered) and not on a leave of absence.
- Students will complete an application for graduation and have it on file with the Registrar's Office prior to the defense being held.
- At this time, virtual and hybrid defenses are allowed. This is subject to change & is contingent upon Graduate Board policy. Prior to the pandemic, History defenses were required to be fully in-person.
- Students that are no longer on departmental funding should pay close attention to the grace period deadlines as outlined on the Graduate Board website. Please discuss this with Megan.
- Students that defend during the summer or winter will be considered "pre-semester" completers. Discuss this classification with Megan.
- Consult with Megan often and early – ASK QUESTIONS!

### **History Department Defense Composition:**

- The Defense or GBO (Graduate Board Oral Examination), will have a committee comprised of 5 committee members and two alternates. Alternates are not required to attend the defense unless asked to serve on the defense committee usually at the last minute.
- 3 of the 5 committee members are History Faculty members (**internal members**) including advisor(s). Two of these three History faculty members will serve as "readers" and will sign the required Reader's Letter.
- 2 of the 5 committee members will be **external** to the History Department but still within JHU.
- One of the two external members will chair the defense committee. Only a JHU full-time tenure track faculty member holding the rank of Professor, Associate Professor, or Emeritus Professor, **external** to the History Department will be eligible to serve as Chair of the GBO. The Graduate Board will select the Chair of the GBO.

- Two alternates will be assigned (one History faculty member and one external to History).
- An external examiner (outside of JHU) may be considered for approval by the Graduate Board. This request should be issued at least 8 weeks in advance of the defense. Required materials include: 1) one-page dissertation summary; 2) CV of the outside examiner; 3) one-page letter from the advisor explaining why the department must go outside of JHU for a committee member.

#### General Timeline for Defense Scheduling:

- A defense will be scheduled only when advisors have approved a dissertation in its entirety. Once the green light has been given to Megan, the scheduling process will begin. Defense scheduling should begin 6 to 8 weeks in advance. Earlier is fine.
- Students should communicate directly with advisors about potential committee members. However, students should not coordinate their own defense scheduling. **FLEXIBILITY IS KEY.**
- Please send Megan your dissertation title (a working title is fine).
- This is the appropriate time, if you have not already done so, to consult with the ETD website (see important links on Page 1) and verify dissertation formatting guidelines, etc.
- Once the defense date is scheduled, students will need to email their dissertation PDF to Megan two weeks prior to the defense date so that it may be circulated to committee members.
- The Reader's letter is circulated to committee members before the defense date.
- General note: if you are on student health insurance, now is a good time to reach out to the Graduate Student Health Insurance Coordinator at [JHUStudentBenefits@jhu.edu](mailto:JHUStudentBenefits@jhu.edu).

#### Defense:

- Defenses are scheduled for a two-hour time slot.
- The GBO chair will run the defense and allot time for each committee member to ask questions.
- Be prepared to speak about any aspect of the dissertation, but be sure to consider what your scholarly interjection is; what broad claims you are making; and what is at stake in the project overall. This is an opportunity to present what you've accomplished and speak about it in a masterly way.
- Possible results of the defense: Unconditional Pass (no changes required), Conditional Pass (the defense is considered a pass once certain conditions have been met); Fail.

- You should feel free to follow up with committee members about their questions and feedback and you can ask for written comments or a meeting to talk about next steps.

#### Post-Defense:

- ETD **approval** of the dissertation is the final requirement of the PHD program and is an auto-generated email.
- Upon acceptance of the dissertation by the Binding Office, students will receive an ETD approval email. This will need to be immediately forwarded to Megan.
- Rest assured that Megan will communicate with you post-defense on any administrative issues.
- CELEBRATE!

\*This is a working document and subject to updates\*