

Kent State University Guidelines Dissertation Final Examination

POLICY STATEMENT

A dissertation is required of each candidate for the Ph.D. degree. The dissertation must demonstrate that the student has acquired the ability to conduct research in a discriminating and original manner. The dissertation should make a significant enough contribution to the field in which it is written that at least one scholarly article suitable for publication in a professional journal may be derived from it or that the findings of the dissertation would be otherwise publishable.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

When the student has developed a dissertation topic acceptable to the advisor, a dissertation committee is convened, responsible for overseeing the progress of the candidate's dissertation. The graduate/program coordinator appoints the members of the committee in consultation with the student and the student's advisor. This group will consist, at minimum, of four members:

1. The advisor, who chairs the committee
2. Two additional members from the candidate's program
3. One faculty member from a discipline outside the program

The advisor and two committee members must be members of the graduate faculty who have been approved to direct dissertations. The remaining members of the committee must have associate or full graduate faculty status and be approved to serve on a dissertation committee. A co-advisor, if used, will count as one of the above members. Special permission must be obtained from the college dean for anyone on the dissertation committee who does not meet the qualifications stated above.

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

When the advisor believes the candidate's dissertation is ready for preliminary approval, the advisor will convene an examining committee. The examining committee will consist of members of the dissertation committee and an appointed graduate faculty representative. The procedures for appointing the graduate faculty representative are detailed in the procedures section below.

GRADUATE FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE

Once the graduate faculty representative is appointed, the advisor will submit the dissertation to the members of the committee for a 10-day reading period of the dissertation. Following the reading period, the advisor will convene the examining committee to evaluate the dissertation. The advisor will note and communicate to the candidate any revisions recommended by the committee. When, in the opinion of the advisor and the candidate, the appropriate revisions have been made, the advisor will inform the graduate/program coordinator, the academic unit's lead administrator and the graduate college dean.

The principal responsibility of the graduate faculty representative is to preside and moderate the final examination (oral defense) and to note whether the nature of the questioning of the faculty and the responses of the candidate meet highly respectable scholarly standards. Any concerns must be presented immediately to the college dean or designee. As moderator, the graduate faculty representative should ensure that all participants in the defense act in a civilized, polite and proper manner. The graduate faculty representative should be familiar with the procedures of the oral defense and has the authority to suspend the examination should a situation arise that would not be conducive to a fair examination.

FINAL EXAMINATION (ORAL DEFENSE)

Upon completion of the revisions, if any, the student will be required to defend the findings before a committee of graduate faculty members, including the dissertation committee and others chosen by the academic unit and college dean. The final oral defense will be open to the university community. The procedures for the defense are detailed in the procedures section below.

PROCEDURES FOR THE FINAL EXAMINATION (ORAL DEFENSE)

When the dissertation committee has met and has agreed to proceed to the final examination, the advisor will designate the time and place of the final oral defense and notify the student and all members of the examining committee. The oral defense is open to any member of the University wishing to attend and, therefore, a facility adequate to meet this requirement should be provided. The defense should be scheduled to allow a minimum of 10 days for all members of the examining committee to review the dissertation; this is in addition to the 10-day period preceding the dissertation committee meeting.

In the absence of the advisor, the lead administrator of the academic unit may postpone the oral defense. In the case of long-term absence or enduring illness of the advisor, the lead administrator, in consultation with the college dean, should make appropriate arrangements for a substitute.

The dissertation must be in final form (not merely a late draft but also not necessarily the final typed copy) prior to the final oral defense. Students are permitted to number their pages in pencil to reduce the cost of final changes that may result from the oral defense. If, in the opinion of more than one member of the examining committee, the dissertation is not in acceptable final form, the oral defense will not be held. An acceptable final form refers to the substance and usefulness of the dissertation as well as the quality of the writing. The decision to halt the defense is to be determined by vote prior to the final oral examination and without the candidate or others being present. If a negative vote occurs, the candidate may be called in to provide clarification.

A rescheduling of the oral defense, if necessary, will occur when, in the opinion of the advisor and the student, the dissertation has been modified to incorporate the suggested changes. The dissertation must be acceptable, with no more than one dissenting vote, before the rescheduled final oral can be held. If the dissertation is not in suitable form at this second scheduled oral, the advisor will notify the college dean. Further action is then the responsibility of the college dean.

The final oral defense will be open to the university community. The advisor should notify the academic unit of the time and place of the so that it may be announced in a suitable way. The student should provide copies of the dissertation abstract to the academic unit so that it will be available to interested individuals prior to the defense to familiarize members of the graduate faculty with the methodology and findings. Students may participate in the oral defense in a different location than the committee members (i.e., by web conferencing) if they are declared in a fully online degree program or have obtained permission in advance from the committee chair. See the policy on [remote participation in a thesis or dissertation defense](#) in the University Catalog.

The candidate will open the defense with a brief presentation of dissertation findings, after which the members of the examining committee will question the candidate in an order to be determined by the moderator. When, in the opinion of the moderator, members of the examining committee have had an adequate opportunity to question the candidate, the moderator may open the examination to appropriate questions from others present. Questions dealing with the substance, meaning and usefulness of the research in the dissertation are of greatest propriety. Questions or comments dealing with punctuation or grammatical minutiae, spelling, etc., are out of order and should be written out and privately submitted to the advisor.

If, in the opinion of the moderator or upon motion duly passed by a majority of the committee, it should be deemed necessary to discontinue the defense, the moderator may recess the defense until a time mutually agreeable to the moderator, the advisor, the candidate and the college dean. When the questioning has run its course, the moderator will adjourn the defense, and the room will be cleared of everyone except the members of the examining committee. Parliamentary procedure will be observed to determine the success or failure of the candidate, with the moderator acting as chair without a vote. The committee should evaluate the candidate upon both (a) the overall quality and significance of the dissertation, and (b) the oral defense of the findings.

All members of the examining committee will sign the Report of Final Examination form, recording their votes of "yes" or "no." Committee members may not abstain in this vote. A candidate passes the final oral defense if there is no more than one dissenting vote. The moderator and lead administrator of the academic unit must then sign the report, which is forwarded to the college for the signature of the dean. The college returns a copy of the completed form to the academic unit.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-forms>

<https://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/guide-to-graduate-education/section-7.3>