

Dissertation Defense Protocol – UH Mānoa Department of Political Science
Revised 12/2013

Graduate students intending to defend their dissertation should first visit the following website to make sure that they are in full conformity with the University of Hawai'i Graduate Division's guidelines for the final defense: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/content/final-defense>

A full and complete copy of the dissertation must be presented to all committee members at least four weeks prior to the target defense date. The chair shall contact, via email, the entire committee to determine if the document is acceptable and ready for a defense no later than two weeks before the target date. If it is determined that at least 4 out of 5 of the committee members agree that the dissertation is ready for a defense then it may proceed as scheduled. However, if one committee member is dissenting, the chair, candidate, and committee member with concerns must meet prior to the defense. All committee members are invited, but not required, to attend this meeting. If two or more committee members feel there is still more work that needs to be done, a defense cannot be scheduled. If a defense is scheduled, at least 4 of 5 committee members are, in essence, agreeing that the document in front of them offers a significant and original contribution to their field of study. If not, then the candidate should work with the committee members who have concerns until those concerns are satisfactorily met. Ideally, only editorial changes and minor revisions should be made after the defense, not substantial revisions and rewrites.

A public announcement of the date and time of the defense must be submitted to Graduate Division at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. Please refer to the Graduate Division website for details: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/content/final-defense>

The defense will begin with a 15-20 minute presentation by the student summarizing their dissertation. This should be modeled after a conference presentation and address the various epistemic communities with which the dissertation engages. The candidate should remember that members of the audience will not have read the dissertation and frame their remarks accordingly.

A successful defense requires a majority of the committee to sign off on the dissertation. The dissertation chair and the University Representative must be in the majority. If the student fails the initial defense they can repeat the defense only if the Graduate Chair and Graduate Division approve the repeat. A second failure will mean the student will not graduate with a Ph.D.

After the defense, the committee may request final revisions prior to the document being formally submitted to graduate division. It is advisable to leave sufficient time for these revisions between the defense of the dissertation and the end of the semester. It is the burden of the student to meet all deadlines and to assure that sufficient time has been allocated to meet all the necessary deadlines.