

Math PhD Defence Checklist: Steps to Completion

This checklist is meant as a guide to the PhD student and supervisor(s), and does not need to be turned in to the Math Graduate Office. Please note that if the deadlines are not met, then the defence may be postponed. Defences cannot be scheduled during the [blackout dates and holidays](#).

The PhD student and supervisor(s) should reference the GSPA thesis information website for details [regarding preparing your thesis](#), [PhD thesis examination regulations](#), and [submitting your thesis](#). The supervisor(s) in particular should review the [External Examiner criteria](#) that can be found on the GSPA Web site, under "PhD thesis examining committee".

When selecting a date to defend, you may want to schedule your defence before important deadlines found on the [Graduate Studies Academic Calendar](#) (e.g., Fall or Spring convocation deadlines, the 100% and 50% refund deadlines, etc.).

Items that must be completed at least 7 weeks before the Oral Defence

- Review the program guidelines – The student and supervisor(s) are to ensure that all courses and milestones have been completed.
- Review the [GSPA Thesis](#) webpage – In particular, the student is to review the [GSPA Preparation of the Thesis](#) page to ensure that their formatting confirms to the standards established by the University of Waterloo. The student and supervisor(s) are to review the [GSPA PhD Thesis Examination Regulations](#).
- Pre-approval of the External Examiner (EE) from the Graduate Officer and the Associate Dean, Graduate Studies (ADG) - The supervisor is to determine an appropriate EE and obtain pre-approval of the EE from the Graduate Officer in their unit and the ADG *before* contacting the EE. The supervisor must include in the email the CV of the EE (or equivalent such as a link to their website) and their statement of independence to confirm the EE is at arm's length from the candidate's thesis (see the section regarding the EE on [GSPA regulations about Examination Committee](#)). The supervisor may email the Graduate Officer and CC the ADG when seeking pre-approval, with the understanding that the Graduate Officer will respond first.
- Select a time, date, and location – The student and the supervisor will select a time, date, and book a location for the defence that is amendable to the schedules of the committee members and EE.
 - Communication between the EE, student, and supervisor: Once the date of the defence is set, all communication with the EE regarding the defence and the thesis is to be carried out by the Math Graduate Office (MGO). In particular, there should be no contact between the EE and the student until after the defence. If the EE will attend the defence in person, then it is understood that the department and/or the supervisor may communicate with the EE for the purposes of other arrangements not related to the defence (e.g., organizing a research talk); however, there is to be no discussion regarding the student and their thesis.
 - EE travel expense: The MGO will provide the EE with basic information on travel expenses, but the EE is to make his/her own travel arrangements. Each unit has a budget to reimburse the EE for their travel expenses and to provide an honorarium. The EE is reimbursed according to [Policy 31](#) and the [Guidelines for Expenses](#). Please contact the unit finance officer for more details.
 - Examination Committee attendance: A maximum of one person can be physically absent/participate electronically at the PhD defence, so long as the individual is not the supervisor(s) (i.e., supervisor(s) must be present). This individual must provide a report should there be technical difficulties at least 10 days before the defence. If a member is to participate electronically, then it is the student and/or the supervisor(s) responsibility to ensure that the appropriate room and/or equipment are booked. Delegates are no longer accepted.

At least 6 weeks prior to defence

- Submit the Notice of PhD Thesis Submission for Display and Oral Defence form – The supervisor and student is to complete and submit the Notice of PhD Thesis Submission for Display and Oral Defence form to the Graduate Coordinator with the proper approvals and defence information.

At least 5 weeks prior to defence

- Student submits their thesis to their Examining Committee and MGO. MGO will email the EE a copy of the thesis.

At least 4 weeks prior to defence

- Student submits Notice of Receipt of PhD Thesis – The student collects signatures from all the Examining Committee Member (except for the External Examiner) on the Notice of Receipt of PhD Thesis. The student returns an electronic copy of the Notice of Receipt of PhD Thesis to the MGO. After this, the MGO will create an Announcement of Thesis submission. The student's thesis must be on display for a minimum of four weeks before the defence date.

At least 10 days prior to defence

- EE report to MGO – The EE should have submitted their report to MGO. This report will be sent to the supervisor, ADG, and the Grad Coordinator. The supervisor is to inform the candidate of any major criticism of the thesis from the EE, but the EE report is not to be shown to the candidate.
- Committee Member unable to attend in person – If there is a committee member that is unable to attend in person, but is still participating electronically, then they must also send a report to MGO.

Day of defence

- Prepare the room for the defence – The student should arrive in their defence room 30-60mins before their scheduled defence to ensure that all the equipment they need is functional.

After the defence

- Defence results – MGO will email the defence result to the students, the supervisor(s), and the Graduate Coordinator.
- Student makes the necessary change to their thesis – Ideally, the student will complete any changes to their thesis within a month after their defence. If the student should require more time, then they must contact the MGO.
- Supervisor(s) approve of the changes – The supervisor(s) will email MGO once they are satisfied with the edits as required by the committee. MGO will create a Doctoral Thesis Acceptance form that the ADG will sign. The MGO will submit the Doctoral Thesis Acceptance form to the GSPA so that so that the student may upload their thesis onto UW Space. If there are any changes in the thesis title, the please inform MGO as the thesis may become rejected from UW Space otherwise.
- Student submit thesis to UW Space – The student will upload their thesis to UW Space after MGO has submitted the Doctoral Thesis Acceptance form to the GSPA. The thesis must conform to the standards established by the University of Waterloo. Please see details at the [GSPA Preparation of the Thesis](#) and the [GSPA Thesis Submission](#) webpages for information regarding thesis formatting and the thesis submission process, respectively.
- Prepare to graduate. Please see [Prepare to Graduate/Convocation](#) for more information.