

Dissertation Defense | Final Oral Exam

Students complete their dissertation defense (or final oral exam) typically at the end of their fifth year. The Graduate School provides critical information regarding deadlines, paperwork, and scheduling. Students file to graduate in their final semester. The Graduate School typically hosts workshops that are helpful and recommended.



Currently, final oral exams may take place virtually or in person, subject to BME room capacity limits.

Please use DocuSign for all forms. Forms must be submitted to the Graduate School electronically at gradstudentsvcs@austin.utexas.edu.

To graduate on time, your dissertation must be uploaded to the Texas Digital Library and all paperwork submitted to the Graduate School by 3 PM on the [submission deadline](#).

Dissertation Defense Step-by-Step

Before Your Defense

Step	Task	Notes and Resources
Step 1	Update your committee with the Graduate School if it has changed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check committee membership.• If your dissertation committee has changed, submit a Request for Change in Doctoral Committee Form to the Graduate School. Email the Graduate Coordinator to use the DocuSign version of the form.• Resolving committee changes should be completed at least 30 days before you defend. If you are within 30 days of your defense, please complete page 2 of the form as well.• More information is provided about committee changes elsewhere in the handbook.
Step 2	Review the Graduate School's Submission Webpage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Graduate School has critical information regarding deadlines, paperwork, and scheduling. Review this at least one semester before your defense.
Step 3	Meet with your supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss your plan to defend and any important requirements/expectations for your defense.
Step 4	Apply to graduate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit the application to graduate at the beginning of your last semester. The application is available on the first day of classes each semester.• Failure to submit the application by the deadline means you cannot graduate that semester.• If you submit the application and end up not defending, there is no penalty. Your application will be cancelled and you may submit a new one during the next semester.
Step 5	Schedule your defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You must defend at least two weeks prior to the submission deadline in your final semester.• All committee members should be present, but exceptions are given in the event of scheduling emergencies. Required participation is <i>N-1</i>. If a member does not attend, they still must sign the final Report of Dissertation Committee form and approve your dissertation.• Members may participate virtually or in person.• Make use of services such as Doodle or When 2 Meet• Use the BME Room Reservation system to reserve your space. If defending in person, reserve the space at least 30 minutes in advance for set up time and about two hours for the defense.
Step 6	Send your dissertation to your committee <i>Due at least four weeks prior to your defense</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once your supervisor approves, send your dissertation to the rest of your committee <u>at least 4 weeks prior</u> to your final oral exam

Step 7	Submit the Request for Final Oral Exam form - <i>this formally schedules your defense with the Graduate School</i> Due at least two weeks prior to your defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch the DocuSign version of the form yourself using this link. If you prefer to use a physical form, download it here. When the form is completed, you will receive an email notification from DocuSign with a link to download your form. Download the form and email it to gradstudentsvcs@austin.utexas.edu, including the required pages listed on page 1 of the form. In addition to submitting the required pages with your Request for Final Oral form, it is recommended to submit the dissertation abstract, title page, doctoral committee membership page, a table of contents, and lists of tables and figures to Bob Penman at the Graduate School for a format check.
Step 8	Send the Graduate Coordinator a summary of your plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your defense may be open or closed and may be virtual or in person. Send the Graduate Coordinator the date, time and location of your defense and whether you will hold an open or closed defense. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPEN DEFENSE: Send your abstract and title in Word format at least one week prior to your defense. An invitation to your defense will be sent to the GSC membership and graduate student body about one week prior to your defense. CLOSED DEFENSE: The students is responsible for creating and distributing a Zoom link to committee members and others they wish to invite to a virtual defense. An invitation will not be sent to the GSC membership nor the graduate student body.
Step 9	Prepare your presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most candidates will use PowerPoint or a similar program to present. Discuss format and style with your supervisor.
Step 10	Prepare forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is only one form you need to have signed at your defense - the Report of Dissertation Committee form. You have two options for collecting signatures on this form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The form will be emailed to you, pre-populated, by the Graduate School about one week prior to your defense. Download this form and circulate it for digital or physical signatures. OR use the DocuSign version of the report of dissertation committee form to collect signatures. Three steps are required for this form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the first page, you need to designate signers, including your advisor, all committee members, and the GSC Chair. On the second page, fill in your EID and dissertation title and any other required fields, and click Submit. IMPORTANT: After clicking submit, the form will route back to you. You will need to click the Release button in the form to send the form to your committee for signature. We recommend releasing the form either right before or right after your defense so your committee can easily find the request in their inboxes.
Step 11	Learning outcomes forms - <i>no action necessary by you on this step</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Graduate Coordinator will circulate learning outcomes forms to your committee on the day of your defense. If needed, the paper version of the form is available here.
Step 12	Coauthor approval form - <i>if applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This form is required if your dissertation includes multi-author work. See the policy attachment at the bottom of this page.
Step 13	Confirm with your committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be sure to confirm your committee's attendance and send a reminder at least a few days in advance. Committee participation is set by the Graduate School at <i>N-1</i>. The Graduate School does not distinguish between virtual and in-person participation.

At Your Defense

Step	Task	Notes and Resources
Step 1	Arrive early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up the room and media, and greet your committee and attendees.
Step 2	Distribute forms and paperwork, if applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If using DocuSign forms, distribute immediately after your defense.

Step 3	Conduct your defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process can take up to a few hours, including the presentation, questions, and deliberation.
Step 4	Collect signed forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If using DocuSign, launch the form to distribute it to your committee. When the form is fully signed, you will receive an email notification with a link to download the completed form. Download and save a copy. If your form is not signed in a timely manner, contact the Graduate Coordinator. The Graduate Coordinator receives the same download link and will automatically place a copy of the signed form in your student file.
Step 5	Request delay of publication - <i>if applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To request a delay of publication, you and your supervisor must sign and submit a form to gradstudent_svcs@austin.utexas.edu

Immediately After Your Defense

Step	Task	Notes and Resources
Step 1	Upload your dissertation to the Texas Digital Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must upload your dissertation to the Texas Digital Library by the Graduate School's deadline. Your dissertation must be uploaded prior to submitting final paperwork to the Graduate School.
Step 2	Submit your final paperwork to the Graduate School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit the Report of Dissertation Committee form and the Request for Delay of Publication form (if applicable) to gradstudentsvcs@austin.utexas.edu by 3 PM on the submission deadline

Commencement

The Cockrell School of Engineering hosts one commencement ceremony each spring. Students who graduated in the summer or fall semesters prior to the ceremony and those who have applied to graduate in the spring may participate. [Learn more here about the Cockrell School of Engineering Commencement Ceremony.](#)

The Graduate School hosts one convocation ceremony each spring. Students who graduated in the summer or fall semesters prior to the ceremony and those who have applied to graduate in the spring may participate. [Learn more here about the Graduate School Convocation Ceremony.](#)

Regalia must be purchased or rented for the ceremonies and details for required regalia can be found online at the links for each ceremony. [You can purchase or rent regalia at the University Co-op.](#) Check the co-op site for details and deadlines.

Diplomas

Prior to graduation, you will receive a "Degree Candidate" email from the Office of the Registrar (sent to the email on file with the university), which will ask you to **confirm your diploma name and the degree you will earn**. Please remember to [update your email](#) if it has changed.

Effective spring 2021 and future semesters, degree candidates may select to have a [diploma name](#) that is different from the legal name on their student record. A diploma name can be updated the semester of graduation, but unless specified, your legal name will be the default name on the diploma. If you have designated a [chosen name](#) on your student record and would like your diploma name to match your chosen name, you will still need to update your diploma name during your graduating semester.

[Options for how to receive your diploma are given online.](#)

File	Modified
PDF File Coauthor Approval Form fillable.pdf	Nov 03, 2021 by Lacy T White
PDF File Campus Notification_MultiAuthor Content Signature Requirements_Effective 2021[81][42].pdf	Nov 03, 2021 by Lacy T White

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