

Guidelines & Requirements for Virtual Dissertation Defense Meetings

Department of Psychology PhD Programs

1. Onsite dissertation defense is the standard and expected format. Students on internship (or with other special circumstances) who would like to request a virtual dissertation defense must discuss this request with their advisor and submit the [virtual dissertation defense request form](#) at least 30 days prior to the planned defense time. This form requires approval and signatures from the student's advisor, program director, and department chair.
2. This form should be used in the case of any committee member or defense participant being unable to attend the scheduled in person defense.
3. If approved, the virtual dissertation defense meeting should follow the expectations/procedures outlined below:
 - a. The virtual dissertation defense meeting should be scheduled for 2 hours.
 - b. The meeting should be scheduled at a time slot that works for all committee members.
 - c. Once a meeting time is identified, the student is required to submit the dissertation defense meeting announcement (which includes the meeting date/time, zoom link, approved abstract, and names of the committee) to the Graduate Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense meeting time. This announcement will be distributed to all students and faculty in the department and the oral defense meeting is open to all students and faculty.
 - d. The student is also responsible to submit a complete draft of their dissertation approved by the committee chair to all committee members and the department chair no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled defense meeting.
 - e. The virtual defense meeting should include the following components and the committee chair moderates the meeting procedures to ensure the meeting will be completed within 2 hours.
 - i. The committee chair checks with all committee members to ensure the written dissertation submitted to the committee meets the minimum expectations for the defense meeting to process.
 - ii. The student provides an oral presentation of the dissertation project, especially focused on the Results and Discussion sections, with visual slides.
 - iii. The presentation is followed by questions from the dissertation committee members. The student is expected to provide responses to these questions to defend the selected analytic methods, findings, interpretations, limitations, and implications

to clinical work and policy associated with the dissertation project. Other Psychology faculty in attendance may also ask questions.

- iv. The committee members identify the strengths/weaknesses of the project and the student's defense performance, complete the dissertation defense evaluation form, and vote on the defense result (i.e., pass, fail, additional meeting needed to pass) with the student being placed in the breakout room.
 - v. The committee chair brings the student back to the meeting to provide a summary of the feedback for revisions and reveal the defense result.
4. Note that the department chair may attend some virtual dissertation defense meetings to observe and assess if the procedures meet the standards/expectations.