Basic Process for Scheduling a Defense

Comps defenses are scheduled the same way as thesis defenses; they differ only in the amount/type of post-defense paperwork.

It is a Department requirement that you distribute your manuscript to your committee, with a copy to the Department administrator, **at least 3 weeks** ahead of the actual defense date.

1. Notify your committee members and the Department office that you and your advisor are in agreement that you are ready to defend your comps project or thesis. Attach or distribute the most recent copy of your manuscript for your committee to review and to provide feedback.

2. See Michelle to determine days/times that are at least 3 weeks in the future to provide as scheduling options for your committee. Give the committee that information and ask them to respond as soon as possible regarding their schedules. Your manuscript must be ready and under committee review before you may tentatively schedule a defense date. However, Michelle will make a note of specific weeks/days that you are considering, to coordinate with others who may also be looking at those time periods.

3. Complete the Department Defense Request Form based upon your committee’s approval of your defense and consensus on the best date/time in which to defend.

4. Bring the form to Michelle, who will forward your manuscript draft for Department Head approval, and reserve an appropriate space.

5. If you have revised your abstract or title, forward the updated information to Michelle, who will send out the announcement of your defense to the Department, as well as a reminder shortly before the defense date.

6. Michelle will send you (by email) the departmental paperwork that you will need for your defense, along with further instructions. It is your responsibility to print the paperwork and bring it to your defense to hand off to your committee chair.

7. Defend!

8. Follow up as appropriate with the completed defense paperwork.
IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- You must be registered during the semester in which you schedule any comps or thesis defense.
- You must have completed all programmatic requirements before you may schedule a thesis defense.
- PhD students: in principle, all of your degree requirements must be complete before you may complete your thesis proposal defense and admit to candidacy. However, in the interest of financial savings through reduced/thesis registration status, you may schedule a thesis proposal/second comps defense without having completed the GPGN681 individual presentation requirement, practical teaching requirement, or foreign language department. Note that you must complete all of the aforementioned requirements, however, before you may schedule your thesis defense.

Post-Thesis Defense Instructions

1. Complete all thesis revisions, format approval (through the Grad School), and checkout process. Pay close attention to the Grad School’s deadlines and checkout process if you mean to graduate in the current semester.
2. Your checkout form will be signed when your thesis revisions are complete and your thesis is ready to be signed.
3. If you are a student in one of the research groups/centers, make sure that before you check out, the appropriate individuals are in possession of an electronic copy of your completed, signed thesis so that they can make the publication available to sponsors. Furthermore, if your research group requires software from you as part of your graduate program, you must make sure your code is complete, functional, and organized with appropriate commenting before you check out.
4. Turn in all Department materials in your possession (including any computer or other equipment, and books from the Reading Room).

Helpful Thesis Hints

- Follow the Grad School’s thesis information carefully, to ensure that your thesis will have as few changes from the format review process as possible.
Defense FAQ’s

These are the most common questions we receive from grad students on the cusp of defending a paper or thesis. The answers herein may save you from unanticipated snags on your road to graduation.

Q: May I schedule a room before obtaining final approval for the defense date?
A: No, you may **not** book any space for a preferred defense date. You must have the defense approved by your committee to confirm the schedule your defense. You may (and should) inquire about defense date availability AFTER you distribute your manuscript to the Department and your committee. Michelle will note down which dates you’re presenting to your committee in case one of your colleagues comes in looking at the same dates, and will confirm the date approved by you and your committee upon receipt of the signed defense form.

Q: I’ve honestly tried—I can’t get my committee together on one of the set-aside days for defenses. What now?
A: It’s important to keep the Department in the loop on this and work with him and with your committee to find a time when they CAN meet. The Department has final approval on the date and time of your defense. Mondays should be avoided if possible for defense dates, as should any start time before 9 am or after 4 pm.

Q: May I schedule a defense during Winter or Spring Break or during the summer?
A: Winter and Spring Break defenses are not allowed; for the winter break, the fall semester is over and the spring semester has not yet begun and for Spring Break, classes are not in session; most of the faculty are not available. We rarely permit a student to schedule a defense during the summer months, even if you are registered, due to faculty and student availability.

Q: If I schedule my defense for a particular date one of my committee members cannot be there. What do I do?
A: For MS candidates, this can be a problem because usually, there are only 3 members of the committee. You should continue searching for dates and times during which all of your committee can attend.

*PhD committees are larger and the absence of 1 committee member for good reason is usually less of an issue. If the absentee is a non-voting member, then their absence is likely not a problem. However, seek the advice of the Department and your advisor on whether you should proceed without that missing committee member or find another date for your defense. For committee members who reside out of town, consider teleconferencing as an option.*

Q: Must I complete my course work before starting the comps process?
A: No; the first comps is supposed to be done by the end of the third full semester at Mines and most PhD students are in the middle of their coursework when they begin the comps defense process. However, your course, comps, and ALL other requirements (except your Heiland presentation) should be met before your admission to candidacy form can be approved by the Department.

Q: What if one of my committee members is off-campus and cannot sign the defense request?
A: We will accept an email from the committee member in lieu of a signature to approve scheduling of a defense.
Q: Do I have to supply food for my thesis defense?
A: This has become something of a tradition, and attendees would certainly welcome the offering. However, you are in no way obligated to supply food or beverage for those who attend your defense.

For Students Returning Specifically To Defend And/Or Graduate

Q: Do I need to register for classes?
A: You must be registered during the semester in which you defend your thesis. This is a non-negotiable institutional requirement. Contact the Grad School with questions. Note: There is a window of time during the first part of a semester where, if you were registered in the prior term, e.g.:
   - You were registered in Fall and hope not to register for Spring; or
   - You were registered in Summer and hope not to register for Fall
If you are defended AND COMPLETELY CHECKED OUT by the institutional early checkout deadlines, then you may not have to register for that semester. Visit gradschool.mines.edu for more information.

Q: What if I cannot be on campus to complete the checkout process after I defend?
A: As much as we staff enjoy helping our students, we don’t have the time to complete the checkout process for you. If this is your situation, please appoint a trusted colleague to do this but please be available to sign and return documentation as necessary. Remember—it’s your program, your responsibility. Also, if you leave campus before checking out BE SURE you return your key to Access Services before you go! Your diploma will be held if your key is not returned!

Q: I am attending the commencement ceremony. Any advice?
A: Yes! First, you should have applied with the Grad School to graduate, so you should be receiving correspondence from that office regarding subsequent commencement deadlines. Whether or not you attend Commencement, your application to graduate will ultimately ensure that you receive a diploma.

Make lodging arrangements as far in advance as possible as the local hotels tend to fill up quickly for commencement week in December and May. Arrive in time to attend the rehearsal and pick up your regalia and other instructions. If you cannot do that, contact the Grad School for instruction.

If you’re attending the spring ceremony, get adequate protection from the sun and elements and advise your family and friends to do the same. We see too many spectators each May leave the Commons with everything from near-hypothermia to sunburn to heat exhaustion, because they are not familiar with the climate, and their graduates did not share with them the secrets of coping with the high altitude and variable Rocky Mountain weather.

Finally, please attend the event that we hold for our graduates. We relish the opportunity to honor your achievement and would love the chance to meet your family, if they are attending with you. Your invitation will come by email and we appreciate the courtesy of a quick reply so that we know how many people to accommodate.