

## FAQ on Preparing to Defend and File Your Dissertation

*Where can I find the deadlines for filing my dissertation?*

The Graduate School website has the dates for filling your dissertation, as well as helpful links about preparing for graduation and the doctoral hooding ceremony (see “Related Links” in the upper right quadrant of this website): <http://gradschool.unc.edu/academics/resources/graddeadlines.html>

Please consult the above link for the dates for Fall and Spring graduation; there are hooding ceremonies in both the Fall and Spring, though the Spring hooding ceremony/graduation is much larger than the Fall one.

*If I defend and file my dissertation in the Fall, will I still be able to hold a teaching fellowship (in other words teach at UNC Chapel Hill) in the Spring?*

If you defend and file your dissertation during the Fall term, you will be considered graduated and will not need to register for 994 credit in the Spring semester, which means you will no longer be considered a PhD student which means you will not be given a TF. Please consider this issue and consult with your dissertation advisor as you plan for your dissertation defense.

*If I don't plan to go through the PhD graduation and hooding ceremony, when is the latest date by which I can defend and file my dissertation for a Spring graduation?*

You can defend your dissertation through finals week of Spring semester in order to graduate with a Spring diploma. You will need to file your dissertation with the Graduate School before the start of the next term; in the case of a Spring defense and filing date, it means you must file before Summer Session I begins. For defending and filing during the summer months, see below.

*What steps should I take if I want to defend and file my dissertation*

*during the summer months?*

The first thing you need to do if you wish to defend and file your dissertation over the summer is to talk with your dissertation advisor and your committee members to ensure that you have their consent for a summer defense. Many faculty are away during the summer months, and while not all your committee members need to be physically present for the defense, it is preferable that a majority of them are present.

Furthermore traveling and time zones (faculty who may be in different time zones from you and each other such as California, North Carolina, London, Shanghai) may prove difficult to coordinate over the summer.

The next thing you will need to do, once you confirm that your committee is able to commit to a summer defense is to enroll in 994 credit with your dissertation advisor under either Summer Session I (roughly mid-May/mid-June) or Summer Session II (mid-June/July). Please consult the Registrar's calendar to find out when the dates for Summer Sessions are taking place.

Additionally, you will need to pay the 3 credit hours of 994 for either Summer Session I or II because the department cannot pay your tuition and fees during the summer months. As of 2017, the cost of 3 credit hours in Summer Session I or II is \$810.00 for NC residents and \$1635.00 for out-of-state residents. This includes both tuition and fees (see the rates here: <http://cashier.unc.edu/tuition-fees/>). As with a Spring defense, you will need to defend by finals week of either Summer Session I or II, and you will need to file the dissertation before the start of the following term.

*How much time will my committee need to read through my dissertation before my defense?*

We advise students to grant their committees 3-4 weeks lead time in reading the dissertation before the defense. Please consult with your dissertation advisor on this matter, especially if you are on a tight schedule and want your committee to only have 2 weeks to read your

dissertation; you should get the approval of your committee if choosing an option of less than 3 weeks (and ideally you should allow them 4 weeks).

*Must all my committee members be physically present for the defense?*

No—you may have members of your committee Skype or call in. However, if a member of your committee cannot be physically present for the defense, please ask the faculty member to email the DGS and grant the DGS signing authority on his/her behalf (NOTE: the department chair also has signing authority for this purpose). The form that must be signed by all members of your committee is an original document that cannot be copied or scanned; you must have your committee members sign or arrange to have the DGS or Chair sign on behalf of a member not physically present during your defense.

*What signatures will I need for the dissertation defense?*

On the original form there are 2 sections that pertain to the dissertation. Section III is related to the oral defense and Section IV is related to the written dissertation. Sometimes committees will

ask students to make revisions after the oral defense. We advise that students ensure that all committee members sign both sections III and IV at the time of the oral defense since tracking down committee members for their signatures post-revision can be an added complication. With your dissertation advisor's approval, you can have all committee members sign both sections III and IV, save your advisor, and once the revisions have been made, to the satisfaction of your advisor, then s/he can sign and turn in the form to the DGS office.

*What happens if my faculty director/advisor (the person I am signed up for 994) fails to enter a grade by the end of finals period the semester I am graduating?*

The Graduate School (and the university in general) has tightened the rules for who can sign a grade sheet. Only the instructor of record can

assign a grade, including for 994 (neither the DGS nor the Chair nor the Dean of the Graduate School can assign a grade on behalf of a faculty member, even for 994). Your dissertation advisor **MUST** enter a grade (a passing grade) for 994 during your final semester (the semester you defend and file your dissertation). Failure to do so will result in failure to graduate—your diploma and transcript, in other words, will not have a graduation date for the semester you intended to graduate but will, instead, have a date for the following semester. This can prove especially problematic for students who have taken jobs that require proof of a diploma/graduation before they can start (ie: they require proof of graduation before they can take their new job). We encourage students to gently remind their advisors to enter a grade for 994 during their final semester at UNC Chapel Hill.