

Guidelines for Scheduling a Dissertation Defense

The Graduate School is enforcing a rule whereby students who turn in their official dissertation defense paperwork to the DGS office will be expected to file for graduation on Connect Carolina. The consequences of this means that students will not be expected to enroll in ENGL/CMPL 994 in order to make any needed revisions on their dissertation for purposes of filing with the Graduate School. Which means if a student schedules a Fall defense, the expectation is that the student will no longer be considered a PhD student and will therefore no longer be able to teach as a graduate student—in effect, any teaching contract that a PhD student has signed with the Writing Program (or any other unit at UNC) will not be in effect for the Spring since the student will have ostensibly graduated.

However, what is reasonable (and should be discussed with the graduate student's director/advisor) is to schedule an oral defense and to make sure that all committee members sign both Section III, the portion that testifies to the successful oral defense of the dissertation, and for the committee members (save the dissertation director/advisor) to sign Section IV, the last segment of the official dissertation form that testifies that the written dissertation has been approved by all members. Since it is often difficult to get faculty to sign Section IV after the oral defense (particularly if they are coming from Duke or departments outside of English and Comparative Literature) it is often preferable that they sign immediately following the defense, with the director holding onto the paperwork and waiting to sign until s/he has approved the revisions that the committee suggests for the final written dissertation.

Once the director approves the written dissertation s/he can sign off on Section IV and hand in the paperwork to the DGS office. Then the student can officially file for graduation on Connect Carolina after the director has turned in the official paperwork.

To recap:

*Students who schedule a defense are generally expected to turn file for graduation in the same semester or shortly after the defense.

*Students can make revisions to their dissertation before filing and uploading their revised written dissertation, which may cause a delay in the official Graduate School paperwork being turned into the DGS office.

*Once a PhD student or dissertation director turns in the paperwork signaling that both the oral defense (Section III) and the written dissertation (Section IV) have been approved by all members of the student's committee, the student will be expected to file for graduation on Connect Carolina and to upload the final copy of the dissertation.

These rules can be confusing; therefore, we recommend that students review the Dissertation Defense checklist (it is available under the "Forms" tab on the Department website) and that they schedule an appointment to talk to the DGS to review all necessary steps for graduation.