

The Robotics Institute - Doctoral Program

Student Procedures for Thesis Defense

All Qualifiers must be completed before scheduling the Thesis Defense.

The Dissertation itself is normally preceded by a year or more of research and writing after the proposal. The Dissertation is a scholarly document describing the problem, related work, the student's approach, the results and insights achieved, and the significance of the work. The written dissertation must be presented to the Thesis Committee for approval. When the committee gives preliminary approval, the Oral Defense can take place. At the Oral Defense, the committee and the entire community will have the opportunity to question the work critically. Finally, the Thesis Committee must decide whether to approve the thesis.

A student will be certified for graduation and allowed to attend commencement ceremonies when the thesis is unanimously approved by his or her Thesis Committee and has been delivered to the Program Coordinator in final form, at which time the student will be awarded the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in the field of Robotics.

External Committee Member

If your external committee member will be in attendance, it is very important that proper arrangements are made well in advance of his/her visit. It is your and your advisor's responsibility, along with the help of your advisor's support staff, to make sure that all travel arrangements, hotel, and an agenda are set up prior to his/her arrival. It's also important to inquire as to whether or not s/he has any other goals in mind during their visit other than to attend your thesis defense. Some examples would be, to give a special RI seminar talk, meet with other RI faculty, etc.

Timeline

At Least One Month Before

- Be sure to check with Suzanne Muth (lyonsmuth@cmu.edu) before finalizing the date, to make sure there are no other orals scheduled at the chosen time. Thesis presentations will not be scheduled to overlap.
- Your committee members should be available for a minimum of 90 minutes, preferably two hours.
- Inform Suzanne once you have settled on a date and time. She will reserve an appropriate room. The room scheduled must be available to the public and must accommodate a reasonably large number of people (~30). Smaller rooms, such as conference-style rooms, are strongly discouraged.
- Thesis defenses should not be scheduled after the last day of finals in the fall semester and not before the start of the spring semester. This is generally from mid- December to mid-January. Check the academic calendar for specific dates.

10 Days Before

- Send email to Suzanne with the date, time, room, title, abstract, URL link to thesis, and thesis committee members, including external member affiliation. If you would like a specific photo displayed on the posters, other than the one on your RI webpage, email the photo to Suzanne.
- Suzanne will post your thesis defense announcement both electronically and physically. These must be posted at least one week before your defense. BE PROMPT!
- Provide thesis committee with final draft of thesis defense document.
- If your external member is not able to be physically present, many students opt to Skype or Zoom with their external member. To reserve a loaner computer, submit the Help Desk Technology Reservation Online Request Form: <https://computing.cs.cmu.edu/help-support/forms/request-hd-tech-loan.html>

Practice Talks

If you would like give a practice talk or two, please contact Suzanne to reserve a conference room.

One Day Before

Pick up yellow thesis oral signature card and thesis signature pages from Suzanne. Take yellow thesis signature card and thesis signature pages to oral and give them both to your committee chairperson.

Day of Defense

Give yourself an extra half hour to make sure the room you've reserved is set-up the way you would like it and to make sure that catering services can enter the room to set up at least 30 minutes before your scheduled talk.

Refreshments

Suzanne will place an order with campus catering for refreshments for your thesis defense.