

Master's Degree Policies

Final Defense

**The following policies do not apply to Plan C option students. Refer to your program handbook for more information on procedures.*

The final defense is an oral examination given to the supervisory committee in which the author of the master's paper, thesis, or culminating work demonstrates satisfactory command of both the focus area of their project and the broader field.

Notification of Scheduled Defense

At least seven (7) calendar days prior to the final defense date, the Notification of Scheduled Final Defense form must be approved by the student's advisor and graduate program coordinator and filed with the Graduate College.

- A *successful* submission requires all signatures, not only that the graduate student has initiated the form.
- If the form is not filed seven (7) calendar days prior, it will not be approved by the Graduate College.
- A final defense takes place without an approved notification form is considered void. A new defense date must be scheduled and the Notification of Scheduled Final Defense filed seven calendar days prior to the new date.

Pre-defense Document Distribution

- The master's paper, thesis, or other culminating work must be distributed to the committee members for review at least seven (7) calendar days prior to the defense.
 - If this seven (7) day stipulation cannot be met, the student's committee holds the right to cancel the final defense. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Graduate College if their defense does not take place as scheduled and to complete a new Notification of Scheduled Examination.

Defense Attendee Policy

- If one supervisory committee member cannot participate in the final defense, the defense may be held; however, their absence is considered a "Disapproval" of the student's defense.
- If more than one supervisory committee member cannot participate in the final defense, the defense must be rescheduled.
- It is the student's responsibility to notify the Graduate College if their defense does not take place as scheduled and to complete a new Notification of Scheduled Final Defense.

Final Defense Outcomes

It is the student's responsibility to initiate the Report of Final Defense (https://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/current_students/forms/#:~:text=Report%20of%20Final%20Defense), ensure all committee members sign it, and submit it to the Graduate College within 14 calendar days following the defense.

- A *successful* submission requires all signatures, not only that the graduate student has submitted the form.
- If the form is not submitted within 14 calendar days, the defense is considered void and must be rescheduled.

The student must pass a final defense as part of earning the master's degree.

- A negative vote by two or more members of the student's committee will signify failure of the defense.
- The student may repeat the defense only upon permission from a majority of the supervisory committee. The committee will set a date at least one month after the failed defense and a new Notification of Scheduled Examination must be submitted within the seven (7) day deadline.
 - Exceptions to this time limit will be considered by the graduate dean upon presentation of written justification from the chair of the committee in consultation with the committee. Should the defense be failed twice, the student cannot continue in their graduate program.
 - The student will not be given a third defense except by recommendation of the examining committee, program coordinator, and special approval of the Dean of the Graduate College following consultation with the Graduate Council.