

13 Tips to Prepare for Your PhD Dissertation Defense

Author

Shrutika Sirisilla

Post Url

<https://www.enago.com/academy/tips-prepare-phd-dissertation-defense/>



How well do you know your project? Years of experiments, analysis of results, and tons of literature study, leads you to how well you know your research study. And, PhD **dissertation defense** is a finale to your PhD years. Often, researchers question how to excel at their thesis defense and spend countless hours on it. Days, weeks, months, and probably years of practice to complete your doctorate, needs to surpass the **dissertation defense** hurdle.

In this article, we will discuss details of how to excel at PhD **dissertation defense** and list down some interesting tips to prepare for your thesis defense.

What Is Dissertation Defense?

Dissertation defense or Thesis defense is an opportunity to defend your research study amidst the academic professionals who will evaluate of your academic work. While a thesis defense can sometimes be like a cross-examination session, but in reality you need not fear the thesis defense process and be well prepared.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/JamesHaytonPhDacademy>

What Are the Expectations of Committee Members?

Choosing the dissertation committee is one of the most important decision for a research student. However, putting your dissertation committee becomes easier once you understand the expectations of committee members.

The basic function of your dissertation committee is to guide you through the process of proposing, writing, and revising your dissertation. Moreover, the committee members serve as mentors, giving constructive feedback on your writing and research, also guiding your revision efforts.

The dissertation committee is usually formed once the academic coursework is completed. Furthermore, by the time you begin your dissertation research, you get acquainted to the faculty members who will serve on your dissertation committee. Ultimately, who serves on your dissertation committee depends upon you.

Some universities allow an outside expert (a former professor or academic mentor) to serve on your committee. It is advisable to choose a faculty member who knows you and your research work.

How to Choose a Dissertation Committee Member?

- Avoid popular and eminent faculty member
- Choose the one you know very well and can approach whenever you need them
- A faculty member whom you can learn from is apt.
- Members of the committee can be your future mentors, co-authors, and [research collaborators](#). Choose them keeping your future in mind.

How to Prepare for Dissertation Defense?

Tips to Prepare for PhD Dissertation Defense

- Start your preparations early
- Attend presentations by other candidates
- Take enough time to prepare the slides
- Structure the presentation
- Practice breathing techniques
- Create an impactful introduction
- Maintain your own list of questions
- Practice speech and body language
- Give mock presentation
- Learn how to handle mistakes
- Do not run through the presentation
- Get plenty of rest
- Visualize yourself defending your thesis

1. Start Your Preparations Early

Thesis defense is not a 3 or 6 months' exercise. Don't wait until you have completed all your research objectives. Start your preparation well in advance, and make sure you know all the intricacies of your thesis and reasons to all the research experiments you conducted.

2. Attend Presentations by Other Candidates

Look out for open dissertation presentations at your university. In fact, you can attend open dissertation presentations at other universities too. Firstly, this will help you realize how thesis defense is not a scary process. Secondly, you will get the tricks and hacks on how other researchers are defending their thesis. Finally, you will understand why **dissertation defense** is necessary for the university, as well as the scientific community.

3. Take Enough Time to Prepare the Slides

Dissertation defense process harder than submitting your thesis well before the deadline. Ideally, you could start preparing the slides after finalizing your thesis. Spend more time in preparing the slides. Make sure you got the right data on the slides and rephrase your inferences, to create a logical flow to your presentation.

4. Structure the Presentation

Do not be haphazard in designing your presentation. Take time to create a good structured presentation. Furthermore, [create high-quality slides](#) which impresses the committee members. Make slides that hold your audience's attention. Keep the presentation thorough and accurate, and use smart art to create better slides.

5. Practice Breathing Techniques

Watch a few TED talk videos and you will notice that speakers and orators are very fluent at their speech. In fact, you will not notice them taking a breath or falling short of breath. The only reason behind such effortless oratory skill is practice — practice in breathing technique.

Moreover, every speaker knows how to control their breath. Long and steady breaths are crucial. Pay attention to your breathing and slow it down. All you need is some practice prior to this moment.

6. Create an Impactful Introduction

The audience expects a lot from you. So your opening statement should enthrall the audience. Furthermore, your thesis should create an impact on the members; they should be thrilled by your thesis and the way you expose it.

The introduction answers most important questions, and most important of all “Is this presentation worth the time?” Therefore, it is important to make a [good first impression](#), because the first few minutes sets the tone for your entire presentation.

7. Maintain Your Own List of Questions

While preparing for the presentation, make a note of all the questions that you ask yourself. Try to approach all the questions from a reader's point of view. You could pretend like you do not know the topic and think of questions that could help you know the topic much better.

The list of questions will prepare you for the questions the members may pose while trying to understand your research. Attending other candidates' open discussion will also help you assume the **dissertation defense** questions.

8. Practice Speech and Body Language

After successfully preparing your slides and practicing, you could start focusing on how you look while presenting your thesis. This exercise is not for your appearance but to know your body language and relax if need be.

Pay attention to your body language. Stand with your back straight, but relax your shoulders. The correct posture will give you the feel of self-confidence. So, observe yourself in the mirror and pay attention to movements you make.

9. Give Mock Presentation

Giving a trial defense in advance is a good practice. The most important factor for the mock defense is its similarity to your real defense, so that you get the experience that prepares for the actual defense.

10. Learn How to Handle Mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes. However, it is important to carry on. Do not let the mistakes affect your thesis defense. Take a deep breath and move on to the next point.

11. Do Not Run Through the Presentation

If you are nervous, you would want to end the presentation as soon as possible. However, this situation will give rise to anxiety and you will speak too fast, skipping the essential details. Eventually, creating a fiasco of your **dissertation defense**.

12. Get Plenty of Rest

Out of the **dissertation defense** preparation points, this one is extremely important. Obviously, sleeping a day before your big event is hard, but you have to focus and go to bed early, with the clear intentions of getting the rest you deserve.

13. Visualize Yourself Defending Your Thesis

This simple exercise creates an immense impact on your self-confidence. All you have to do is visualize yourself giving a successful presentation each evening before going to sleep. Everyday till the day of your thesis defense, see yourself standing in front of the audience and going from one point to another.

This exercise takes a lot of commitment and persistence, but the results in the end are worth it. Visualization makes you see yourself doing the scary thing of defending your thesis.

If you have taken all these points into consideration, you are ready for your big day. You have worked relentlessly for your [PhD degree](#), and you will definitely give your best in this final step.

Have you completed your thesis defense? How did you prepare for it and how was your experience throughout your **dissertation defense**? Do write to us or comment below.

Cite this article

Shrutika Sirisilla, 13 Tips to Prepare for Your PhD Dissertation Defense. Enago Academy. 2022/07/07. <https://www.enago.com/academy/tips-prepare-phd-dissertation-defense/>