



Hello Graduate Student:

Your thesis or dissertation defense represents the final stage on your quest to a graduate degree. Often, graduate students wonder if they'll ever reach the 'dissertation-defense milestone,' however, persistence, hard work and a solid support system will help to ensure you accomplish this goal. If your defense date has been scheduled and is approaching, congratulations!

Feelings of excitement and pride can be mixed with stress and anxiety when you are beginning to prepare for your defense. Feeling anxious at this point is normal for many, if not all, graduate students. Strategically preparing for your defense can help you deal with these anxious feelings and make this major scholarly milestone a positive one.

Today's GRADUpdATE will offer some tips to help you better manage preparing for your defense.

1. Become aware of the guidelines and requirements your department has in place. Speak with your supervisor to ensure you know what is expected of you.
2. To quell your fears, speak with others who have recently defended. If possible, try to speak with someone in your department who might be able to offer advice on the defense process and/or the types of questions they were asked.
3. Take some time to understand and learn about your examiners. Read some of their recent research as this may help you to predict or anticipate certain questions they may ask of your own work.
4. Leading up to your defense, read through your thesis with a very critical eye. Use a highlighter to identify sections of your thesis that may lead to questions being asked from your examiners.
5. Create an outline and short presentation (15-20 minutes) describing:
  - i. Why your research problem is important
  - ii. How the research arose
  - iii. What other researchers have done
  - iv. Methodology used
  - v. Results of your investigation(s)
  - vi. Contribution of your findings to the body of knowledge
  - vii. Limitations of your research and areas for future study.
6. If possible, take part in a mock defense with your supervisor or with a few peers who are knowledgeable about your research.
7. Keep in mind that you are an expert and may understand the particular area of research far better than your examiners. Acknowledging and affirming your expertise can help you to build your confidence heading into your defense.
8. Remember, your examiners understand that you will be nervous. They are not there to intimidate or put-down your research, rather they are curious about what you have done and want to learn more about your findings and achievements.
9. Ensure you are familiar with the room and equipment where you will give your defense to guarantee that no technological glitches will occur when giving your presentation.

10. As always, get solid rest the night before your defense and practice some deep breathing exercises to help you relax.

Would you like to speak with a Learning Skills Counsellor about preparing for your thesis or dissertation defense? If so, please call 519 661-2183 to book a Learning Skills appointment. Or feel free to come and see us! We are located in the Western Students Services building, room 4100

*GRADUpdate is a twice-monthly e-mailout dedicated to helping students succeed in graduate school. This e-newsletter is provided by SDC's Learning Skills Services, Room 4100, Western Student Services Building, Western University, Canada. E-mail questions, comments, or suggestions to: [owner-gradupdate@uwo.ca](mailto:owner-gradupdate@uwo.ca) or feel free to visit our website <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning/> for more information. To unsubscribe, e-mail [owner-gradupdate@uwo.ca](mailto:owner-gradupdate@uwo.ca) indicating the e-mail address you used to subscribe.*