

From JCPO Handbook:

3.7 Thesis Defense

The thesis defense provides an open forum for presentation of the results of the research and final decision on the acceptability of the work. It is essential that an adequate period of time be available for review of the thesis between the time the dissertation is submitted to the thesis committee and the date of the defense. Therefore, the oral defense of the doctoral dissertation can be held not sooner than three weeks after the submission of the defendable thesis draft. Every effort should be made to submit the thesis at least one week prior to the defendable draft submission deadline. Submission entails giving copies to the Committee members and the Department Office at MIT and the Academic Programs Office at WHOI and arranging for announcements of the thesis defense to be posted at both institutions. In order to be on a particular semester's degree list, the student must also meet the thesis submission deadline dates given in the Joint Program Academic Calendar; keep these deadlines in mind. (These are the official MIT deadlines; students should check with their MIT department for the actual due date -it may vary).

Each Thesis Defense consists of two parts:

- A public seminar in which either the whole thesis or some significant and coherent subsection is presented. A seminar of normal length (i.e., 50 minutes) is expected. The seminar should precede the defense by at least two months. It should be given at the institution at which the student is not resident. Arrangements may be made to broadcast the talk to the institution of residency. Students are encouraged to make this early in the process since comments from people attending the seminar can be helpful in the final drafting of the dissertation.
- A formal defense, chaired by someone not a member of the Advisory Committee; this person is selected by the student in consultation with the advisor and committee, subject to JCPO approval. The defense is a public presentation of the thesis, including a period for detailed questions. At this time, the student is presenting the work to the scientific public and must be ready to explain and defend it. Private discussions with the Advisory Committee and other faculty focused on the written document may follow.

The responsibility to accept the thesis rests with the Advisory Committee. They may recommend that the thesis be accepted as it is or they may accept it subject to minor revisions that the Thesis Defense Chairman must relay in writing to the student. In exceptional circumstances, the Committee may request further work before the thesis can be accepted. In such cases, another defense may be required. The Thesis Defense Chair will notify JCPO and the student in writing of the decision of the Advisory Committee (and cc the WHOI Academic Programs Office (the Student Affairs Officer and the Executive Assistant to the Dean) and the MIT Joint Program Office.