

Program in Neuroscience Defense Preparation Checklist

Please use this checklist to guide you as you prepare your dissertation for defense.

- ☐ I have advanced to candidacy, submitted an NRSA (or equivalent), and proposed my dissertation
- ☐ (at least) 6 months before defense submit final committee to School of Graduate Studies via this form: [Nomination of the Members for Final Doctoral Dissertation](#)
- ☐ (semester of anticipated defense) apply for graduation through [SURFS](#)
- ☐ check transcripts on SURFS for the following and contact program coordinator if there are any issues:
 - ☐ Do you have at least 12 total credit hours of Dissertation Research (GPLS 899)? If not, contact coordinator
 - ☐ Do you have any “no marks” or “incomplete” grades? If so, contact coordinator
- ☐ Submit first-author publication
 - ☐ Send publication link to program coordinator
 - ☐ **GPILS Policy:** GPILS requires all PhD students to have a first-authored (or co-first-authored) publication at the time of graduation. Occasionally, a student may be ready to defend with a manuscript still *submitted* or *in revision*. In such cases, the mentor and student must submit a waiver request to proceed to the thesis defense. The request should outline the paper’s status and the plan to ensure it reaches publication. In rare circumstances where no manuscript is in process, it is strongly encouraged that the student first submit a preprint of the dissertation results (e.g., [bioRxiv.org](#)) before requesting a waiver. The waiver must clearly specify the publication plan, timeline, and include assurances from the mentor that the work will be published with the student as first author. If a waiver is needed, the process is as follows:
 - ☐ Student and mentor agree that a waiver request is necessary.
 - ☐ Mentor submits the request to the Program Director, with justification and a plan for timely submission of the manuscript.
 - ☐ The Program Director forwards the request, along with their recommendation, to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Education and GPILS.
 - ☐ GPILS reviews and makes the final determination.
- ☐ Schedule 2-hour private defense, have [Committee-Only Defense Form](#) completed
- ☐ Schedule 1 -hour public defense (ideally a minimum of 2 weeks after private defense)
 - ☐ Send to coordinator: Date, time, location any zoom link, and thesis title
- ☐ Discuss final day on mentor funds with mentor (typically 2 weeks after public defense)
 - ☐ Send to coordinator
- ☐ 1 month before private defense: submit copy dissertation to readers for feedback
- ☐ 2 weeks before private defense: submit copy of dissertation to full committee to read
- ☐ **Submit all forms and paperwork to the School of Graduate Studies by the dates listed:** <https://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/academics/student-resources/for-graduating-students/graduation-deadlines/>
 - ☐ Note that the “date of defense” acknowledged by the School of Graduate Studies is the public defense
 - ☐ Note that many major paperwork deadlines are clustered: 1) 2 weeks before public defense (certification, fulfillment & announcement forms), 2) right around public defense (report of examining committee form, submitted by Deans’ rep), and 3) 2 weeks after the public defense (four items, see link)
- ☐ Send to coordinator: Post-graduation plans and contact email
- ☐ If you will begin a new position after defending but within the semester of graduation and need proof of degree completion, please request degree verification through the Graduate School: <https://umbforms.wufoo.com/forms/m1bix1i50kyekk1/>
Following the semester, you can request proof of degree from the Registrar’s Office

Feel free to reach out to Jenn with any questions