

## **FOURTH YEAR RESEARCH TALK**

Each student is required to give a formal progress report on his/her Ph.D. dissertation research by the fall or spring of Year-4 in the program. Students are expected to prepare a 45-50 minute seminar with slides and be prepared to take questions from the audience. As scheduling permits, the talk will be included as part of the Cell and Developmental Biology's regularly scheduled seminar series. An announcement will be sent to all CDB program students, postdoctoral fellows and faculty at least 1 week prior to the seminar date.

## **THE DISSERTATION (SUMMARY)**

The student's Dissertation Committee will determine when the student is ready to begin writing his/her Ph.D. dissertation. After being approved by the advisor, a draft of the dissertation is distributed to all members of the committee for review and comment. After the dissertation is revised in response to comments of the committee members, a new version is distributed to all committee members, a copy is placed in the CDB Program office at least two weeks prior to the scheduled oral dissertation defense, and a notice is distributed to all CDB faculty inviting them to attend the oral defense.

The dissertation defense is conducted by a member of the Dissertation Committee other than the mentor and begins with a 20-minute (minimum) presentation by the student. Only after the dissertation defense has been successfully completed may the student schedule a public CDB Program seminar in which to present his/her dissertation research. This public seminar is required and must be scheduled and completed prior to graduation.

Further details regarding the preparation of the dissertation and information regarding how the oral defense is conducted may be found on the following page.

## THE DISSERTATION AND ITS DEFENSE *(rev. 04/04)*

Each student is required to complete a piece of original and significant research as part of the requirements of the doctoral degree. Original and significant research is defined as being suitable for publication in a high quality peer-reviewed journal. It is expected that data from the dissertation will have been published (i.e., in print or “in press”) in a **MINIMUM** of one first-author publication.\* The mentor, in collaboration with the Dissertation Committee, will determine when the student is ready to proceed with writing the dissertation.

The dissertation must be prepared in the format specified by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) posted at [http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/grad/degree/physical\\_standards.php](http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/grad/degree/physical_standards.php). When the mentor feels the dissertation is ready for input from the Dissertation Committee, a complete copy of the dissertation with all references and figures is distributed to each member for his/her review and comment. The student then revises the dissertation using the feedback from the members of the Committee. This revised version of the dissertation is used as the basis for the dissertation defense.

The student must obtain approval from the Dissertation Committee and complete the [Dissertation Defense Authorization and Evaluation](#) before scheduling the dissertation defense. One complete copy of the revised dissertation is placed in the CDB Program office at least two weeks prior to the defense; at that time the Program Administrator will e-mail a notice to all faculty members in the program announcing the time and place of the dissertation defense. All members of the faculty are invited to attend and participate fully in each dissertation defense. Each member of the Dissertation Committee also receives a revised copy of the dissertation at least two weeks before the defense.

The CDB Academic Committee appoints an add-on committee member who will conduct the dissertation defense. The person conducting the defense will utilize the copy of the dissertation placed in the program office. The defense must be scheduled so as to accommodate the schedules of all members of the Dissertation Committee in addition to the person conducting the defense.

The student must bring to the defense a completed copy of the green GSAS final examination form, in addition to at least two copies of the signature page for the dissertation (on bond paper fitting GSAS requirements). The defense begins with a meeting of the faculty present without the candidate. The student then gives a 20-minute presentation with slides outlining the significant results from the dissertation. The faculty members in attendance then question the student on the dissertation. After the person conducting the defense judges that the candidate has been sufficiently examined, the faculty meets without the student present to discuss the dissertation and the student’s defense of the dissertation.

If the student passes the dissertation defense without significant qualifications, the dissertation cover pages are signed and the student is then allowed to proceed to schedule (in consultation with the Program Administrator) and publicize a CDB Program seminar at which time he/she presents his/her research to the broader scientific public as a one hour talk. Once the seminar is scheduled, the the CDB Program Director will sign the GSAS dissertation form. The student may be required to make some written revisions to the dissertation, and the extent of these revisions is to be decided at the time of the defense. These changes must be completed before the dissertation can be delivered to the GSAS office for approval. After obtaining all necessary signatures and approving changes to the dissertation required by the faculty conducting the defense, the mentor forwards the dissertation defense form to the Program Administrator who forwards it to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

\*Publications beyond the stated minimum are **STRONGLY** encouraged as they positively impact student career development and visibility of the CDB Program.

**SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION AND DEFENSE GUIDELINES & SCHEDULING CONCERNS**

1. The mentor and Dissertation Committee agree that the student is ready to proceed with the writing of the dissertation.
2. The student prepares the dissertation in format specified by the GSAS at <http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/grad/phystan.html>.
3. A complete draft of dissertation including figures and references is provided to dissertation committee members following approval of the mentor.
4. The student revises the dissertation and, with the approval of the Dissertation Committee, schedules the “private” dissertation defense (in consultation with the Program Administrator). The student completes the top portion of the [Dissertation Defense Authorization and Evaluation](#) form.
5. The CDB Academic Committee is notified that a defense is to be scheduled and will appoint an add-on committee member. The add-on committee member will conduct the defense. The defense must take place at a time when all members of the Dissertation Committee and the add-on member are able to attend.
6. A complete and revised copy of the dissertation is provided to each member of the Dissertation Committee and an additional copy is placed in the department office at least two weeks (i.e., 10 weekdays) prior to the defense date.
7. The Program Administrator e-mails an advance announcement to all faculty members in the Cell and Developmental Biology Graduate Program informing them of the defense date and inviting them to participate in the thesis defense.
8. The student prepares a 20-minute presentation of the dissertation research.
9. The add-on committee member conducts the defense.
10. Dissertation Committee members sign the green GSAS form and 2 copies of the title page of the dissertation following the successful conclusion of the defense. Extensive changes to the dissertation may require the signing-off to be postponed until revisions are complete.
11. Following the successful completion of the defense and any significant revisions, the student may schedule the public seminar (in consultation with the Program Administrator).
12. Once the public seminar has been scheduled, the CDB Program Director will sign the GSAS dissertation form (green).
13. The student completes the bottom portion of the [Dissertation Defense Authorization and Evaluation](#) form and submits it to the CDB Program Administrator.
14. The official seminar announcement is e-mailed by the CDB Program Administrator to BIMS faculty and a notice is posted on seminar boards at least one week prior to the seminar.
15. The student prepares and gives a 50-minute formal seminar and is prepared to answer questions on the subject of the dissertation research.