

## Prepare for the defense

### What

There are various aspects which a PhD student should consider while preparing for the defense of the theses.

### Recommendations for good practice

Obtaining useful information:

The format of the defense is different from country to country. How the dissertation defence works varies enormously between fields, universities, and departments. In some countries and at certain universities, graduate students are advisory members of the committee during the PhD defence. In other countries, a PhD defence takes place in public and everyone might ask questions at the end.

Interviews with PHD students conducted by one FESTA partner showed that an important aspect is to provide useful information. This information may be obtained in several ways and can be grouped at some levels:

Supervisory level:

- Ask your supervisor. He/She should obviously know what the requirements of the defence are, exactly

PhD student level:

- Attend other defences. Typically, PhD defences are public, and it is highly recommended that any PhD candidate should visit a few before her/his own, to get to know the procedure and get a feel for what the defence talk is supposed to look like

Administrative level:

- Look it up in the programme description and talk with your administrative supervisor, generally your Head of Department/Programme. Usually, the programme description will contain exam regulations for the defense, and this should describe the exam procedure and who is supposed to ask what kind of questions.

### From literature and other sources

The selection of examiners is one of a number of decisions in the final stages, albeit one which the supervisor must make alone. Other choices are for students and supervisors to discuss together. One such decision is simply whether the research is ready for submission. It is appropriate to consider the likely outcome if the research is presented in its current state and to what extent the project could be improved with more persistence.

For most people, completing a research degree is one of their biggest accomplishments in life, and their emotional investment causes stresses and strains. Moments of doubt can start to appear in the final stages. Even though the vast bulk of the work has been done and (in the supervisor's opinion) little additional work

may be necessary, some students nevertheless stall. The supervisor must be a calming and reassuring influence, while at the same time playing the devil's advocate and putting the work through a comprehensive quality – assurance audit. (Baldwin, 1999)

James, R. & Baldwin, G. 1999, Eleven practices of effective postgraduate supervisors, University of Melbourne, Victoria.

**Other useful resources**

<http://phdtalk.blogspot.bg/2013/08/how-to-prepare-for-phd-defense.html>

<http://jameshaytonphd.com/preparing-for-your-thesis-defence/>

Dinham, S. (2007a) Leadership for Exceptional Educational Outcomes. Teneriffe, Qld: Post Pressed.

Elmore, R.F. (1996) 'Getting to Scale with Successful Educational Practices', in Fuhrman, S.H.; O'Day, J.A. (Eds), Rewards and Reforms: Creating Educational Incentives that Work. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.