

QUICK REFERENCE • RESEARCH DOCTORAL STUDIES

Ph.D. Dissertation Submission & Defense Guide

PhD Supervisors guide students through the Advanced and Candidate phases, oversee prospectus development, direct dissertation writing, and conduct oral defenses.

Dissertation Requirements & Specifications

- **Word Count:** A completed Ph.D. dissertation must be between 50,000 and 80,000 words (footnotes not included). Footnotes should not exceed 30,000 words. Appendices should rarely be included, but if they are necessary, the total word count should not exceed 15,000.
- **Style Guidelines:** Manuscripts must strictly adhere to the Southern Seminary Manual of Style.
- **Supervisor Approval:** The student's faculty supervisor must review and approve every chapter in sequence before granting permission to submit the defense draft.

Master Schedule of Deadlines

Milestone	Fall Graduation (December)	Spring Graduation (May)
Completed Defense Draft Submission	September 1 (July 1 for a continuation fee waiver)	February 1
Oral Defense Window	Between October 15th and November 10th	Between March 15th and April 10th
Final Digital Submission (ProQuest UMI)	December 1	May 1

Step-by-Step Defense Workflow

- **Draft Submission:** Submit the fully approved defense draft via the Canvas course 81910 by the deadline above. Additionally, submit the dissertation to the style reader.
- **External Reader:** School of Theology students must use an external reader (other students are encouraged). The supervisor selects an expert who is formally sent the draft by the RDS office.
- **Review Period:** The external reader has 4 weeks to return comments. An external reader fee of \$500 is applied to the student's account.
- **Scheduling:** The RDS office contacts the committee members to schedule the oral defense.

Post Defense Hearing

Following the defense, the committee may:

- Approve the dissertation.
- Approve the dissertation with required revisions.
- Request substantial revisions and a subsequent defense.

If required, the student must complete all mandatory revisions required by the oral defense committee, supervisor, and Style Reader. Then a final PDF of the completed, revised dissertation must be uploaded to ProQuest UMI by the final deadline above for digital publishing and library archiving.

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