

Thesis Proposal Defense/Presentation

For JCAOSE: see Handbook and MIT Department Guides and contact JCAOSE and/or AOPE Education Coordinator.

From JCBO handbook:

The Thesis Proposal Defense is attended by the Chair of the General Exam, the Thesis Committee. The Education Coordinator may attend the Thesis Proposal Defenses as an observer.

The Defense will begin with a brief oral presentation (under 20 minutes) consisting of an overview of the Thesis Proposal. The student should provide an introduction, outline the major hypotheses, and discuss the proposed research including any preliminary results. The presentation will be followed by questions from the Thesis Committee on the proposed research and any relevant background material. The Defense will also likely include discussions of how the research plan might be improved. **The discussion will not be limited to the student's specific topic. The Thesis Committee is expected to take the discussion away from the project itself and into related areas of basic scientific knowledge.** The Chair of the General Exam will moderate the discussion as necessary, and may ask questions. This second portion of the exam will typically take between 40 and 60 minutes.

At the end of the Defense the student will be dismissed for a short period While the Chair and the Thesis Committee discuss the student's performance.

5.3 Evaluation

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the General Exam to relate the findings of the AAC with respect to the student's performance on the Research Report to JCBO. The Chair will also summarize the proceedings of the Thesis Proposal Defense. Each of these evaluations should be written in separate memos to the Chair of JCBO, with copies provided to the Education Coordinator, the Academic Programs Office, the student, the advisor and members of the AAC and Thesis Committees.

From JCCO handbook:

Appendix IV Responsibilities of Chairs of Thesis Proposal Defense

The Chair of the Thesis Proposal Defense presides over the question and answer period following the thesis proposal defense seminar. Following the defense of the thesis proposal, the Chair of the defense should send a memo to the Chair of JCCO reviewing what happened at the thesis proposal defense, including who was present, any concerns raised, and a summary of comments made and suggestions that were given. The Chair of JCCO then sends a memo of results to the student and ccs the student's advisor(s), the Education Coordinator, and the WHOI

Academic Programs Office (the Student Affairs Officer and the Registrar) and MIT Joint Program Office.

From JCMG&G Handbook:

At least one month before the Thesis Proposal Presentation, the student should submit the proposed membership and Chair of his/her Thesis Proposal Committee to JCMG&G for approval.

At least three weeks before the Thesis Proposal Presentation, the student, in consultation with the Advisor and committee, should schedule the date, time, and meeting facility for the Presentation and transmit this information to the JCMG&G Chair, and to the Joint Program Education offices.

2. Conduct of the Thesis Proposal Presentation

The Thesis Proposal Presentation provides the opportunity for a student to prepare and present the research topic which he/she proposes for thesis research. The format is one of a presentation followed by discussion and suggestions for the student -- it is not an examination.

At least three weeks prior to the Thesis Proposal Presentation, a Thesis Proposal no longer than 10 text pages in length will be submitted to the Thesis Proposal Committee and to the Joint Program Education Offices. The Thesis Proposal should outline succinctly the following: (1) the proposed research topic, (2) background information, (3) the merit and importance of the proposed research (how it will lead to new discoveries or fundamental advances in marine geology and/or geophysics), (4) the proposed plan for conduct of the research, and (5) a general statement about the anticipated results. The proposal should be accompanied by a statement outlining the source of funding for the project.

A Thesis Proposal presentation typically lasts about 2 hours, beginning with a 20-30 minute presentation of the proposed research by the student, followed by questions and discussion among the student and the Committee. Interested MIT faculty and WHOI Education Assembly members who have read the Thesis Proposal may attend a student's Thesis Proposal Presentation and, at the invitation of the Committee Chair, ask questions and participate in the discussion. Issues that should be included in the discussion include the scientific merit, originality, and viability of the proposed research, the adequacy of the student's background for the proposed research, and the likelihood that the necessary resources (financial, logistical, intellectual) will be available for the research.

After completion of the discussions, the student will leave the room so that the Committee can synthesize and summarize their conclusions and recommendations for subsequent presentation to the student. The Chair will write a letter to JCMG&G, with copies to the Education Offices at WHOI and MIT, that summarizes the results of the Presentation, and recommends whether the Thesis Proposal is acceptable or must be modified, and whether the student's background is suitable for the proposed work. The Committee Chair will also transmit a written account of the results to the student with a copy to JCMG&G, the student's Advisors, and the Education Offices. If the Thesis Proposal needs modification, the Committee is expected to work with the

student to revise his/her plan, and the letter should include a timetable for modification. An acceptable plan must be developed before the beginning of the 6th semester. Once the Committee agrees that the revised Thesis Proposal is acceptable, then the Chair should write a letter to JCMG&G, with copies of the Education Offices at WHOI and MIT, informing them of the Committee's approval. If the student's background is considered inadequate, the means for overcoming this should be specified in the letter.

From JCPO Handbook:

Prior to submission of a student's thesis proposal, in consultation with the advisor(s), he/she needs to form a four to five, or more, person Advisory Committee at least two months prior to the thesis proposal defense. The principal advisor serves as chair of this committee, which must have MIT and WHOI representation (two from each institution are strongly encouraged) and include at least one current member of JCPO.

The thesis proposal document is normally to be submitted to the Advisory Committee within about four months after the successful completion of the written and oral exams, or in the cases described below, within about four months after the acceptance of a required Master's thesis. A modest extension of the preparation period may be approved by JCPO in cases when the proposal topic is sufficiently different than the pre-generals research. Two weeks after submission, the thesis proposal is to be defended before the Advisory Committee, potentially supplemented by representation from the General Exam Committee depending on the outcome of the General Exam. The length of the presentation should be discussed with the principal advisor. An essential first step is for the student to review the proposal with his or her advisor before submission. Students are also urged to solicit the response of individual committee members to the proposal before the thesis proposal oral presentation.

Upon acceptance of the thesis proposal by the Advisory Committee, a student has completed the general exam and can continue on to prepare a Ph.D. thesis. The chair of the Advisory Committee will advise JCPO (and cc the student) in writing. An electronic copy of the accepted thesis proposal should be submitted to the WHOI Academic Programs Office. The student should expect to receive a letter with feedback from the committee at this point, as with all committee meetings.
