

From JCAOSE Handbook:

Thesis Preparation and Defense (All Departments)

Thesis Committee

A student's thesis committee acts as an advisory body during the course of the student's dissertation research, monitors the student's research for satisfactory progress and examines the student on that research at the time of the thesis defense. It is the responsibility of the thesis committee to guide the student, and this should include regular meetings with the student to assess progress and make recommendations. It is the student's responsibility to set up frequent meetings with the thesis committee, including meeting as an entire group at least twice per year.

The proposed committee membership should be submitted to the student's MIT engineering department chair or graduate officer and the JCAOSE Chair for approval. The committee consists of three to six members, including at least one staff or faculty member from MIT and WHOI. Changes in the membership of the thesis committee, if deemed necessary by the thesis advisor in consultation with the student, must be submitted in writing to JCAOSE for approval.

Thesis Content

In general, a thesis consists of five parts:

1. Abstract
2. Historical review and background of the problem.
3. Chapters that develop the original contribution toward the solution of the problem.
4. Final summary of the student's work and its significance.
5. Bibliography

The student is encouraged to incorporate, as part of Item 3, published manuscripts or manuscripts that have been prepared or submitted for publication, provided that they are partly or entirely the student's original contribution. If the paper has been published and copyrighted, a waiver of the copyright must be submitted with the thesis. If multiple-authored papers are included in a thesis, the student must obtain statements from all co-authors detailing their specific contributions to the papers in question and submit them to JCAOSE. No doctoral thesis containing such multiple-authored papers will be accepted for final approval without these statements or without the explicit written permission of JCAOSE.

Detailed information about requirements for preparation and submission of the thesis to both MIT and WHOI are online at <http://mit.who.edu/thesis> and <http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/thesis-specs/>

Preparation for Thesis Defense

Students should meet with the thesis committee no more than six weeks prior to the defense to submit their drafts, take the preliminary examination and obtain final approval for the defense. Students must also submit the name of the thesis defense chair to JCAOSE for approval at least one month prior to the defense. The thesis defense chair must be either an MIT faculty member, from the student's MIT Engineering Department or a member of the WHOI Educational Assembly; someone related to the student's discipline of intent, but cannot be a member of the thesis committee.

The student's thesis committee must approve the final thesis prior to the student submitting the defendable draft to both MIT and WHOI. At least two weeks in advance of the thesis defense, a student must submit copies of the defendable thesis to the WHOI Academic Programs Office (one copy) and the student's MIT Engineering Department (two copies). It is the responsibility of the student to arrange for announcements of the thesis defense to be printed and posted at least three weeks prior to the defense. When submitting the defendable draft, a signed Dissertation Defense Notice must accompany the copy that is distributed to the institution to where the student will be defending. A copy of the form can be found at <http://mit.who.edu/thesis>.

The timetable below outlines the usual preparation procedures.

Timetable	Actions to Prepare for Defense
No More Than Six Weeks Before Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with thesis committee and obtain final approval for defense • Submit drafts to thesis committee
At Least One Month Before Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit name of the thesis defense chair to JCAOSE for approval
Three Weeks Before Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print and post announcements to publicize defense presentation
Two Weeks Before Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit copies of defendable draft to thesis committee, WHOI Academic Programs Office and the MIT engineering department
Two Weeks After Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final signed thesis is due

If a delay in holding the defense occurs, the student must submit a petition to the JCAOSE Chair in order to register and receive financial support beyond the fifth year. This must be done by the last day of final exam week of the semester in which you complete your fifth academic year.

Thesis Defense

All students in the Joint Program are required to hold a public thesis defense. The student schedules the date and reserves a room for the defense. It is also up to the student to coordinate scheduling with the thesis committee, the MIT department chair, the JCAOSE Chair, and the WHOI Education Coordinator. If any one of these people cannot attend, the student must obtain verbal approval to proceed from the JCAOSE Chair.

The public thesis defense consists of:

1. A public seminar in which the entire thesis or some significant part is presented. This presentation should be roughly 50 to 60 minutes long.
2. The presentation is followed by a period of detailed questioning by the audience.
3. A closed session of questioning by the thesis committee and voting faculty members may follow.
4. The student will then be asked to leave so that the thesis committee and voting faculty members may discuss the candidate and vote to decide whether or not it was a successful defense.
5. For some MIT departments, there are minimum requirements for the number of voting faculty members that need to be or say they will be present.
6. A simple majority vote of those present is needed to pass.
7. Thesis committee members who cannot attend the defense, must submit a letter detailing their assessment of the thesis to the Defense Chair.

The Thesis Defense Chair will:

1. Introduce the candidate.
 2. Instruct the candidate and audience to the format and formalities of the defense process.
 3. Moderate the question period.
 4. Lead private discussions and take a vote.
 5. Write a memo to the MIT department head, JCAOSE Chair, and the Associate Dean at WHOI regarding the results of the defense (and cc the WHOI Academic Programs Office (the Student Affairs Officer and the Executive Assistant to the Dean) and the MIT Joint Program Office).
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