

## Academic Preparation for M.S., Ph.D., and Ed.D. Defenses

### Ph.D. or Ed.D. Comprehensive Exams (“COMPS”) OR Qualifying Exams (“QUALS”)

The purpose of these exams is the same—for students to demonstrate depth and breadth of knowledge in their areas of academic specialization/interest, and the ability to conduct cogent research in those areas.

The defense of comprehensive (after the completion of all coursework) or qualifying (after completion of enough coursework that you are deemed ready by your committee to move forward) exams involves preparing an introductory statement about yourself and an oral summary of each of your papers. You should plan to speak for no more than about 35-45 minutes combined. Remember, that the goal of these exams (in the papers and at the defense) is for you to demonstrate depth and breadth of knowledge and the ability to conduct research in a topic area related to that knowledge. Sometimes, even if the papers are not as strong as they should be, you can bridge knowledge/ability gaps by how you perform in the defense.

The defense will begin with your chair welcoming everyone to the room—for these exams, only the committee members and you can attend, no guests (also, these exams are not advertised externally). You should also not bring refreshments (beyond what you need to discretely care for yourself) to this defense.

The absence of guests/group refreshments is due to the fact that these exams are considered a “test,” meaning that you are to complete them without content area support in the process (you can have professional technical (editing) support), so your performance on them is typically treated as “pass/fail,” thus handled in this more discrete, less “festive” fashion ☺. That said, keep in mind, everyone gets two chances to pass, so even if you fail the first time around, you will get another opportunity. Usually a student is not encouraged to move forward with these exams until their chair believes they are ready (likely to be successful), so it is generally wise to heed your chair’s advice regarding your readiness; exceptions to this rule do, however, exist and, for that reason, you are encouraged to advocate for your readiness if you feel your chair is moving too slowly—open, honest communication between you and your chair is key to your success.

The chair will indicate to the committee that you have been invited to speak for about 35-45 minutes maximum, after which each committee member will have the opportunity to comment and/or ask questions. Once all committee members have exhausted their responses to your written and oral work, you will be asked to leave the room (but not go far), the committee will deliberate, and then you will be called back into the room for the decision.

Your introductory statement about yourself should detail, briefly (5-10 minutes), what has brought you to this point—to this oral defense—personally, academically, and professionally. Your summary of each of your three papers—1) Emphasis (CSIEME Major) area, 2) Cognate (CSIEME Minor) area, and, 3) CSIEME Research area oriented toward the dissertation

proposal—(10-12 minutes each) should succinctly describe your interest in the content area, the main/key points you make about the content area, and how you might undertake a formal study to extend understanding in the content area.

You can sit or stand when you present, just be mindful of your time limit. You can bring a handout or visual aid (graphic) to share with the committee, but generally you should not rely on a powerpoint or other like media, instead speak from an outline, note cards, and/or memory ☺. You should think of these exams as you beginning to become an expert in your content/methodology, but still defer to your committee.

If you will need media support the day of the defense (e.g., to Skype in a committee member), please contact Mr. Young Kim ([Young.Kim@unlv.edu](mailto:Young.Kim@unlv.edu)) at least two weeks in advance to ensure that he and/or one of his staff members can be available to assist.

Again, this defense is not externally marketed.

Once your chair has secured a defense date and time with the rest of the committee members, you will be asked to check with the Teaching and Learning Departmental staff to reserve a room for the defense and communicate the room number to the committee.

Be sure to bring the appropriate form for signature with you to the defense (see <http://csieme.us/benchmarksformsoverview/>) and Once the form is completed by you and the committee members, make a copy for your records, and then hand in the original to Ms. Nanette Meyer in the Teaching and Learning Departmental Office (CEB 368A, CEB 342A, CEB 351-357).

### **M.S. Thesis Proposal or Ph.D./Ed.D. Dissertation Proposal**

The defense of the thesis or dissertation proposal involves preparing an introductory statement about yourself and an oral summary of each of your three chapters (1-intro, 2-lit review, 3-methodology). You should plan to speak for no more than about 35-45 minutes total. Remember, that the goal of proposal is for you to demonstrate your preparedness to implement your thesis or dissertation study. Sometimes, even if the chapters are not as strong as they should be, you can bridge knowledge/ability gaps by how you perform in the defense.

The defense will begin with your chair welcoming everyone to the room—for the proposal, committee members and guests can attend (though the defense is not advertised externally). You can bring refreshments (for yourself, the committee members, and guests) to this defense if you choose to do so (be advised that people do not usually eat very much (so less is more ☺) and typically prefer beverages (especially coffee/tea for morning defenses) and healthier snacks, like fruit).

The presence of guests/group refreshments is due to the fact that this defense is considered more of a formality, meaning that you work with your chair and committee members to

complete your chapters (they act as content area/methodology supports, and you can also seek out professional technical (editing) support), so your performance in this defense is typically treated as likely to be successful, thus handled in this more public, more “festive,” fashion 😊. This is because a student is not encouraged to move forward with this defense until their chair believes they are ready (likely to be successful), so it is generally wise to heed your chair’s advice regarding your readiness; exceptions to this rule do, however, exist and, for that reason, you are encouraged to advocate for your readiness if you feel your chair is moving too slowly—open, honest communication between you and your chair is key to your success.

The chair will indicate to the committee that you have been invited to speak for about 35-45 minutes maximum, after which each committee member will have the opportunity to comment and/or ask questions. Once all committee members have exhausted their responses to your written and oral work, you will be asked to leave the room (but not go far), the committee will deliberate, and then you will be called back into the room for the decision.

Your introductory statement about yourself should detail, briefly (5-10 minutes), what has brought you to this point—to this oral defense—personally, academically, and professionally. Your summary of each of your chapters (10-12 minutes) should succinctly describe how you plan to enact your study—intellectually and practically, and the relationship between the two.

You should stand when you present, and be mindful of your time limit. You can bring handouts or visual aids (graphics) to share with the committee, and you can also speak/from rely on memory, an outline, note cards, powerpoint and/or other like media. You should think of this defense as you being a co-expert in your content/methodology along with your co-expert committee members, so be prepared to engage in equitable, spirited back and forth exchanges about your work with your committee members.

If you will need media support the day of the defense (to Skype in a committee member and/or for powerpoint, etc.), please contact Mr. Young Kim ([Young.Kim@unlv.edu](mailto:Young.Kim@unlv.edu)) at least two weeks in advance to ensure that he and/or one of his staff members can be available to assist.

Again, this defense is not externally marketed.

Once your chair has secured a defense date and time with the rest of the committee members, you will be asked to check with the Teaching and Learning Departmental staff to reserve a room for the defense and communicate the room number to the committee.

Be prepared to complete the appropriate forms for signature after the defense (see [Information about Program of Study-Related Form Changes](#), as well as <http://csieme.us/benchmarksformsoverview-ms/> (M.S.) and <http://csieme.us/benchmarksformsoverview/> (Ph.D. and Ed.D.)).

## M.S. Thesis or Ph.D./Ed.D. Dissertation

The defense of the thesis or dissertation involves preparing an introductory statement about yourself and an oral summary of each of your five chapters (1-intro, 2-lit review, 3-methodology, 4-findings, 5-implications). Because the proposal defense focused on chapters 1-3, the bulk of the thesis or dissertation defense should be spent on chapters 4-5, only briefly reviewing chapters 1-3, giving special attention to anything that changed in them as a result of the implementation of the study. You should plan to speak for no more than about 35-45 minutes total. Remember, that the goal of proposal is for you to demonstrate your expertise in the content/methodology of your thesis or dissertation study. Sometimes, even if the chapters are not as strong as they should be, you can bridge knowledge/ability gaps by how you perform in the defense.

The defense will begin with your chair welcoming everyone to the room—for the thesis or dissertation, committee members and guests can attend (also, the defense *is* advertised externally). You can bring refreshments (for yourself, the committee members, and guests) to this defense if you choose to do so (be advised that people do not usually eat very much (so less is more ☺) and typically prefer beverages (especially coffee/tea for morning defenses) and healthier snacks, like fruit).

The presence of guests/group refreshments is due to the fact that this defense is considered more of a formality, meaning that you work with your chair and committee members to implement your study and analyze/write up the results of it (they act as implementation/analysis supports, and you can also seek out professional technical (editing) support), so your performance in this defense is typically treated as likely to be successful, thus handled in this more public, more “festive” fashion ☺. This is because a student is not encouraged to move forward with this defense until their chair believes they are ready (likely to be successful), so it is generally wise to heed your chair’s advice regarding your readiness; exceptions to this rule do, however, exist and, for that reason, you are encouraged to advocate for your readiness if you feel your chair is moving too slowly—open, honest communication between you and your chair is key to your success.

The chair will indicate to the committee that you have been invited to speak for about 35-45 minutes maximum, after which each committee member will have the opportunity to comment and/or ask questions. Once all committee members have exhausted their responses to your written and oral work, you will be asked to leave the room (but not go far), the committee will deliberate, and then you will be called back into the room for the decision.

Your introductory statement about yourself should detail, briefly (5-10 minutes), what has brought you to this point—to this oral defense—personally, academically, and professionally. Your summary of each of your chapters (3-5 minutes on chapters 1-3, and 10-12 minutes on chapters 4-5) should succinctly describe how you enacted your study—intellectually and practically, and the relationship between the two, as well as what you learned from so doing, especially how your work “fills the gap” in knowledge that existed prior to your study being

conducted and the implications of your work for the field moving forward (e.g., areas for future research your study has uncovered).

You should stand when you present, and be mindful of your time limit. You can bring handouts or visual aids (graphics) to share with the committee, and you can also speak/from rely on memory, an outline, note cards, powerpoint and/or other like media. You should think of this defense as you being the expert on your study, and your committee members being colleagues with whom you are sharing your work, so be prepared to “own the floor” as you respond to questions from committee members about your work, as well as to “push back” against challenges from them on it.

If you will need media support the day of the defense (to Skype in a committee member and/or for powerpoint, etc.), please contact Mr. Young Kim ([Young.Kim@unlv.edu](mailto:Young.Kim@unlv.edu)) at least two weeks in advance to ensure that he and/or one of his staff members can be available to assist.

Again, this defense *is* externally marketed. As soon as your defense date, time, and location (see below) are confirmed, please contact Ms. Nanette Meyer ([Nanette.Meyer@unlv.edu](mailto:Nanette.Meyer@unlv.edu)) to let her know these details, as well as the title of your thesis or dissertation, and the names of your committee chair and members.

Once your chair has secured a defense date and time with the rest of the committee members, you will be asked to check with the Teaching and Learning Departmental staff to reserve a room for the defense and communicate the room number to the committee.

Be prepared to complete the appropriate forms for signature after the defense (see [Information about Program of Study-Related Form Changes](#), as well as <http://csieme.us/benchmarksformsoverview-ms/> (M.S.) and <http://csieme.us/benchmarksformsoverview/> (Ph.D. and Ed.D.)).