

Dissertation Defense requirements for the Human Genetics Program (2022)

- 1) Completion of 72 total credit hours of Vanderbilt University Graduate level credits with a GPA of 3.0 or better
- 2) Completion of all required HGEN program courses
- 3) Passing all qualifying exams to establish candidacy
- 4) Completion of a clinical rotation, to be developed and determined by the dissertation committee
- 5) Publication (Accepted and in press are ok) of a primary research manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal
- 6) Approval of all members of the dissertation committee that the student may defend the dissertation
- 7) Dissertation must be defended within 4 years of candidacy for the degree, excepting extensions from the Graduate School and leaves of absence
- 8) Submission of the completed dissertation to all members of the dissertation committee a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the defense date
- 9) Submission of the dissertation for format review at VIREO vireo.library.vanderbilt.edu, at least 2 weeks prior to the defense date
- 10) Submission of dissertation defense and intention to graduate forms to the graduate school

Dissertation Defense Process

The dissertation defense has three components: Approval by the committee of the written dissertation, the public defense of the presentation of the research in the dissertation, and the private defense to the committee. The public Defense is traditionally 1 hour long, with a ~45-minute presentation and time for questions. The private defense with committee members is also traditionally scheduled for 1 hour, immediately after the public defense. After the private defense, the members of the committee will confer and determine whether the defense was successful. If so, then the faculty will sign the form for the Graduate School and the title page for the dissertation. The committee may require revisions to the dissertation. If so, then these must be implemented and approved before the process can be completed. The student will submit the signed dissertation title page and any revisions to the dissertation required by the committee to the Graduate School for final approval. Please refer to the Graduate Catalog for additional information about formatting, copyright, and other requirements. If the dissertation committee decides the defense was *not* successful, the committee will determine the next steps in coordination with the Graduate School.

The HGEN program will purchase 3 copies of the dissertation for each student, one for the program, one for the VU library, and one for the student.

Once the final dissertation is approved by the Graduate School, the student may take part in the commencement ceremony. The entire process must be completed by March 24th for May graduates. Otherwise, they may participate in the next year's commencement.

Graduate Student Responsibilities

- Fulfilling all requirements above
- Scheduling the defense (2 hours)
- Writing the dissertation
- Submitting the dissertation to VIREO and committee members by 2 weeks prior to the defense
- Notifying HGEN program manager of the scheduled defense with adequate time to submit paperwork 3 weeks prior to the defense
- Preparing the presentation of the dissertation for the defense

Mentor Responsibilities

- Reading and providing feedback on the dissertation document
- Reviewing the presentation prepared for the defense
- Attend the defense

Committee chair Responsibilities

- Reading and providing feedback on the dissertation document
- Will convene and dismiss the defense, as well as keep time and lead the agenda
- Attends the entire defense period, plus 15 minutes to communicate results to the student if necessary (2 hours and 15 minutes)
- Will compile feedback for the dissertation from committee members and communicate these to the student
- Will communicate the results of the dissertation in-person to the student at the end of the defense. This news should not be given one-on-one, and there should be at least 3 people in the room

Committee member Responsibilities

- Reading and providing feedback on the dissertation document
- Attends the entire exam period (2 hours)
- Asks questions relevant to the dissertation during the exam
- Provides their opinion about the outcome of the dissertation during the committee discussion and votes for the outcome they feel is most appropriate
- Clearly articulates the conditions they feel are necessary to progress to a pass, if any