

**The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth  
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences**

**Guidelines for the MS/PhD Defense**

- The purpose of the defense is to facilitate a thorough evaluation of the thesis/dissertation and the student's understanding of the research, as well as the student's ability to report information to the scientific community in a well-organized and interesting form.
- The defense consists of two parts: a public seminar on campus and an examination. In the public seminar, the student will make a 45 to 60 minute oral presentation, including a detailed description of the background, rationale, materials and methods, results and conclusions appropriate to the research. Following the presentation, the student will respond to questions from the audience.
- Immediately thereafter, and at a location announced at the end of the seminar, the Advisory Committee will examine the student on the thesis/dissertation. Any member of the GSBS Faculty who attends the public presentation may participate in the examination to the extent described below. Others wishing to attend must be approved by the Advisory Committee.
- The student's Advisor will serve as moderator of the examination. The student will be expected to respond to questions from those attending on any aspect of the written thesis/dissertation or the material presented at the seminar.
- After the defense, the student will meet privately with the Advisory Committee to discuss the results. Finally, the Advisory Committee (in executive session, if desired) will determine what recommendation to make to the Dean and the Academic Standards Committee.
- **The Committee may conclude that the student has passed, or it may require additional research, modifications to the thesis/dissertation, and/or another defense.**
- Following the defense, the results of this meeting will be communicated through the Office of Academic Affairs to the Dean and the Academic Standards Committee for their information and approval.
- Within one week of the defense, any GSBS faculty member who has read the student's thesis/dissertation and has attended the defense may write directly to the Dean to provide an evaluation of the student's performance. In reaching a final decision on whether to award the MS/PhD or require further work and/or another defense, the Dean will take into consideration the recommendation of the Advisory Committee and other comments received from GSBS Faculty. In particular cases, the Dean may solicit additional evaluations of the thesis/ dissertation from experts in the field either within or outside the GSBS Faculty.
- The decision of the Dean will be communicated to the student and the Advisory Committee within one month of the defense.

