

ADP Oral Defense Tips

Format and Length

- The Defense takes about 60 minutes and is conducted virtually with your entire Committee.
- Your presentation should be 20-30 minutes and formatted as follows:
 - Proposal Defense:
 - Includes introduction, background literature, purpose statement, relevance of project, and implementation plan.
 - Spend most of the time (10-15 minutes) on the proposed plan or methods.
 - Report Defense:
 - Includes introduction, background literature, purpose statement, relevance of project, implementation process, results or findings, and implications and conclusions.
 - Spend most of the time (10-15 minutes) on your findings or results.
- During the last 30 minutes of the Defense, you will answer questions from the Committee.
- Your Chair will moderate the Defense.

Preparation

- Schedule the date of your Defense at least two weeks in advance.
- Send your Committee the PowerPoint presentation, at least two days prior to the Defense.
- Consider inviting others to your Defense, with your Chair's permission.
- Know your Proposal or Report thoroughly.
- Rehearse the presentation multiple times, possibly with an audience to get feedback.
- Make sure your presentation rehearsal fits within the time available (20-30 minutes).
- Consider which questions the Committee might ask and prepare responses for them.
- Use a PowerPoint presentation to keep the Defense organized and to stay on task.
- Be sure to:
 - Not read directly from your slides. Keep your presentation conversational, but still scholarly.
 - Avoid putting entire sentences or too much material on the slides. These should contain an outline of what you are covering.
 - Check for glaring errors on the slides (e.g., writing, spelling, and formatting).
 - Consider using graphs or other visual displays to communicate your project plan or findings.

Additional Considerations

- You are providing a brief overview of the proposed project (Proposal) or findings (Report), so don't read lines from your paper or presentation slides.
- The Committee is on your side and wants you to succeed, so don't be afraid of them. However, do be sure to listen carefully to their questions and answer them directly. Don't hesitate to ask them to repeat a question if you don't understand what they are asking.
- Defending your project doesn't mean you can't be open to suggestions or recognize the weaknesses in your work. In fact, doing these things makes your Defense well-rounded and demonstrates your critical thinking skills.
- It is acceptable to say, "I don't know," when answering a question from the Committee, but consider expanding on this response to show how you might find out or speculate on the answer to the question. With this being said, know when to stop talking. Avoid rambling when you are not prepared to discuss a topic.

- Slow down if you have a tendency to go fast when you are nervous. Take a few breaths before you get started, and plan slight pauses to remind you to slow down as you are presenting. The more rehearsal you do, the easier this will be.
- Have fun and enjoy the process. You've made it this far for a reason, and you know your project better than anyone else.

Summary

- Be fully prepared (rehearse multiple times).
- Log on and call in early in order to take care of any technological issues.
- Stay within the time limit.
- Keep it simple.
- Focus on the proposed methods (Proposal) or findings (Report).
- Speak clearly and DON'T read.
- Have fun!