

*Script to be read at the beginning of the defense by the moderator:*

## **Dissertation Defense Script – Sample**

### **Moderator Introduces the Defense Process**

Thank you for joining us today, for [Name's] dissertation defense. I'm [Name] from [Dept.] and I will be moderating the proceedings.

In the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, we ask that you hold questions until after the candidate's presentation. After [Name's] talk, questioning will proceed in stages, starting with the general audience and ending with the dissertation committee. I will introduce each stage of questioning as it occurs. For all members of the audience, please keep in mind that although it is tempting for faculty to answer questions or clarify points, the goal of this exercise is for the student to independently defend the work that has been completed.

### **Moderator Introduces Committee Members**

The dissertation committee members are: [Introduce each by Name, titles, starting with Chair and ending with External Member]

### **Moderator Initiates the Presentation**

Now [Name] will present his/her study, [Title].

**Moderator Initiates the Presentation Now [Name]**

Stage	Time	Active Participation
<p>Stage 1: Formal presentation by the candidate followed by questions from the general audience.</p>	<p>No more than 45 minutes</p>	<p>General audience (students, practitioners, non-graduate faculty)</p>
<p><b>Note:</b> Questions during this stage should be initiated by the General Audience and not the graduate faculty or committee members. A graduate faculty or committee member may ask follow-up questions or comments pertaining to a question initiated by the general audience. The moderator will ask the graduate faculty/committee members if there are any follow-up questions once the student has responded to the question initiated by the general audience member. Once the student has responded to any follow-up question, the moderator resumes questioning by the general audience. The key in this stage is that the general audience is given the opportunity to initiate questions and the graduate faculty/committee may ask follow-up questions.</p> <p>When there are no other questions to be initiated by the general audience the Moderator concludes the formal presentation/general question period and announces that the oral examination will proceed with questions from members of the graduate faculty, who are not on the dissertation committee. The entire audience is welcome to remain in attendance.</p>		
<p>Graduate Faculty Questions</p>	<p>~ 15-20 minutes</p>	<p>Graduate faculty of SHRS and the greater University who are not members of the dissertation committee</p>
<p><b>Note:</b> Questions during this stage should be initiated by the graduate faculty. The Moderator will ask the committee members if they have any follow-up questions/comments once the student has responded to the question initiated by the graduate faculty member. Once the student has responded to any follow-up question, the moderator resumes questioning by the graduate faculty.</p> <p>When there are no further questions to be initiated by the graduate faculty, the Moderator concludes this stage and announces that the oral examination will proceed with questions from the dissertation committee. At this point, the Moderator should stop the proceedings momentarily and allow anyone in the audience who wants to leave to do so.</p>		
<p>Dissertation Committee Questions</p>	<p>There is no time limit but this section usually lasts ~ 30 minutes.</p>	<p>Members of the Dissertation and any other members of the audience who wish to stay</p>
<p>When the dissertation committee indicates there are no further questions the Moderator concludes this stage and the audience, other than the Dissertation Committee and Moderator are excused.</p>		
<p>Deliberation and Recommendations</p>	<p>Time as needed</p>	<p>Members of the Dissertation Committee are present. The moderator is a silent observer during this portion. The candidate is present for probing questions if the committee deems this necessary, but absent during deliberations, and the present again during recommendations and procedural discussions.</p>

## Moderator Checklist

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Defense Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Moderator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

During the defense, the moderator will complete the following check list, to be submitted to Courtney Fleck, [cof21@pitt.edu](mailto:cof21@pitt.edu), who will forward it to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Please record actual times for each portion of the defense. These data will help with auditing the dissertation defense process.

### Procedural Check List

- |       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| YES   | NO | Script was read to introduce the dissertation defense   |
| _____ |    | Record the length of the student's talk (~45 minutes)   |
| _____ |    | Record the length of general audience questioning (~ 10 minutes)                                  |
| _____ |    | Record the length of graduate faculty questioning (~15 - 20 minutes)                              |
| _____ |    | Record the length of dissertation committee questioning (~ 30 minutes)                            |
| YES   | NO | Was student further questioned in private session with the dissertation committee?                |
| _____ |    | Record the length of the private questioning session if held                                      |
| _____ |    | Record length of deliberations  |
| YES   | NO | Was the student notified of the final committee decision?   |
| YES   | NO | Was student provided with specific details on finalizing the document?                            |
| YES   | NO | Did faculty need to be reminded during the proceedings to refrain from answering for the student? |