

Dissertation Prospectus Defense Guidelines for the Economics Department¹

- The purpose of the 4th year Dissertation Prospectus Defense (DPD) is to demonstrate to your committee that you are well on your way to being able to complete a satisfactory dissertation by the end of your 6th year, and to go on the economics job market (academic or non-academic) in the Fall of your 6th year.
- The DPD should take place during the Fall semester of your 4th year. If you do not pass the DPD, you may retake it. However, per [GSAS policy](#), you must pass the DPD by May 31 of your 4th year.
- Typically, your prospectus committee will consist of 3 faculty members; one must be your main (co-)advisor, and at least two must be from the [list of approved dissertation advisors in Economics](#). For BusEc Track students, your main (co-)advisor must be from the CBS Economics division.
- Consult with your main advisor as early as possible before the start of your 4th year about what they/the committee expects for a successful defense, both in terms of substance and format.
- Usually, a prospectus defense occurs during a colloquium time slot—so it lasts 60 minutes—but it is closed: i.e., only the candidate and the committee are present. You present a summary of your completed and planned research, using slides.
- Each field may define expectations as it sees fit. In general, by the time of the DPD you should have one completed paper and written materials for a potential JMP or the strongest available paper. If you are waiting for a dataset, analysis of a training dataset is expected.
- You should provide your committee with written materials—again, consult with them about their expectations before the start of the Fall semester of your 4th year.
- Logistics: Inform the Economics Graduate Program Manager when your DPD is scheduled. Complete the top half of the [prospectus report](#), submit it to the committee for signatures following the defense, and then return it to the Economics Graduate Program Manager. Prospectus defenses are expected to take place in person. GSAS approval is required for the remote participation of any committee members.

¹ Last modified 12/18/25 by SSG