

Scenario: PhD Candidate hopes to graduate during the Spring 20XX Semester.

1. To graduate in Spring 20XX, a doctoral candidate must defend by the Spring final defense deadline in late March set by the Graduate School. In Spring 2026, for example, this deadline is March 27.
2. To schedule a defense ahead of March 27, the last possible date is February 20th or the Friday before, if the 20th is on a weekend. Remember, final defenses must be scheduled by the 20th of the month prior to the defense.

Given this information, here's what you might recommend to your advisee:

- January 1 of Spring 20XX: Full draft of dissertation should be to the dissertation director / committee.
- By/before January 15, the committee reviews and determines whether Candidate is ready for final defense.
- If YES → Candidate proceeds to complete the scheduling form with the committee—this form must be to the graduate school by end of day on the 20th with all signatures/approvals completed, meaning the Candidate should submit the form for signatures and routing no less than 2-3 days ahead of the 20th.
- If NO → Candidate should take feedback and revise to submit a new draft by February 1.
 - Recommend that the Candidate work to revise and resubmit a final draft by February 1 and repeat the cycle above.
 - If the candidate is still deemed as not ready to defend, the advisor should talk with the candidate about defending later in the semester or early Summer for a Summer graduation timeline.