



Strategies for Handling Midpoint Review Question & Answer Period

After your 20-minute oral presentation, the panel will have a Question & Answer period. The panel may seem intimidating and ask challenging questions, but the panel wants you to succeed. The goal is for you to have an excellent final project and portfolio that will help you land your dream job. The panel members don't ask questions in order to undermine your proposal, but to help you identify areas that might need more development in order for you to be successful.

They will ask you questions to make sure you have done enough research and are on the right track to complete your thesis project. They will ask questions, based on their expertise in their field, to make sure you have adequately thought through your proposal, and that you will be able to complete it to a standard worthy of a Master's thesis.

If you feel that the questions are very challenging, remain calm and view this as an opportunity to revise your proposal for a better outcome. Present a can-do spirit, but be honest about your abilities and areas where you need to develop.

Here are some tips to help you be prepared and handle the Q&A session with confidence and professionalism.

1. Predict questions before your presentation. Brainstorm questions you think the committee will ask, then rehearse or outline your answers. Having answers ready will make you feel more in control and give you credibility and stature as the expert.
2. Listen to the entire question before you begin to answer any questions, even if you think you know the answer immediately. Too many people start responding to a question before the entire question is even asked. Not waiting to hear the entire questions can result in you providing a response that had nothing to do with the question. Listening to the whole question also shows respect for the questioner and gives you more time to prepare to answer.
3. Credit the person for asking the question. You may say something like, "That was a great question" or, "Glad you asked that question" or even, "I thought you might ask that question".
4. Confirm that you understood the question. Even if you are a native English speaker, repeat the question back rephrasing it. For example you might say, "You've asked how my project fits into the context of historical and contemporary work." Repeating and rephrasing the question will give you the chance to clarify

the meaning. It will also give you a bit of time to phrase your answer. Also, even though you heard the question, others in the room might not have, so it helps them as well.

5. Respond to the question as directly and as honestly as you can. Don't give too much unnecessary information that isn't called for. If you do NOT know an answer to a question, do not try to fake it. Be honest, and tell them you do not know but promise to research the answer for them, and then really DO follow up. Write down any questions or comments the committee asks and don't forget to follow up in a timely manner.
6. Answer to everyone. Maintain eye contact with all participants in the room and don't engage in "private dialogue" during your Mid-Point Review presentation.
7. Bridge to the next question by saying, "Does that answer your question?" or "Is that the kind of information you were looking for?" If they say "yes," you have permission to move on to another question. This also gives them one more opportunity to say "No" and clarify their question more by asking it again.

Here are some commonly asked questions. You should prepare in advance how you would answer them if asked.

- What are your strengths? Be positive but do not misrepresent yourself. The goal of the midpoint panel is to identify your strengths and evaluate your ability to complete the proposed project.
- What are your weaknesses / areas you need to improve?
- How will your course selection and plan for directed study help you improve? The panel is made of advocates for your success, not critics. Present a positive attitude, but be honest about your expertise and skills that you need to improve.
- What differentiates your project and makes it unique?
- How does your project identify you as an artist with a unique vision? How is it different from work in the same vein or same industry? What makes your work distinctive compared to other students'?
- What is the question you fear most? Be prepared to answer it.
- What questions have come up in your critiques? Be prepared to address those.
- Some other questions could include the following:
 - Is your timeline realistic?
 - Is your project too large in scope?
 - Is your project too far beyond your skill set?
 - What are the expenses involved in making this project?
 - Do you have sources for materials and equipment lined up?

- Why should someone hire you over other students?
- Do you have contacts in the industry that you'll need? Have you contacted them?
- Are there other services or people you need for collaboration? What are their time commitments?
- Have you identified instructors or professionals you would like as your Directed Study supervisor? Have you contacted them? What is their availability? If you are working with a professional outside of the Academy, expect them to put their own business commitments first.
- Is your project and timeline realistic?
- Do you have a backup plan?
- Thinking about the future: Where would you like to work? Would you prefer to work in a larger or smaller company? Why? How would you fit into that company? Do you plan to live in a big city or a small town? Are you versatile in your field?

Finally, here are some additional resources to help you with public speaking:

Source:

<http://arc.academyart.edu/esl/whatmakesgood.asp>

http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Alan_Fairweather

<http://www.ljlseminars.com/question.htm>