SO, YOU ARE ABOUT TO DEFEND YOUR MA? This is what to expect  
(Sociology Department, 2013)

There is an external examiner (external to the Department but not the University) for MAs, and the Chair is the Head or a delegate. The Supervisor and a second examiner (usually the Second Supervisor) are also present. The candidate is allowed to look at his or her thesis during the defense. Please remember to dress professionally and to bring a bottle of water in case water is not supplied.

1. The Committee convenes, and the Chair makes sure everyone is present, then the Chair asks the Candidate to leave the room, but to remain close by.

2. With the Candidate out of room, the Chair addresses any concerns and the examination procedures are discussed. The order of questioning starts with the external examiner, the second examiner, then goes to the Supervisor.

3. The Candidate is invited back into the room. The Candidate may want to make a short preliminary summary of the thesis (most do not). The Chair may begin with an easy, general question designed to set the Candidate at ease, or may forego this privilege and move right into committee member questions.

4. The first round of questions begins. Each examiner typically gets 15-20 minutes.

5. After this is done, there may be a second round of questioning depending on what the examiners decide.

6. Once the questioning is complete, the Candidate is asked to leave the room again, while the committee members deliberate.

7. The Chair reads out the choices: Pass, (typos and "minor modifications" allowed); Referred (whole sections need rewriting, an area omitted must be added); or Failed.

8. The Candidate is invited back into the room, congratulated (if appropriate) and told what needs to be done before final submission of the thesis (uploading to QSpace). These changes are normally submitted to the Supervisor and approved by him/her. In the case of a referred thesis, the revisions typically involve a second committee member. The Committee may be reconvened in the case of a referred thesis. The Committee remains in existence until the thesis is passed.

9. Once the required revisions are complete (for a passed thesis with minor revisions such as typos, this is usually done the next day or so) to the satisfaction of those responsible for overseeing the changes, the SGS along with the Sociology Graduate Assistant are notified by the Supervisor that the corrections have been made, and the Candidate uploads the final version of the thesis to Qspace.

9. At the defense, the form indicating the decision of the Committee is signed by committee members and other forms re. Copyright and so on are signed by the Candidate. The Committee is dismissed.