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

The PhD examination committee is made up of at least the Chair (assigned by the School of Graduate Studies and external to the Department), an examiner external to the University, an examiner external to the Department from the University, the Department Head or delegate, and the Supervisor and normally two internal members from the Department who are usually members of the Supervisory Committee. Typically PhD examinations are closed, but the Candidate may ask that it be open to allow others to attend the defense however these invitees cannot take part in the defense. 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 and is introduced to each other. Then the Chair asks the Candidate to leave the room, but to remain close by.

2. With the Candidate out of room, the Chair reads out the written comments submitted by all examiners beforehand. The Chair also addresses any concerns and overviews the examination procedures. The order of questioning starts with the external examiner, then the internal/external examiner, the Head or delegate, any member internal to the Department but not the Supervisor, then it 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. Typically the external has about 30 minutes to question the Candidate in the first round. All others have about 20 minutes each.

5. 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.