



Gemstone Thesis Conference Discussant Job Description

Discussants serve as the panel of experts to which Gemstone senior teams present and defend their research at the [annual team thesis conference](#). Ideally, a discussant possesses ample knowledge about the subject matter of your team's research and is able to critically evaluate your draft thesis to provide suggestions for the final thesis.

Here is a list of what is expected of discussants:

- Read the draft of the team's thesis, which will be mailed to them approximately two weeks before the thesis conference
- Prepare a brief written critique of the draft thesis to give to the team at the thesis conference
- Attend the team's presentation and public question and answer session at the thesis conference (1 hour)
- After the presentation, ask the team pertinent questions about their research
- Meet with the team privately (along with the other discussants) for an additional hour after the thesis conference to provide the team additional feedback on their presentation and draft thesis

Sample language to use to invite people to serve as discussants:

Dear XXXX:

My name is XXX and I am a member of the XXX team in the Gemstone Program at the University of Maryland. The Gemstone Program is a four-year, multidisciplinary, undergraduate research program for honors students. For the past three years, my team (X # of students) has been studying XXX in order to XXX. We have collected and analyzed original data and are currently writing our thesis, which we will present and defend April 11, 2014.

I am writing to ask you to serve as one of my team's five discussants for our thesis. Discussants serve as the panel of experts to which Gemstone senior teams present and defend their research at the annual team thesis conference in April. My team could truly benefit from your expertise in (or experience with) XXX.

My team is tentatively scheduled to present on (day) at (time) at the University of Maryland. Serving as a discussant is not overly time consuming. Here is a brief list of what is expected of discussants:

- Read the draft of the team's thesis, which will be mailed to them approximately two weeks before the thesis conference
- Prepare a brief written critique of the draft thesis to give to the team at the thesis conference
- Attend the team's presentation and public question and answer session at the thesis conference (1 hour)
- After the presentation, ask the team pertinent questions about their research
- Meet with the team privately (along with the other discussants) for an additional hour after the thesis conference to provide the team additional feedback on their presentation and draft thesis

My team would really appreciate your support. Please let me know by (give a deadline date to get back to you – please know that your list needs to be submitted to the Gemstone office no later than 11/1, so set your internal deadlines much earlier) if you are able to serve as a discussant for my team. If you agree to take on this role, the Gemstone Program office will follow up with additional information that contain all of the information that you will need for the day.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
XXXX