



VIRTUAL DEFENCE PROTOCOL

This remote protocol applies for Virtual Defences held on or after March 19, 2020.

This document outlines the main procedures for a Virtual Defence. There are also guidelines for the examining committee, which are emailed with the Exam Reminder, and guidelines and advice to candidates, which are sent when the exam is booked.

Virtual Defence

Virtual defences are supported on Zoom, following recommendations by UBC IT and AV.

Doctoral Exams staff will normally set these meetings. Supervisors who have UBC Zoom accounts and are familiar with the platform may also be asked to set the meeting. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should the Zoom meeting be created by the candidate.**

Information about booking the virtual defence will be sent with the regular defence email notifications. The Exam Reminder sent to the committee one week before the defence is also the regular timeline for setting up the Zoom meeting. Doctoral Exams Staff will send confirmations of the virtual defence, which will include specific instructions on joining the defence. Questions should be directed to graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca.

Virtual Defences need to be booked 4 weeks in advance, as is the rule for in-person defences. Even though physical rooms are not required, there are limits on the number of simultaneous defences, and the number of defences per day based on the ability of the Doctoral Exams team to support the required virtual exam processes.

All required participants, outlined below, are presumed to have agreed to participate in a virtual defence. The mode of defence should be indicated at the time the defence is booked using the Online Booking form. If an in-person defence needs to change to hybrid or virtual, the research supervisor should contact the Doctoral Exams team promptly.

Participants

Virtual defences give preference to participants required for **quorum**. The required participants are as follows:

- candidate
- examination chair
- two supervisory committee members (supervisors, co-supervisors, or committee members)
- two G+PS-approved university examiners

A third committee member and/or the external examiner may also attend. Please indicate if these committee members will attend at the time the defence is booked, in the appropriate section of the Online Booking form. The Doctoral Exams team should be copied on all correspondence with the external examiner.

It is important to note that while the approved platform is capable of supporting a virtual defence with multiple participants, the quality of both the audio and visual components will depend on the quality of each participant's internet connection. We recommend connecting from a location with a reliable internet connection. UBC VPN may be turned off if it is slowing down the video connection. Zoom allows testing the connection prior to the defence, and all participants should take the opportunity to do so. As we cannot control the quality of each participant's internet connection, participants should be prepared for technical issues (e.g. poor audio or visual quality, dropped connections) and the chair should be prepared to uphold the responsibilities as outlined below.



Audience

Audiences are permitted to join the Zoom meeting for a Virtual Defence. Audience members are welcome to join individually, or to gather in a physical location and join the Zoom meeting with one account.

A Doctoral Exams team member will be present at the start of each exam to facilitate the inclusion of the audience, and will be available to assist the exam chair with managing the audience.

The Zoom URL should not be circulated to anyone but the committee, candidate and approved audience members; it should never be posted publicly.

Responsibilities of the Chair

1. Represent the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies following the procedures set out in the Doctoral Exam Instructions.
2. Moderate the defence proceedings; ensure fairness.
3. Outline the potential technical issues that may occur, encourage patience and kindness towards each other, and describe the chair's responsibility to suspend the defence if there are technical difficulties that compromise the defence.
4. Ensure that any questions posed in the External Examiner's Report are addressed by the candidate during the question period.
5. Chair the *in camera* discussion of the examining committee and convey the outcome to the candidate.
6. Ensure the candidate is removed (either disconnected or in a break-out room) for the entirety of the *in camera* discussion.
7. Submit a report on the Final Doctoral Examination to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies using the form provided.

Important note: the Chair has the authority to discontinue a remote connection at any time they judge that it is interfering with the proper conduct of the examination. If one or more participants drop from the connection or lose audio, the defence must be halted until the participant's connection or audio is restored. If the connection or audio cannot be restored after 30 minutes or if the total amount of time lost exceeds 60 minutes, the Chair **must** suspend the defence and notify graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca immediately. The Doctoral Exams team will communicate with the Candidate and their Supervisor regarding rescheduling the defence.