



DOCTORAL EXAMS OFFICE

In response to the concerns surrounding the COVID-19 virus, G+PS, in consultation with UBC IT, has developed a process to support total virtual participation in a doctoral defence.

This remote protocol applies for defences held on or after March 19, 2020 until further notice.

This document outlines the main procedures for a Virtual Defence. There are also guidelines for Faculty, 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 will be supported on Zoom, following recommendations by UBC IT and AV. Following the migration of UBC Zoom data to a Canadian data centre, UBC AV is no longer supporting the UBC VMR application for defences.

Doctoral Exams staff will normally set these meetings. Supervisors who have UBC Zoom accounts and are familiar with the platform may also set the meeting. **IN 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 now 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 our office to support the required virtual exam processes.

All required participants, outlined below, must agree to participate in a virtual defence. This agreement should be indicated at the time the defence is booked using the updated Online Booking form.

Participants

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

- The Doctoral Candidate
- The 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 can be approved attend. Requests for approval should be made at the time the defence is booked, in the appropriate section of the Online Booking form.

It is important to note that while the approved platforms are capable of supporting a virtual defence with six 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.

G+PS Doctoral Exams Office has the ability to support the inclusion of a small invited audience, following the rules outlined in the ***Guidelines for Audience Attendance at a Virtual Defence***. If the candidate and supervisor wish to explore the possibility of audience attendance, they should contact the Doctoral Exams Office at least 2 weeks before the defence date.

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.
2. Moderate the defence proceedings; ensure fairness.
 - a. 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.
3. Ensure that any questions posed in the External Examiner's Report are addressed by the Candidate during the question period.
4. Chair the *in camera* discussion of the Examining Committee and convey the outcome to the Candidate.
 - a. Ensure the Candidate is removed (either disconnected or in a break-out room) for the entirety of the *in camera* discussion.
5. 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.