

Guidelines for Remote Dissertation Defense in a Public Health Emergency

Current Graduate School [policy](#) allows for remote participation in a dissertation defense, but the candidate, the committee chair (or at least one of the co-chairs), and the Dean's Representative must all be present in the examination room; none may be at a remote site.

In a public health emergency, it may not be possible to physically convene all of these individuals in the same room. Waiting for the public health emergency to end could result in an unacceptable delay in the defense. In such exceptional circumstances, a remote defense with any or all of these individuals participating remotely by videoconference may be considered.

Remote participation by video teleconferencing by the candidate, committee chair, and/or Dean's Representative will be permitted under the following conditions:

- The candidate, the chair, and/or the Dean's Representative are unable to return to campus due to quarantine or travel restrictions imposed or recommended by the State of Maryland, the U.S. government (e.g., State Department or CDC), or a foreign government. Other compelling reasons as to why each of these individuals cannot be physically present may also be considered (e.g., unavailability of transport due to flight cancellations).
- Waiting until after travel restrictions have been lifted to hold the defense is expected to significantly delay degree completion (e.g., by at least one semester).
- Permission to conduct the remote defense must be obtained by the dissertation chair from the Graduate School in advance. In making this request, the chair must indicate in writing that the above conditions apply for each remote participant.
- Videoconferencing software must be used that allows all participants to see and hear each other during the entire defense. Remote participants must connect using hardware and network connections that ensure that all participants are visible and audible and that the connection is stable and available throughout the scheduled time of the defense. Audio-only participation is not permitted.
- The Dean's Representative will be responsible for ensuring that the requirements for remote participation are met and that the remote participation was uninterrupted or, if interrupted, that the defense was paused until all remote participations were fully restored.

If the campus is open and in-person classes are being held, normal rules for the announcement and location of, and attendance at, the examination apply. If the campus is closed or in-person instruction has been suspended due to a public health emergency, and waiting until campus reopens or in-person instruction resumes is expected to significantly delay the defense (e.g., by one semester), the dissertation chair may request permission from the Graduate School to hold

the defense entirely by videoconference, with the candidate and all committee members participating remotely. In making this request, the chair must indicate in writing that the above conditions apply and must indicate what provisions will be made for participation by the campus community in the public presentation portion of the defense.

The Graduate School will provide for electronic signatures of thesis and dissertation examination forms.

Remote participation by candidates, chairs, and Dean's Representatives during a public health emergency will not establish a precedent for remote participation in non-emergency situations.