

Memorandum

From: Ahmad Afsahi
Date: June 25, 2020
Re: Department Remote Thesis Examinations Policy – Guide for COVID-19 Pandemic

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this document details the Department policy and best practices for holding thesis examinations remotely, complementing the School of Graduate Studies [Procedures for Holding Thesis Examinations Remotely - Updated Guide for COVID-19 Pandemic](#), and the guidelines for [Conducting Master's and Doctoral Oral Thesis Examinations in the Absence of Participants: A Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). It is effective from the date hereof and, unless terminated early or extended, will expire on August 31, 2021.

All other policies and guidelines by the School of Graduate Studies pertaining to the Oral Thesis Examination remain in effect.

1) Closed Remote MASc/PhD Thesis Examinations

Normally, thesis defences at Queen's are open to the broader Queen's community. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic this regulation is waived and all thesis defenses will be closed by default to participants other than the Chair, the Examining Committee and the Candidate. The Candidate, however, can invite a limited number of guests (graduate students, and up to five visitors) to the thesis examination with the Chair's permission. The Candidate must send the list of invitees to the Department at least a couple of weeks prior to the scheduled date of the remote thesis examination for the Chair's approval, and in the case of visitors (anyone who is not a member of the Queen's community) for the Head's approval. At the time of the remote thesis examination, the Chair of the examination shall have final authority to determine who is eligible to attend the remote thesis examination.

The Chair of the thesis examination should remind the Candidate, the Examining Committee and the guests that recording of the remote MASc/PhD thesis examination is NOT permitted. Guests are required to fill out a form to confirm that they will not record any part of the remote thesis examination nor communicate via text or email (or any other method) with the Candidate during the thesis defense.

2) Submission of the MASc/PhD Thesis to the Department

The MASc/PhD Candidate is required to submit a PDF copy of his/her MASc/PhD thesis to the Department. The Graduate Program Assistant will then distribute the thesis, along with the Department Remote Thesis Examinations Policy - Guide for COVID-19 Pandemic to the Chair and the Examining Committee 10 working days before the MASc thesis defence, and 25 working days before the PhD thesis defence, according to the SGS policies. For the MASc thesis defence, the Graduate Program Assistant will also distribute the Master's (Examiners) Regulations to the Chair and the Examining Committee and asks for the Examiners' reports to be returned at the latest a couple of working days before the MASc thesis defence.

3) Inviting the Committee and the Candidate to the Remote MASc/PhD Thesis Examinations

The Graduate Program Assistant will send the invite for the Zoom meeting to all Committee members, including

the Chair, and the Candidate as soon as possible and no later than five working days before the thesis defence.

The guests will be invited the day before the thesis examination.

The Supervisor is still responsible to schedule the date/time of the thesis defence for their student with the MASc/PhD Examining Committee and inform the Department.

4) Chair Package for the MASc Thesis Examinations

The Graduate Program Assistant will place the following files on the FEAS cloudfiles and will provide the link to the materials to the Chair of the MASc thesis defence as soon as possible and no later than five working days before the examination.

- Notes for Chairing and Conducting Oral Thesis Examinations
- Department Remote Thesis Examination Policy - Guide for COVID-19 Pandemic
- Master's (Examiners) Regulations
- Checklist for Chairs
- Examiners' Reports
- Master's Oral Thesis Examination Result Form – to be filled out, signed and returned
- Master's Oral Thesis Examination Conduct Form – to be filled out, signed and returned
- Contact Information for all Participants

The Chair package for the PhD thesis defence will be provided by the School of Graduate Studies directly. The Graduate Program Assistant will provide the Chair of the PhD thesis examination with the Department Remote Thesis Examination Policy – Guide for COVID-19 Pandemic and the contact information for all participants.

5) Host and Co-host options for the Remote MASc/PhD Thesis Examination

Once the examination begins, the Chair manages the exam. If the Chair is not familiar with the Zoom, the Chair may ask the Supervisor to manage the exam as a co-host under his/her guidance. Information on the Zoom roles and how to enable/add a co-host can be found on the Zoom website.

The Chair, or the co-host, can use the “breakout room” in Zoom to ask the Candidate and the guests to leave the meeting before the examination begins or before the deliberation process begins, or to invite the Candidate and the guests back to the meeting. Alternatively, using the chat or permission, the Chair can ask the Candidate and the guests to leave or rejoin the examination.

6) Filling out the MASc Thesis Results Form

The fillable Results Form will be placed on the FEAS cloudfiles. The link to the Results Form will be provided to the Chair and the Examining Committee, as soon as possible and no later than five working days before the thesis examination. After the deliberation, the Chair is responsible to ask the examiners to enter their decision on the fillable Results Form, sign and date it. The required changes on the examination Results Form can be compiled by the Chair and agreed upon by the examiners.

The Chair is also responsible to remind the Examining Committee to fill out the Oral Exam Conduct form if they have any comments on the conduct of the examination to the Head of the Department or the Graduate Coordinator.

- Note: If the Chair feels that because of technical reasons the student was disadvantaged at the remote thesis examination, please contact the Associate Dean of School of Graduate Studies at sgsadable@queensu.ca.

7) Additional Notes

- To convene the thesis examinations remotely, consent of the Examining Committee and the Candidate must be received by the Supervisor and confirmed by the Chair before the exam begins, either in prior written correspondence, or at the outset of the meeting.
- All participants engaging remotely will need to have computers and/or mobile phones with video and audio capabilities. These should be charged and charging cords available. In addition, all participants should test their technology and connectivity the day before the examination.
- Usually, thesis examinations take much longer than an hour, and so to manage remote meetings the Chair should consider giving a 5-minute break after one hour of exam time.
- The Department will ask that each participant provide their email, phone or other contact information to the Department to be passed on to the Chair and the Supervisor. In the event of communications by video/audio conferencing failing, the Committee can still conduct the examination as appropriate through telephone conference calling and/or the discussion forum created in the chat function. However, these measures are a last resort. Alternatively, if the technology is failing and interfering with the content of the examination, the Chair can take the decision, with advice from Committee members in so far as possible, that the examination needs to be postponed or rescheduled. If this is the case, please contact the Associate Dean of School of Graduate Studies at sgsadable@queensu.ca to discuss options.
 - The Candidate is asked to send their presentation ahead of time to the Chair and the Examining Committee. In the event of video failing for an Examiner, this will allow the Candidate to continue presenting their presentation with the Examiner flipping through slides as instructed. The Examiner can ask questions through Zoom audio or telephone conference call.

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