

Faculty of Graduate Studies Guide for Virtual Oral Examinations

Pre-examination Procedures

1. Confirm that the student is comfortable proceeding online (private email separate from committee).
2. The committee is free to use any virtual conferencing options that may be available to them or that they are comfortable with (e.g. Cisco Webex, BlueJeans, Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams etc). Please refer to the website of the selected platform for guidance and tutorials (links to the most common platforms are provided at the end of this document).
3. The oral examination (i.e. meeting) will be hosted by the primary advisor/unit. If connections are lost, it will be the responsibility of the primary advisor/unit to contact the affected participants. The primary advisor/unit is strongly encouraged to arrange a test call including the student and chair using the same platform as the oral examination.
4. Students should consider sending their slides to the committee in advance of the oral examination in case there are technical difficulties. Some platforms allow screen sharing either by assigning control of the host's screen to another participant or by allowing participants to request desktop access (i.e. the ability to share their own screen) from the meeting host. The student and host should familiarize themselves with the platform and agree upon a method for sharing slides in advance of the examination.
5. Committee members should safeguard the security of the oral examination process to the best of their ability (e.g. use a meeting password and/or a "waiting room" option, if available). Should the student and unit/advisor(s) wish to allow guests (e.g. faculty members beyond the examining committee, students), they may do so by invitation only (i.e. the meeting invitation may not be shared publicly). Options include:
 - a. Posting the details of the defence and inviting prospective attendees to indicate their desire to attend to the designated contact (e.g. unit support staff, primary advisor). The unit would share the meeting invitation or code only with those who have confirmed their desire to attend; or
 - b. Inviting select guests individually and providing the meeting invitation or code when the invitation is accepted.

Pre-examination Procedures

1. The student's primary advisor/unit is responsible for sending the invitation to the committee members, student, and chair in advance of the examination. This invitation includes access and login details.
2. 15 minutes prior to the oral examination, the host will open the meeting to allow everyone to sign in, test their microphones and be ready for the start of the exam.
3. If there are technical difficulties related to the platform within the first 15 minutes, an alternate platform should be used. The host is responsible for coordinating a new meeting within the new platform. Slide sharing methods, if applicable, should be taken into account when selecting a new platform.

4. If the connectivity issues persist for an additional 15 minutes in the new platform, the examination must be postponed to an alternate time and date. The primary advisor/unit must notify the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the issues immediately upon closure of the meeting.

Examination Procedures for Chair

1. The chair will introduce the participants and outline the examination procedures. All participants (except the student) are required to have their microphones and cameras off when they are not talking (the host can control the video/audio of all participants) to reduce background noise and excessive bandwidth use. Video is not needed for the chair or committee members as it may slow the examination. The student can show their video if they so desire. If participants cannot hear the proceedings or are experiencing other technical issues (e.g. video lag), they should notify the chair via the chat.
2. The student presents for the allotted time.
3. The Chair invites questions in the established order. All other mics with the exception of the speaker's and student's are off.
4. When the question period is done following the examination, the student must leave the meeting for committee deliberations. The student should be directed to closely monitor their University email account for a notification to re-join the meeting. Once the deliberations are over, the chair must email the student to inform them to re-join the meeting using the original meeting invitation link.

After the Examination

1. The Chair shall communicate to the Dean of FGS, through the submission of the "Report for Final Examination of the Ph.D." form ("Chair Report"), the nature of the revisions and the procedures to ensure that the revisions are satisfactorily made.
2. The primary Advisor shall ensure that any required revisions to the thesis have been approved according to the agreed upon procedure, obtain the signature of all committee members who participated in the oral examination (including that of the external examiner) on the "Final Oral Examination of the Ph.D. Thesis" form ("Approval Form"), and submit the form to the Faculty of Graduate Studies Office in time to meet relevant deadlines.
3. The completed and signed forms should be submitted via email to the Student Programs Assistant responsible for the student's unit.
4. A guide for signing pdf documents can be found at the following link:
http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/nursing/media/How_to_Sign_a_PDF_Online.pdf
5. If students wish to request programs as keepsakes, they may do so by emailing graduate.programs@umanitoba.ca. Programs will be made available once access to campus is restored.

Tips and Advice for Virtual Oral Examinations

Student

- If possible, use a headset to speak
- Test streaming quality at the same time of day as the scheduled examination
- Have your computer close to your wifi router, or use wired Ethernet for better quality video

- Make sure to look at the camera and speak slowly and clearly
- Consider whether others will be connected to the same network during your examination

Chair

- If there are bandwidth issues you may want to have the audience stop their video
- Use the chat feature to communicate with committee members in order to avoid interrupting the presenter if quality issues arise
- Ensure that you are familiar with the platform

Committee Members

- Ensure you are comfortable using the features of the online software (how to: turn video on/off, mute/unmute, use the chat feature)
- If bandwidth is not an issue, use video during questions. Live faces provide a sense of having an actual audience, and you can provide positive encouragement via facial responses such as head nods, smiling, etc.
- If you encounter bandwidth issues when asking questions, turn off your video to ensure you are communicating clearly
- Be positive and encouraging. While you can still ask probing questions, do so in a supportive way focused on helping the student

All participants

- It helps if background distractions are minimized (cell phones muted, pets in a different room, family members apprised of what is going on, TV/radio off, etc.) to ensure high quality audio experiences for everyone
- **Please note that Oral Examinations may not be recorded for any purpose**
- Don't forget to celebrate after the student passes! Applause, send congratulations, and virtual high fives will be appreciated by the student

Platform Tutorials

Cisco WebEx: <https://help.webex.com/en-us/8bzter/Cisco-Webex-Meetings-Video-Tutorials>

BlueJeans: <https://support.bluejeans.com/s/topic/0TO2R000000kaifWAA/videos>

Zoom: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-video-tutorials>

Microsoft Teams: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7>

Skype: <https://support.skype.com/en/faq/fa11098/how-do-i-get-started-with-skype>

Google Meet: <https://support.google.com/a/users/answer/9282720?hl=en>