Academic Year 2020/21 Guidelines
for Thesis and Dissertation Defenses and Comprehensive Examinations

Please note that these are temporary measures to apply for academic year 2020/2021.

Guiding Principle: Under normal circumstances, all members of a dissertation/thesis committee must be physically present in the examination room during the entire dissertation defense and during the committee's private deliberations following the examination. Given the mitigation efforts to break the cycle of contagion of the COVID-19 virus, we encourage thesis and dissertation defenses and pre-defenses for the academic year 20/21 with all members of the committee and the candidate participating remotely. Colleges should be flexible in ensuring that the candidate is allowed to defend on time and that technical resources be provided to ensure that all members of the committee and the candidate be virtually present. Oral comprehensive examinations may be held in the same manner. Written comprehensive examinations should be held remotely utilizing technology to proctor the examination if necessary.

Remote Principles and Practices

- The Dissertation/Thesis chair is responsible for ensuring that all members of the committee and the candidate have the technology to participate in the defense. Please check with your IT personnel for assistance.

- The Dissertation/Thesis chair should consult with Student Accessibility Services if assistance is needed to meet accommodations.

- The chair of the dissertation committee is responsible for ensuring
  - that all requirements for remote participation are met,
  - that the remote technology is sufficiently tested prior to the defense,
  - that the remote participation is uninterrupted and, if interrupted, that the defense is paused until all remote participations are fully restored.

- Departments/Schools should be flexible in the technology to be used. It may include, but not be limited to web conferencing software, Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams. Phone conferencing should be used as a back-up only. You may use Blackboard and the proctoring tools available in that software for examinations or similar technology.

- The program pays for any costs associated with the remote participation. Units should track all expenses incurred due to COVID-19.

- Colleges have agreed to honor the deadlines for Dissertation Defenses.

- Colleges have agreed that electronic signatures are acceptable for thesis, dissertation, and exam documents.

Face-to-face Principles and Practices

- The Dissertation/Thesis chair is responsible for determining whether the defense is to be face-to-face. All members of the committee and the candidate must agree. If one or more members are uncomfortable with a face-to-face defense, then the defense must be held remotely.
• If all members and the candidate agree to a face-to-face defense, the following practices must be in place:
  
  o The defense participants and guests must not exceed revised (based on social distancing) room capacity.

  o All participants must practice the Flashes Safe Seven principles. This includes monitoring health prior to the defense, wearing face coverings, hand washing and sanitizing the room and equipment both before and after the defense.