

UBC FORESTRY GRADUATE PROGRAM

VIRTUAL MASTER'S DEFENSE PLANNING INFORMATION

In response to the growing concerns surrounding the COVID-19 virus, we have developed a process to support total virtual participation in a master's defense. This protocol mirrors the recently created G+PS process for virtual doctoral examinations.

This remote protocol applies to Forestry master's defenses held until further notice.

Note that the usual quorum requirements and other defense planning procedures still apply. Refer to page 21 and page 48 of the [Forestry Gradbook](#) for more information.

ACCEPTABLE PLATFORMS

The preferred platform is [Zoom](#). Please familiarize yourself with the Privacy information as outlined on UBC's [IT information page](#). If preferred, UBC's [Virtual Meeting Room \(Skype for Business\)](#) may also be used.

AGREEMENT FROM ALL PARTICIPANTS

Be sure that ALL required participants (including the NDE and Chair) have confirmed their agreement and ability to participate remotely at the date and time selected.

ADVANCE NOTICE & WHO SETS THE VIRTUAL MEETING

Once the student and supervisor have confirmed a defense date, time and virtual platform, please notify the graduate program office *at least two weeks in advance*. Our staff will then schedule the meeting in Zoom and send out (~7-10 days prior) the formal exam notification (procedures and protocol) to all participants, as well as the Zoom meeting link.

Zoom meeting configuration will be as follows:

- Host capabilities assigned to both the Supervisor and the Chair;
- Waiting room enabled;
- All participants able to join before host(s);
- Video on.

CLOSED PARTICIPATION

Although the master's defense is normally a public event, virtual defenses present additional challenges to the student and may be more difficult. In order to ensure a rigorous, fair, and uninterrupted defense, the virtual defense will not be open to anyone outside the examining committee. The Zoom URL **must not** be circulated to anyone but the committee and defending student. This is a temporary measure in order to facilitate virtual defenses.

March 27, 2020

Forestry Master's Defenses Virtual Participation Protocol

SYSTEM PERFORMANCE AND ADVANCE TESTING

The quality of both the audio and visual components will depend greatly on the quality of each participant's internet connection. The recommendation is to connect from a computer that is hard-wired into an internet connection rather than using Wi-Fi.

For optimal system performance, **do not** connect from a remote desktop session.

If there are any concerns about how to use the online platform, refer to the [UBC info page](#). Please [test your connection](#) prior to the exam. If you have difficulty with your test session, contact a Forestry IT person at forestry.ithelp@ubc.ca at least two days in advance of the examination.

As we cannot control the quality of each participant's internet connection, participants must 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 in the section below.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR SPECIFIC TO VIRTUAL DEFENSES

The following information is also detailed in the [Chair Guidelines document](#), sent to all participants 7-10 days in advance:

- Outline the potential technical issues that may occur, encourage patience and kindness towards each other, and describe the Chair's responsibility to suspend the defense if there are technical difficulties that compromise it.*
- Chair the *in camera* discussion of the Examining Committee and convey the outcome to the student.
 - a. Ensure the student is removed from the connection for the entirety of the *in camera* discussion.
 - b. Ensure that the student's mobile number or email address is known prior to disconnecting, so they may be contacted to rejoin once the *in camera* discussion is completed.

*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 defense 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 defense and notify gayle.kosh@ubc.ca immediately. The Forestry Graduate Program office will communicate with the student and their Supervisor regarding rescheduling the defense.