

Advice to Candidates Defending Their Thesis Remotely

In advance of the FOE:

- ❖ Review the videoconferencing details for your exam.
- ❖ If you are not familiar with Zoom, sign up for a free account so you can learn how it works. Have a conversation using Zoom with some friends or colleagues so you can become comfortable with the interface (sharing your screen, muting and unmuting yourself, arranging the view of the speakers the way you want).
- ❖ Practice your presentation with the Zoom window open and sharing your screen to show your slides so that this will feel familiar to you at the time of the FOE. If possible, do a mock defense with your supervisor.
- ❖ Set up the space where you will do your remote presentation at least one day before your FOE.
- ❖ You are of course required to be in a private and controlled area for your FOE, but try to also ensure the area looks nice, and that you will be well-lit. Rearrange floor lamps or desk lamps as appropriate. Avoid having bright lights or windows behind you.
- ❖ Some of you may want to use a green screen (i.e. a background picture); we advise **against** this if you do not have a physical green screen-the computer effects may be too jarring.
- ❖ Minimize distractions and extraneous noise. If you share a space (roommates, spouses, partners, friends, pets, children, etc.), try to make arrangements for them to go for a walk or to a distant room with the TV on low. If you have a headset, or headphones with a microphone, try using them.
- ❖ Have your camera as close to eye level as possible. Looking directly into the camera (rather than your screen) helps other participants feel that you are speaking to them directly.
- ❖ Remember that Presenter View will not be available. There are a number of possible ways to handle this, including using a hard copy of your speaking notes, having a second computer in front of you to use Presenter View, coordinating with your supervisor so they show your slides from their computer while you use Presenter View on yours, or even rehearsing your presentation until you can do it without notes.

At the FOE:

- ❖ Dress professionally. Or not. It's your choice, but it can help you feel more confident, especially in a remote environment.
- ❖ Have water, and pen and paper handy.
- ❖ Take a screenshot to remember the experience.
- ❖ You will be required to leave the meeting/be put into the 'waiting' room twice (once briefly near the start, and again when it is time for the committee to discuss and vote).
- ❖ Responding to questions remotely has a different feel to it than in person. Give yourself time to think through the questions—make notes, have some water—and do not rush through.

After the FOE:

- ❖ After a remote FOE, it can feel anti-climactic to find yourself alone in your private space again. A number of our candidates and supervisors have arranged a “virtual celebration” using their personal Zoom accounts (or by other means). If this is not possible, at least set aside sometime after the FOE to treat yourself to something special as a reward. You will deserve it!