

Memorandum

From: Ahmad Afsahi
Date: June 17, 2020
Re: Department Remote PhD Comprehensive 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 PhD Comprehensive examinations remotely, complementing the Department [PhD Comprehensive Examinations](#) policies and procedures. It is effective from the date hereof and, unless terminated early or extended, will expire on August 31, 2021.

1) Closed Remote PhD Comprehensive Examinations

As for in-person PhD Comprehensive examinations, all remote PhD Comprehensive examinations during the COVID-19 pandemic will be closed to participants other than the Chair, the Examining Committee and Candidate. The Department Representative, who is also the Chair of the PhD Comprehensive examination, should remind the Candidate and the Committee that recording of the remote PhD Comprehensive examination is NOT permitted.

2) Submission of the PhD Comprehensive Report to the Department

The PhD Candidate is required to submit a PDF copy of his/her PhD Comprehensive Part I/II report to the Department by the required deadline according to the [PhD Comprehensive Examinations](#) policies and procedures. The Graduate Program Assistant will then distribute the Candidate's PhD Comprehensive report, along with the Department PhD Comprehensive Examinations Policies and Procedures and the Department Remote PhD Comprehensive Examinations Policy - Guide for COVID-19 Pandemic to the Examining Committee, including the Department Representative, three weeks before the date of the PhD Comprehensive examination, according to the [PhD Comprehensive Examinations](#) policies and procedures.

3) Inviting the Committee and the Candidate to the PhD Comprehensive Examinations

The Graduate Program Assistant will send the PhD Comprehensive examination Memos, the SGS Confidential Report Forms, and 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 PhD Comprehensive examination. The Supervisor is still responsible to schedule the date/time of the PhD Comprehensive exam for their student with the PhD Examination Committee and inform the Department.

4) The Department Representative (Chair) Package for the PhD Comprehensive Examinations

The Graduate Program Assistant will place the following files on the FEAS cloudfiles and will provide the link to the materials to the Department Representative (Chair), as soon as possible and no later than five working days before the examination.

- Department PhD Comprehensive Examinations Policies and Procedures
- Department Remote PhD Comprehensive Examinations Policy - Guide for COVID-19 Pandemic

- Copy of all the Memos sent to each Committee Member and the Candidate
- PhD Candidate's Comprehensive Part I/II report
- PhD Comprehensive examination Results Form – to be filled out, signed and returned
- Notes on SGS Post Examination Forms Instructions
- SGS Confidential Report Forms for Committee Members and Candidate
- Contact Information for all Participants

5) Host and Co-host options for the Remote PhD Comprehensive Examinations

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 to leave the meeting before the examination begins or before the deliberation process begins, or to invite the Candidate back to the meeting. Alternatively, using the chat or permission, the Chair can ask the Candidate to leave or rejoin the examination.

6) Filling out the PhD Comprehensive Results Form

The fillable Results Form will be placed on the FEAS cloudfiles. The link to the Results Form will be provided to the Examining Committee, including the Chair, as soon as possible and no later than five working days before the PhD Comprehensive 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 final remarks on the PhD Comprehensive examination Results Form can be compiled by the Chair and agreed upon by the examiners.

- Note: If the Chair feels that because of technical reasons the student was disadvantaged at the remote PhD Comprehensive examination, please contact the Chair of Graduate Studies.

7) Additional Notes

- To convene the PhD Comprehensive Examinations remotely, consent of all participants, including 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, PhD Comprehensive 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 Chair of Graduate Studies.

- 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.

Ahmad Afsahi
Professor and Chair of Graduate Studies