

## The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

### Ontario Tech University

#### Procedures for Remote Thesis Examinations—Updated Guide for Covid-19 Pandemic

In light of the COVID-19 situation, The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) has transitioned to remote oral thesis and candidacy examination. SGPS has temporarily waived the [graduate academic calendar](#) requirement that “no more than two members of the examining committee, including the external examiner, may attend the defence remotely” in line with the university’s recommendations to move online. However, the following policy still applies: “The examination will be rescheduled if one or more members of the examining committee are unable to attend.” Attendance for the purpose of these guidelines means participation in person **or remotely in real time (as opposed to the submission of questions to be read by the chair)**.

The defence process will continue as "normally" as possible to ensure minimal disruption in these unprecedented times. The following guidelines have been developed to ensure consistency and best practices in graduate examination process:

- 1) The SGPS will try to facilitate thesis examination and a representative from SGPS may attend the thesis defence.
- 2) The examining committee should meet privately right before the defence to agree on defence proceedings.
- 3) SGPS highly recommends that the written reports from the Examiners have the key questions to be posed to the candidate in the event that communication is disrupted.
- 4) The defence meeting will be conducted via Google Meet. The examining committee and Candidate **must have their video active** that allows them to see and be seen.
- 5) The thesis examination should not be recorded.
- 6) The presentation phase of the defence is the oral presentation by the candidate. The presentation phase may be open to students and colleagues from Ontario Tech. However, extraordinarily, the presentation may be closed to a restricted audience, or no audience, for reasons of confidentiality, safety or intellectual property.
- 7) The question phase is the second component of the defence in which the candidate must answer questions from the examining committee. Under the current circumstances, the question phase will be closed to the public.
- 8) The deliberation phase is the third major part of the defence. When the question phase is over, the student is asked to temporarily leave the Google Meeting and members of the examining committee will determine the outcome of the oral examination.
- 9) The Chair will invite the candidate to return to the Google Meeting to receive the outcome and feedback of the oral examination.
- 10) On the day of the oral defence, the defence should be cancelled if more than two members of the examining committee are not able to attend. Due to technology, there may be technical difficulties or delays. The Chair should allow a thirty-minute grace period before making the decision to cancel a defence.
- 11) The Chair should have a back-up telephone number (or another conferencing communication tool) should the Google Meet be disrupted. In cases when

technical difficulties occur during an online defence, the Chair should contact [gradthesis@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:gradthesis@ontariotechu.ca). In emergency situations, the Chair may wish to contact Dr. Aziz Douai, Associate Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies ([aziz.douai@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:aziz.douai@ontariotechu.ca)).

[Google Meet guidelines and resources](#) are available through the Teaching and Learning Centre.