

# Guidelines for Holding a Successful Defense through Zoom

This document provides an overview of options for holding these meetings using FERPA compliant platforms in an effort to minimize disruptions to student progress during university closure in response to COVID-19 pandemic. The University Zoom account is now FERPA compliant and is allowed for meetings with students. *This does not include the free accounts that students may have so please use a professional account through the University.*

## **“Best” practices for using Zoom**

To avoid having attendees join for the sole purpose of disrupting the meeting (Zoom bombing)

1. Do not post Zoom coordinates on any social media
2. Send targeted invitations to external parties (e.g. people who have requested by email to join and family members/friends of the student as requested by the student)
  - a. Use password for the meeting and provide password to attendees in a separate email from Zoom coordinates
  - b. You can use waiting rooms to screen out unwanted participants
  - c. You can lock people out of meeting once the meeting starts
  - d. Disable “File Transfer”, “Join before host”, and “Allow Removed Participants to Rejoin”
3. Request the student and invitees not to share/post Zoom coordinates with others.

## **Instructions to the Student:**

### **Setting Up Your Meeting**

1. Work with your committee to identify a date and time for thesis defense
2. Communicate defense date and time to Sara Wilson – [sara.j.wilson@utah.edu](mailto:sara.j.wilson@utah.edu)
3. Request public announcement of thesis defense to department website by contacting Kay Argyle – [kay.argyle@utah.edu](mailto:kay.argyle@utah.edu)

## **Instruction to the Committee Chair:**

### **Managing Your Meeting**

1. Set Screensharing to “Host Only”. This requires the student to also be a cohost, the presentation to be loaded on the host’s computer. Alternatively, allow only the student to share screen when presentation begins (see if this can be locked)
2. Mute all participants on entry; disable ability for each person to unmute (for thesis defense). Introduce meeting with the policy for questions and interaction
  - a. Have people raise their hands to ask questions.
  - b. Use chat window to ask questions.
3. Check-in with everyone when you start the meeting, set any ground rules. Who should be allowed to ask questions, and should those be held until the end? Should questions be asked only utilizing the chat feature, the raise your hand feature, or will you open the floor, so to speak? Remember to be patient with questions. There may be a lag, or people may be formulating their thoughts. Make sure everyone can see and hear you.

4. During student presentations, only the committee members may interrupt to ask questions/seek clarification.
5. Following student presentation, allow public questioning period. During this period, public questioning by public participants will occur through one or both of the following options.
  - a. Have people raise their hands to ask questions
  - b. Use chat window to ask questions
6. The public participants will be requested to leave at the end of the public questioning period.
7. This is followed by committee questioning period.
8. Use the committee breakout room for committee deliberations.
9. Creating a recording of the meeting
  - a. If the presentation is being recorded inform participants and end recording after public portion
  - b. Appoint somebody to take notes
    - i. Questions and issues
    - ii. Committee's vote
    - iii. Committee's feedback on defense and dissertation.

Student Responsibility	Professional Graduate Advisor Responsibility	Committee Chair Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate defense date and time with committee</li> <li>• Practice presenting via zoom prior to defense (contact Sara or chair to set up zoom practice meeting)</li> <li>• Contact Kay at <a href="mailto:kay.argyle@utah.edu">kay.argyle@utah.edu</a> to have announcement posted on website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create pre-defense zoom meeting and send invite if student would like to practice</li> <li>• Monitor RSVP's and provide zoom meeting information to guests that request it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create defense zoom meeting</li> <li>• Utilize a breakout room for deliberation</li> <li>• Set up waiting room option</li> <li>• Record defense if requested by student</li> </ul>

**More Tips:**

**1. Utilize the tools available to make the virtual more “real”.**

There is a feature in Zoom that allows you to share your screen, plugin HDMI, etc. There is also a [feature in PowerPoint](#) which allows you to have a laser on screen like a real laser, using your mouse. Test all of these tools out before your defense.

See more tips from Zoom on [here](#), and more on security from OIT [here](#).

## 2. Ask for help when you need it.

- a. Reach out to College and University IT
  - i. Cooper or Gordon (CMES)
  - ii. [Opers@eng.utah.edu](mailto:Opers@eng.utah.edu) (COE)
  - iii. Help Desk 801-581-4000

## 3. Utilize the breakout room.

During the defense, we will [create “breakout rooms”](#) within Zoom, so that the committee can manage the defense in the same way that it is done traditionally during the meeting. This avoids having to have to separate meetings running. Practice with this tool during your pre-meeting.

**Don't Forget...**

### **Instructions to Student Regarding Post-Defense Actions Needed**

#### **Supervisory Committee Approval Form & Final Reading Approval Form**

- Make any changes to the manuscript that the committee may require after the oral defense.
- After the defense, the student will need to complete a form found on the graduate school website under **Supervisory Committee Approval Form**:  
<https://gradschool.utah.edu/covid-19/>
- The completed form should be sent to [signatures@gradschool.utah.edu](mailto:signatures@gradschool.utah.edu) Along with the form, the committee members university email addresses need to be listed in the email.
- The **Thesis Office will generate** an electronic Supervisory Committee Approval form through Adobe Sign.
- The student and committee members will be notified when this form is ready for digital signatures.
- When all committee members have digitally signed the Supervisory Committee Approval Form, the Thesis Office will receive a final copy of the form to be validated
- The form will be placed in the student's file.
- See Website for **Final Reading Approval Form** using the same link  
<https://gradschool.utah.edu/covid-19/>

**It's going to be OK. Celebrate!**

Additional resources:

Zoom's advice on holding secure Zoom meetings:

<https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-uninvited-guests-out-of-your-zoom-event/>  
<https://graduate.rice.edu/news/tips-tricks-virtual-thesis-defense-and-submission>