

**Cleveland State University**  
**College of Graduate Studies**  
**Guidelines for Thesis and Dissertation Defenses and Comprehensive Examinations**  
**March 17, 2020**

Given the migration of all instructional activities from face-to-face formats to virtual formats, the College of Graduate Studies is instituting alternative delivery modalities for thesis and dissertation defenses and proposal hearings. Students, with guidance from their faculty advisors, can use a number of platforms that are available for use, such as Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, Microsoft Teams, and many others, which are listed on the University's [Keep Teaching](#) website.

Colleges should be flexible in ensuring that the candidate is allowed to defend on time and that technical resources be provided to allow all members of the committee and the candidate to be virtually present. Oral comprehensive examinations may be held in the same manner. Written comprehensive examinations should be held remotely utilizing technology (such as [Respondus](#)) to proctor the examination if necessary. In addition:

- The Dissertation/Thesis chair is responsible for ensuring that all members of the committee and the candidate have the technology to participate in the defense.
- The Dissertation/Thesis chair should consult with the [CSU Office of Disability Services](#) if assistance is needed to meet accommodations.
- The chair of the dissertation committee is responsible for ensuring
  - that all requirements for remote participation are met,
  - that the remote technology is sufficiently tested prior to the defense, and
  - that the remote participation is uninterrupted and, if interrupted, that the defense is paused until all remote participations are fully restored.
- If audio conferencing is the only option available, arrangements must be made by the candidate to distribute all visual materials to the committee in advance of the defense.
- Departments/programs should be flexible in the technology being used. Please refer to the [Keep Teaching](#) website for a full range of tools and technology platforms that are available.
- Given that many students' access to labs and other research materials may have been restricted abruptly, dissertation chairs are requested to remain flexible with their students in defining and potentially altering the scope of the research for the thesis/dissertation.
- The deadline for Dissertation Defenses is the last day of classes, May 1, 2020. Extensions within limits may be requested upon the recommendation of the Dissertation Committee Chair and the approval of the Graduate Dean.
- Electronic signatures are acceptable for thesis, dissertation and comprehensive exam documents. The University will provide options for electronic signatures.

Please note that these measures apply through the end of the Spring semester 2020.

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