Beschluss des PhD-Ausschusses vom 16. März 2020
Decision of the PhD Committee of March 16, 2020

Digital PhD Defenses at the Medical Faculty of the University of Basel

A guideline to ensure the reliable process of online PhD defenses with remote participants via Zoom.

Summary
Due to the current Coronavirus pandemic, through which face-to-face PhD defenses are made impossible, the PhD commission of the Medical Faculty of the University of Basel set guidelines through which PhD defenses can be carried out online. Although these guidelines apply until the restrictions due to the pandemic are lifted by the University of Basel and face-to-face classes are possible again, they provide a learning opportunity to define the future models once the Graduate School Health Science is established.

It is essential that the communication between the PhD student and all members of the PhD committee and the chair is of high acoustic and visual quality at all times. This is crucial not to risk the postponement/repetition of the defense. To ensure that the PhD candidates can focus fully on their PhD defense, the PhD commission further requires that all online PhD defenses must have a dedicated technical savy **PhD Defense Assistant** (PDA) taking this responsibility.

Procedures, roles and responsibilities

PhD candidate

No later than **10 days prior to the defense**, the PhD candidate must inform the PhD commission (phd-med@unibas.ch) that the PDA (name) will organize an online PhD defense. The email also includes a pre-formulated reminder, in which the primary advisor, secondary advisor, and the external expert are asked to confidentially send (at least) three questions to the chair of the PhD defense that the advisors/expert would like to ask the candidate during the oral exam. This reminder should be sent out at least **7 days prior to the PhD defense**, and the chair should receive the questions at least **1 day prior to the PhD defense**.

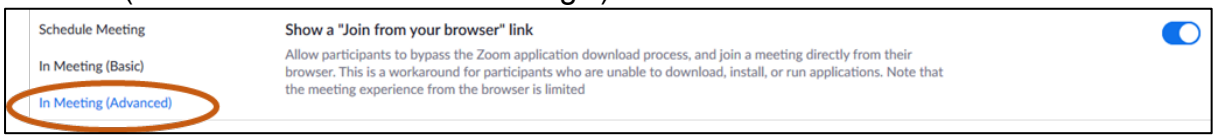
PhD Defense Assistants (PDA)

(Under the assumption that only the candidate and the PDA are present on site.)

a. Prior to the PhD Defense:

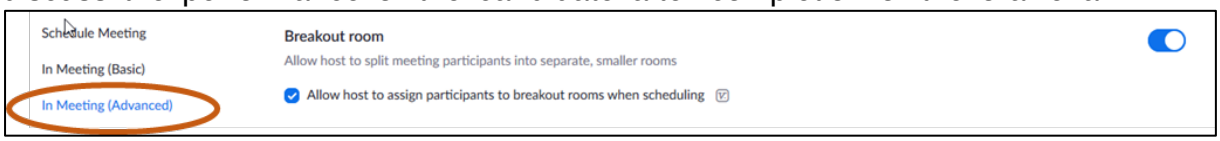
1. Ensures that the PhD candidate has sent the above-mentioned reminder to the PhD committee (primary advisor, secondary advisor, external expert, with chair in cc).
2. Ensures that he/she knows the email and mobile phone numbers of primary advisor, the secondary advisor, the external expert and the chair of the PhD defense, in order to guarantee communication during the PhD defense in case of technologic problems and to get confirmation that everything runs well.

3. Ensures that the Zoom settings are set in such a way that external participants are not required to download Zoom on their own devices (Settings in your online account ('General' → 'View more Settings'):



Instruction provided by University of Basel
Support by Zoom

4. Sets up the Zoom invitation and provides co-host properties to the PhD candidate having the defense.
5. Creates a breakout room for members of the PhD committee where they can discuss the performance of the candidate after completion of the oral exam.



6. Sends preferably a calendar-based invitation to the members of the PhD committee, the chair of the PhD defense, and invited guests defined by the candidate (as soon as possible, at least **7 days prior to the PhD defense**).
7. Asks the secretary of the department/institute, which the PhD candidate is affiliated to, to make the Zoom link public (as soon as possible, **at least 7 days prior to the PhD defense**).
8. If available: Uploads the Zoom link on intranet (as soon as possible, **at least 7 days prior to the PhD defense**).
9. Ensures that the room, in which the PhD candidate will sit, is equipped with video and microphones no later than one working day prior to the defense.
10. Tests the online performance with the candidate at least 3 hours prior to the PhD defense including advising the candidate to optimize the appearance, light, and background settings and to optimize the sound quality.
11. Provides a date and time to offer the members of the PhD committee a Zoom test, in particular, encouraging the external expert to test it once before the PhD defense.
12. Keeps the chair, the PhD committee and the candidate informed at all times in case of changes due to technologies, infrastructure or logistic problems.

b. During the PhD defense:

1. Makes all systems ready and opens Zoom **no later than 20 minutes prior to the planned start of the PhD defense**.
2. Connects all members of the PhD committee and the chair with Zoom **at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the PhD defense** to provide the chair the possibility to explain how the PhD defense will be done and what the role of the PhD committee is during the exam.
3. Informs the chair once all members of the PhD committee are online and that the candidate is ready to start.
4. Makes sure that the online acoustic and visual quality is good. In the event of a malfunction or an interruption, the PDA intervenes and adapts the infrastructure accordingly. In case of technical malfunctions, the PDA and the chair have the

right to interrupt the PhD defense, if need be. It is the chair's responsibility to decide if the PhD defense can be finished or not. In this case, the chair of the PhD defense immediately informs the PhD commission of the Medical Faculty (phd-med@unibas.ch).

5. Has the primary host functions. That is, he/she handles the questions and answers during the oral exam in terms of distributing the microphones to ensure good acoustic quality.
6. If possible: He/she handles the optional camera in the room to visualize the speaking person.
7. Assigns the members of the PhD committee and the chair to the breakout room for discussion.

Responsibilities of the PhD candidate and the PhD defense assistant (PDA)

Deadline	PhD candidate	PhD defense assistant
10 days prior to the defense	Informs the PhD commission, phd-med@unibas.ch, (1) who as PDA (name) will organize the online PhD defense. (2) includes a pre- formulated reminder, in which the primary advisor, secondary advisor, and the external expert are asked to confidentially send (at least) three questions to the chair of the PhD defense that the advisors/ expert would like to ask the candidate during the oral exam.	Ensures to know the email and mobile phone numbers of primary advisor, the secondary advisor, the external expert and the chair of the PhD defense, in order to guarantee communication during the PhD defense in case of technologic problems and to get confirmation that everything runs well. Provides a date and time to offer the members of the PhD committee a Zoom test, in particular, encouraging the external expert to test it once before the PhD defense.
7 days prior the defense	Reminder email to primary advisor, secondary advisor, external expert to send the chair the three questions for the defense.	Sends a calendar-based invitation to the members of the PhD committee, the chair of the PhD defense, and invited guests defined by the candidate. Asks the secretary of the department/ institute, which the PhD candidate is affiliated to, to make the Zoom link public.
1 working day prior to the PhD defense	Chair of defense must have received the three questions.	Ensures that the room, in which the PhD candidate will sit, is equipped with video.
3 hours prior to the PhD defense		Tests the online performance with the candidate including advising the candidate to optimize the appearance, light, and background settings and to optimize the sound quality.

20 minutes prior to the planned start of the PhD defense.		Makes all systems ready and opens Zoom.
15 minutes prior to the start of the PhD defense		Connects all members of the PhD committee and the chair with Zoom to provide the chair the possibility to explain how the PhD defense will be done and what the role of the PhD committee is during the exam.
Start of PhD defence		Informs the chair once all members of the PhD committee are online and that the candidate is ready to start.
During PhD defence		Makes sure that the online acoustic and visual quality is good. In the event of a malfunction or an interruption, the PDA intervenes and adapts the infrastructure accordingly. The PDA has the right to interrupt the PhD defense, if need to be. Has the primary host functions. That is, he/she handles the questions and answers during the oral exam in terms of distributing the microphones to ensure good acoustic quality. If possible: He/she handles the optional camera in the room to visualize the speaking person. Assigns the members of the PhD committee and the chair to the breakout room for discussion.
General		Keeps the chair, the PhD committee and the candidate informed at all times in case of changes due to technologies, infrastructure or logistic problems.

For the chair of the PhD defense:

1. The chairperson fills in all documents as foreseen (e.g. minutes of the PhD defense).
2. The chairperson informs the candidate of the result of the PhD exam.
3. If the PhD defense was successful, the chairperson takes the academic oath from the PhD candidate.
4. The chairperson then asks the primary advisor and the other members of the PhD committee whether they want to give a short (laudatory) speech.
5. The chairperson then asks the PhD candidate if he/she wants to say a few words of thanks.
6. The chairperson asks the PDA to end the Zoom session.
7. The chairperson sends the minutes of the PhD defense to the primary advisor, secondary advisor, and external expert (via Email), and asks them to sign the document and send them back immediately.
8. The chairperson then prints out and signs the signed minutes of each PhD committee member and sends these sheets to the PhD commission (phd-med@unibas.ch).
9. The secretary of the PhD commission will then send the certificate and all other relevant documents per ordinary mail to the PhD candidate (as soon as possible).