


MEMORANDUM

TO: Directors of Graduate Studies
CC: Chairs of Departments, Graduate Administrators
FROM: Holger Hooch, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies & Research 
DATE: March 9, 2020
SUBJECT: Temporary Adjustments to the Doctoral Dissertation Committee Policy: Remote Attendance

Effective immediately and continuing until the University lifts the emergency response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), any graduate student and any faculty committee member may participate remotely via skype or other appropriate technologies in doctoral student milestone committee meetings if they are unable to attend in person due to illness or circumstances related to the coronavirus. Adjusted requirements for audio-visual technology under the policy for doctoral dissertation committees apply (please see below). The committee chair must certify compliance with those remote participation requirements. A fillable .pdf form is available through the [Graduate Studies Handbook](#).

Requirements for Audio-Visual Technology

To satisfy the requirements for the remote attendance of the graduate student and /or any committee member, the student, committee, and any remotely attending participants must have access to the technological means for audiovisual interaction.

Remote attendees must be accessible, with or without reasonable accommodations, to the graduate student presenter and other committee members and vice versa.

For meetings conducted with at least one participant present on campus, the candidate's department is responsible for arranging the necessary technology on campus and it is recommended that someone with technological expertise be present to resolve any difficulties as they may arise.

The dissertation proposal/prospectus/overview meeting or the defense of the dissertation must be rescheduled (or completed at a later time) if –

1. it is not technologically possible to accomplish the required level of audiovisual interaction at the time and place appointed; or
2. the video portion of the connection fails before the defense is 50% completed (reasonably determined by the Committee Chair) and cannot be reestablished; or

3. the audio portion of the connection fails before 90% of the meeting or defense is complete (reasonably determined by the Committee Chair) and cannot be reestablished.

However, if either the student attends the meeting or defense remotely or only one committee member is present in person, the meeting or the defense of the dissertation must be rescheduled (or completed at a later time) if the audio portion of the connection fails before the meeting or defense is completed, or if the video portion of the connection fails before the defense is 90% completed (reasonably determined by the Committee Chair).

By agreement with the committee chair, a student defending their dissertation remotely may choose to share a video of their introductory presentation with the committee before the dissertation defense.

Any public parts of dissertation defenses should, when possible, be made publicly accessible via a streaming service. Committees requiring guidance should consult the University Center for Teaching and Learning.

Should any committee member and/or graduate student require reasonable accommodations as they relate to the doctoral dissertation committee process, please contact the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies at BDS76@pitt.edu.