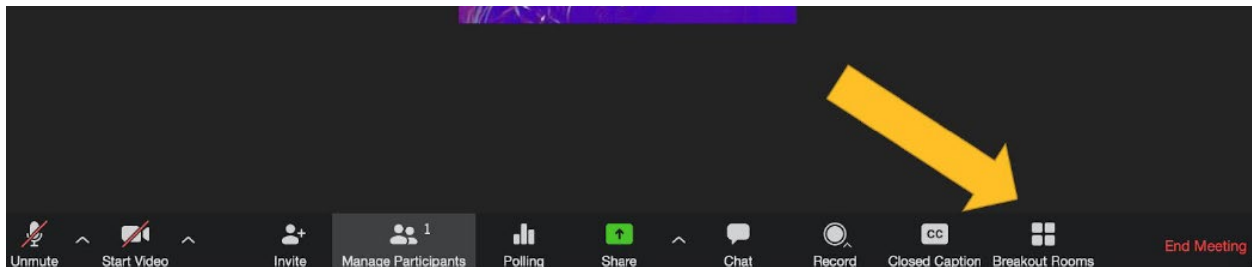


Best Practices and Tips for Zoom Defenses

Based on my experiences with other platforms, Zoom is by far and away the best option for this. I would also like to thank several faculty and staff who have given me excellent information about how to do this; these include: Michelle Bartlett, Lisa Chapman, Heather Lyerly, Reade Roberts, and Mary Wyer

General preparation

- The defense meeting(s) should be set up by the committee chair so that they can control aspects of the defense and control who can take part in the various phases of the defense. This link will take you to a [quick guide to setting up Zoom meetings](#).
 - If the chair is uncomfortable with the mode of delivery, they can assign a 'co-host' to assist with various technological elements.
 - One of the ways to manage things is using breakrooms as indicated below:



- Students should practice extensively with the technology and try different formats to see what feels best to them with an eye towards the quality and functionality of the software chose. They should do this with their advisor and/or others in remote viewing mode to get feedback.
 - If the student is not presenting in a manner that will allow them to physically point to their presentation on screen, they should familiarize themselves with and practice using annotation tools in Zoom, including "spotlight", a virtual laser pointer.
- For the most effective presentation and to mirror as closely as possible a traditional in-person defense, the student and their presentation slides should be shared simultaneously.
 - In Zoom, this can be done from a single computer, but there may be more flexibility if two computers are used: one for presenting the slides, and one to provide speaker video.
- Although under current conditions this is not possible, if conditions improve and a student wants to present in front of a real screen in a seminar or conference room, they should inquire with their DGP and program coordinator to discuss possible options.
- The student and all committee members should exchange phone numbers in case of technical issues. The advisor should receive calls when the student is presenting.
- Keep in mind that both public and private meetings may be recorded depending on meeting settings.

Public defense

- Start with welcome and introductions, and everyone should be reminded to mute their audio and video unless asking questions.

- Committee will go into the breakout room to discuss initial evaluations and concerns about preceding
 - The proper protocol for asking questions should also be outlined in terms of when they can be asked – during the presentation or only afterwards. It is easiest, however, if they only come after the presentation.
 - In Zoom, the ‘raise hand’ option can be used by the audience to indicate that they have a question
 - Furthermore, the audience can be informed that the chat function can be used to record questions or notify the host of technical issues
- Some issues that may be confronted:
 - Zoombombing – this is an issue that has plagued a number of classes across the country often with inappropriate material being presented. To learn more, see [this piece from Inside Higher Ed](#). For detailed information from Zoom as to how this can be effectively controlled by the host, [click here](#).

Private defense

- If the advisor or co-chair is not already a host, a separate zoom session should be scheduled so that participation in breakout rooms can be controlled or you can use the hold option; for directions about the latter, [click here](#).
- At the end of the closed meeting (and potentially at the beginning if there are issues to be discussed), the committee will use a breakout room to assess and vote on the student’s performance. The student’s virtual presence should be blocked during this discussion.
- In contrast to the public defense, the “Gallery view” with all committee members displaying video may be more appropriate and natural for the closed portion of the defense.
- Some programs are using DocuSign to make signing the committee form easier, and the Graduate School is working on a form that can be electronically routed for signatures.
- When completing the final examination form, the Graduate School Representative is encouraged to comment on any impacts (or lack thereof) on the defense due to remote viewing.

How to Effectively Celebrate a Successful Virtual Defense

Given the virtual nature of the exam, once it is completed everyone logs off and the student is alone. This time is normally filled with celebration and departments/programs/committees need to consider how create as much celebration and community as possible.

- Suggestions:
 - Create a celebratory Zoom meeting, perhaps hosted by the GSC or a close friend of the student that the student can enter soon after leaving the private defense meeting. A challenge is letting people know when the event is happening; this could be done The meeting could be along the lines of a virtual happy hour to celebrate a successful defense. Programs should consult the student and decide on a case-by-case basis if the celebratory meeting should take place, its format, and the best way to notify everyone who might attend if and when the exam ends with a positive outcome.