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**Cc:** [Dean of Grad Ed & Postdoc Affrs](#); [Antony, James](#); [Kim, Judy](#); [Welch, Ashley](#)  
**Subject:** Updated Rules for Master's and Doctoral Examinations (Effective FA22, Graduate Council)  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 6, 2022 1:28:35 PM  
**Attachments:** [2022-03-14 GRAD -- Telepresence Rules for Exams.pdf](#)

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July 6, 2022

TO: DEPARTMENT CHAIRS  
PROGRAM DIRECTORS  
GRADUATE COORDINATORS

RE: Updated Rules for Master's and Doctoral Examinations

We are writing with an update on the rules surrounding remote participation in Master's and Doctoral examinations (qualifying exams and final defenses). The temporary COVID-19 authorization remains in place through the end of Summer 2022, which allows any or all members of a master's or doctoral committee and/or the student being examined to participate in the qualifying examination and thesis or dissertation defense in person or remotely. However, effective Fall 2022, the Graduate Council has now approved permanent changes to the rules which are detailed below. The updated rules are intended to affirm that graduate examinations are most effective when all committee members are physically present but recognize that there are benefits for graduate programs to retain flexibility to allow for remote participation for faculty and students. Attached is the memo from the Graduate Council.

**Effective Fall 2022**, the following provisions for scheduling and administering qualifying exams and final defenses will replace the previous campus rules and the temporary COVID-19 authorization:

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***The default method for the doctoral and master's committee to conduct graduate examinations (doctoral qualifying examination and final dissertation/thesis defense) is when the student and all members of the committee are physically present in the same room.***

*The Graduate Council recognizes, however, that practical exigencies do not always make this possible. Therefore, the Graduate Council will defer to the graduate programs (Department Chair or Program Director) to review requests for exceptions and to make decisions to allow remote participation. The graduate program must ensure that when an exam is approved to be held entirely remote or in a hybrid format (i.e., some members are physically present and some are remote) that the student has agreed to this format.*

***It is expected that there will be synchronous participation by all committee members in the scheduled exam. If an unavoidable situation arises that affects a committee member's ability to participate synchronously, the committee chair (or co-chairs) may decide how to proceed. There must be sufficient expertise among present members to examine the student. If a committee member must be absent for the scheduled exam, it is permissible for one absent committee member to examine the candidate on a separate date. The committee chair, or one co-chair, must participate synchronously in the scheduled exam.***

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As specified above, the Graduate Council will defer to each graduate program to make

decisions whether to allow remote participation in graduate examinations. Therefore, each program will need to establish appropriate guidelines for the application of this flexibility allowed under the new rules starting in FA22.

Let us know if you have any questions.

Best regards,

Erica Lennard

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