



## SPPH MSc Virtual Final Oral Defense Protocol

In response to the growing concerns surrounding the COVID-19 virus, the SPPH MSc Program has developed a protocol to support total virtual participation in an MSc defense. This remote protocol is adapted from the PhD virtual defense protocol and applies for defenses held on or after March 19, 2020 until further notice. This protocol was updated as of May 14, 2021 to include options for guest attendance at a virtual defense.

### Virtual Defense

Virtual defenses should abide by the following guidelines:

- Virtual defenses will be supported by a software solution of the student's and supervisor's choice, including, but not limited to: Skype, Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, etc. It is the joint responsibility of the student and the supervisor to inform the MSc program of the type of connection that will be used for the virtual defense.
- All participants, including required participants and guest participants must agree to respectfully participate in the virtual defense prior to the defense date.
- Required participants will include all of the following: (1) student, (2) supervisor/co-supervisor, (3) exam chair, (4) SPPH examiner, (5) SPPH committee member.
- The supervisor/co-supervisor, exam chair, SPPH examiner, and any committee members will constitute the Exam Committee.
- The MSc Program recommends that virtual defenses be open to a maximum of five guest attendees. Guest attendees may include any family, friends, or colleagues that the student would like to invite. It is the joint responsibility of the student and the supervisor to ensure that any guest attendees have the exam attendance details and to inform the exam chair of the names of guest attendees.
- The student's presentation slides should be circulated to all Exam Committee members prior to the meeting.
- The connection and setup should be tested prior to the meeting.
- If it becomes necessary for some attendees to turn off video to enhance the stability of the meeting, the student should wherever possible remain on video.

The MSc program recommends that all participants connect from a computer that is hard-wired into an internet connection and, if you must connect via wifi, try to test the connection prior to the defense. We cannot control the quality of each participant's internet connection, participants should be prepared for technical issues (e.g. poor audio or visual quality, dropped connections) and the Chair should be prepared to uphold the responsibilities as outlined below. It may be advisable to have a back-up plan for a conference call with audio only if all else fails.

### Responsibilities of the Chair (for standard responsibilities, please refer to the MSc PPH Final Oral Examination Policies and Procedures Document)

1. Ensure quorum in the virtual environment.
2. Moderate the defense proceedings; ensure fairness.



- a. Outline the potential technical issues that may occur, encourage patience and kindness towards each other, and describe the Chair's responsibility to suspend the defense if there are technical difficulties that compromise the defense.
3. Ensure all required participants can effectively engage in the process.
4. Ensure that any questions posed are addressed by the student during the question period.
5. Chair the in camera discussion of the Examining Committee and convey the outcome to the student.
  - a. Ensure the student and any guest attendees are removed from the connection for the entirety of the in camera discussion.
6. Submit the Chair's Report form to the MSc Program ([emily.vangulik@ubc.ca](mailto:emily.vangulik@ubc.ca)) within one week after the defense (MSc Final Oral Exam Chair's Report Form).

\*\*Important note: the Chair has the authority to discontinue a remote connection at any time they judge that it is interfering with the proper conduct of the examination. If one or more required participants drop from the connection or lose audio, the defense must be halted until the required participant's connection or audio is restored.

If the connection or audio cannot be restored after 30 minutes or if the total amount of time lost exceeds 60 minutes, the Chair may elect to switch to a conference call with audio only. **This option should be established in advance.** In the event that a stable connection is not sustainable, the Chair must suspend the defense and notify the MSc program.