

QUICK GUIDE: DEFENCES BACK TO PHYSICAL PRESENCE

Updated version: 28 March 22

Context

Restrictions regarding meetings and conferences are lifted. General health and safety recommendations remain in force. Organisers of events can recommend the wearing of masks in case of large attendances.

The University asks everyone to plan any future PhD Defence meeting again in physical presence on site. Defence meetings can be held following the general instructions for meetings which are available on the website: <https://wwwfr.uni.lu/coronavirus/guidelines#Meetings>. It is also possible again to organise a reception after the defence.

The University law (art. 37) requires physical presence of at least 4 jury members. Due to the contact and travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in other countries, it might still be impossible for members of the examination board (jury) to travel. So it might be good to foresee a video link. This also allows broader participation of guests.

The signature rules of the thesis reports remain unchanged:

- The University law requires presence of jury members, which are normally justified by original signatures.
- If a jury member cannot be present exceptionally (e.g. if the Covid-19 measures remain strict in her/his country of residence), the administration accepts electronic signatures from this member of the examination board, in order to proceed with the next steps, and in order not to delay the graduation.
- However, the paper version of the thesis reports must be circulated via mail in order to collect original signatures from all jury members. This is not urgent but required to comply with the law. The signed thesis reports will be part of the diploma supplement handed out during the graduation ceremony in December.

How to prepare a defence with members joining (exceptionally) remotely?

It is recommended to hold a physical defence meeting with all participants present in a room, according to the University health and safety measures. In case a hybrid format is chosen, please find below some hints. Please make sure to test the technology with all concerned participants a few days before the event. Totally online defences are not possible any more.

Tools

- The University recommends **WebEx technology**.
- There is a large online resource: <https://remote.uni.lu/work-remotely/>
- WebEx is offering 3 types of services available to all @uni.lu and @ext.uni.lu accounts:
- WebEx Meetings
- WebEx Training (e.g. offers the use of “breakout rooms”; [Find online resources](#)) o WebEx Events
- Other resources are available if WebEx should not be working.

Connectivity

- Please ensure that everyone has a stable internet connection. It might be preferable to use a University room especially to enable a good connection for the doctoral candidate.
- Please test the technology before starting the defence, and do so with all participants. o A headset improves audio quality and reduces side-noises.
- Connectivity might be improved by using a cable rather than wireless connection. o It seems WebEx works best with “Chrome” browser.
- If connectivity fails during the meeting, provide enough time to repeat a section of the meeting.
- **Worst case:** if lines break down completely, or in case of other technical difficulties, the defence should be postponed!

Public defence – invite guests

- In general, a defence must be public.
- Guests can participate virtually, upon registration/invitation by the meeting organiser.
- A limited “public debate” should be possible; the moderator can register questions and define in which order they can be asked.

During the meeting

- It is recommended to appoint a moderator for each part of the meeting. This is typically the role of the jury president.
- During the meeting, only the person who talks should switch on the microphone. Sound quality improves if most participants (especially guests) are muted and switch off cameras.

After the meeting

- The closed discussions of the jury can happen in the same meeting (by excluding the Candidate and other participants) or in a virtual breakout room.
- The thesis reports are written as usual.
- Please provide time to communicate the results to the new doctor.
- It is again possible to organise a drink/reception after the defence.

Signatures of thesis reports

- See above in the introduction.