

QUICK GUIDE: ONLINE/SEMI-ONLINE DEFENCES AND TRANSITORY MEASURES DURING COVID-19

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Context

The University law (art. 37) requires physical presence of at least 4 jury members. Due to the contact and travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the safest way to hold a defence is via video conferencing, or with a limited presence on Campus and other participants joining remotely. Both setups are exceptionally permitted.

Defence meetings can be held in a (large) WebEx room at the University (any Campus) **with a limited number of people in the room.**

Defence meetings must be organised in accordance with the University's guidelines for meetings and event which are published [here](#). All participants must be registered before the defence meeting (via email: superviseur.securite@uni.lu).

Information about the maximum occupancy per room is available on the COVID-19 pages on the [Intranet](#). In case of doubt, please ask the reservations team for advice.

A list of defences which are authorised by the Vice-Rector for Research (VRR) will be sent by the BED to the central services (SI/SLO/IT) in regular intervals, in order to confirm that these defences can be held while respecting the maximum occupancy number of the room. **Upon reservation of the room, please inform the reception of the concerned building** via email and copy: superviseur.securite@uni.lu.

Please note that external jury members might not be able to travel to Luxembourg, so you should always foresee a video link. The audience can also connect via the same video link.

Please find some further information on online defences below.

How to prepare an online/semi-online defence?

Many doctoral defences have been performed successfully online. It is recommended to run a test with all participants a few days before the real event.

Tools

- The University recommends **WebEx technology**.
- There is a large online resource on ServiceNow: <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 [here](#))
 - 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.
 - A headset improves audio quality and reduces side-noises.

- Connectivity might be improved by using a cable rather than wireless connection.
- 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! A prolongation of the study period can be discussed according to individual needs.

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, and to “celebrate online”.

Signatures of thesis reports

- The University law requires presence of jury members, which are normally justified by original signatures.
- In the current situation, the administration accepts electronic signatures 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.