



30 JUNE 2022

## MEMORANDUM

**Re:** Guidelines for PhD defences

**Case handler** R&I

The PhD order stipulates:

*19. The PhD thesis is defended in public in accordance with the rules laid down by the institution. At the defence, the PhD student or author must be given the opportunity to explain his or her work and defend the PhD thesis before the members of the assessment committee, see subsection (3).*

Guidance on the PhD order, section 19 (1), stipulates the following:

*"... There is nothing to prevent the defence proceedings being undertaken as a video conference or similar as long as the PhD student is given the opportunity to explain his or her work and defend the PhD thesis before the members of the assessment committee."*

On the basis of the PhD schools' positive experience of digital defences during the COVID 19 lockdown, the University of Copenhagen has decided that PhD defences can be held in three different ways: 1. Physical PhD defences where those involved are present in the same room, 2. Hybrid PhD defences that combine a physical defence with a digital solution and 3. Digital PhD defences. The supervisor/department is responsible for choosing the format of the defence and for the proceedings. For option 2 and 3, it is required that the PhD student agrees with the choice of defence format. The Supervisor/department is responsible for the defence proceedings.

Before announcing the defence, the PhD student or the principal supervisor must inform the PhD school of the defence format chosen, which, as a rule,

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is binding. However, in situations that may be regarded as force majeure, the chosen format can be deviated from.

The following describes how the PhD schools can hold hybrid and digital PhD defences.

The following interpretation of section 19(1) of the PhD order ensures that the main elements of a defence are present, so that the function and legitimacy of the defence are upheld. If this is not possible, the defence must be postponed, see section 20(3).

Hybrid PhD defences are to be held in the following way:

- As stipulated in the PhD order, the PhD student or the author must be given the opportunity to explain their work and defend the PhD thesis before the members of the assessment committee. The time frames that normally apply to PhD defences are maintained.
- The PhD supervisor may decide to hold a digital or hybrid defence if the PhD student agrees to the choice of defence format.

The defence must take place in rooms that are equipped with the necessary IT tools to support a hybrid PhD defence.

- As a minimum, the PhD student and the chair of the assessment committee must be present in person at the defence. In special circumstances, the chair may be replaced by a moderator.
- The defence must be live-streamed and made accessible via a secure IT platform.
- Members of the assessment committee who attend the defence digitally must be given the opportunity to ask questions directly to the PhD student/author via the video meeting.
- Any digital audience must also be given the opportunity to participate actively in the defence, including putting questions to the PhD student/author, for example via a chat function.
- A video link or other electronic address must be made public along with the location of the physical part of the defence when the defence is announced or as soon as possible thereafter, and it must be clearly stated how the public defence can be accessed digitally.
- It is the responsibility of the chair of the defence to ensure that the conditions during the defence proceedings are as the rules stipulate. If not, the defence is interrupted or suspended.

- The person in charge of the defence proceedings, or another specifically appointed individual, must give instructions as to the basic use of the IT platform during the defence, e.g. turning on/off the microphone and the camera. More information is available in the specific UCPH IT guide and support regarding the required technical solution for setting up hybrid PhD defences.

Digital PhD defences are to be held in the following way:

- As stipulated in the PhD order, the PhD student or the author must be given the opportunity to explain their work and defend the PhD thesis before the members of the assessment committee. The time frames that normally apply to PhD defences are maintained.
- The PhD supervisor may decide to hold a digital or hybrid defence if the PhD student agrees to the choice of defence format.
- The defence must be live-streamed and made accessible via a secure IT platform.
- The assessment committee must be given the opportunity to put questions directly to the PhD student/author via the video meeting.
- The audience must also be given the opportunity to participate actively in the defence, including putting questions to the PhD student/author, for example via a chat function.
- The video link or other electronic address must be made public when the defence is announced or as soon as possible thereafter, and it must be clearly stated how the public defence can be accessed digitally.
- It is the responsibility of the chair of the defence to ensure that the conditions during the defence proceedings are as the rules stipulate. If not, the defence is interrupted or suspended.
- The person in charge of the defence proceedings, or another specifically appointed individual, must give instructions as to the basic use of the IT platform during the defence, e.g. turning on/off the microphone and the camera.