Guidance for student thesis or seminar paper defenses via video conference, Spring 2020
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General considerations
First off, thank you for the work you are all doing to support our students through this unprecedented time.

As you prepare for student defenses, please remember this format is an added stress for them. We have not trained our students to present this way. Presentation qualities like eye contact and gestures are going to be different than they would be in person. So if those things are part of what you evaluate, you may want to provide committee members with guidance regarding your program's expectations for video conference defenses.

Please note that **signed signature pages will not be required** for students to submit their thesis for editing, or for us to approve the thesis so the student can graduate. We will pick up those pieces after campus re-opens. Instead, please create an email trail of the entire committee's approval (emails to the committee chair saying "I approve so and so's thesis" would be perfect). Then the committee chair should email gradstudies@uwlax.edu with a list of the committee member names and a statement that the thesis has been approved by the committee.

Video conference options for thesis and project defenses
Collaborate Ultra (through Canvas) and WebEx are our two options in terms of software that UWL owns licenses for and supports that will work for online defense seminars. At this time, **WebEx is our recommendation for online defense meetings**. If, however, you are more familiar with Collaborate Ultra and plan to have only committee members attend, that program may work for you.

We provide directions for hosting an online thesis defense in both programs below. **Whichever option you choose, make sure that whoever is leading the meeting has a chance to practice the steps listed here, so they are comfortable running the defense.**

WebEx

Terry Wirkus has volunteered to serve as WebEx support for any thesis defenses happening this spring. If you are struggling with any of these steps, feel free to email him for assistance. ITS has created a set of videos to help folks learning to use WebEx, available here: Webex Video Instructions.

1. To host a meeting in WebEx, you need a WebEx account. Successfully attending a WebEx meeting does not mean you have one. Request an account via web help desk ticket at https://support.uwlax.edu/. Terry Wirkus will email you back with details about how to log in for the first time.

2. With your WebEx account you will get a URL for your "personal room" in WebEx. That is the URL you will share with folks to let them attend the meeting.

3. Once the defense is scheduled, share the date and time along with your WebEx URL with the student, committee members, others in the department, etc. Advertise the defense via email within your department and/or in the Campus Events Calendar using that same information plus the URL. Anybody will be able to join the meeting simply by clicking the URL on the right day at the right time. The first time they use WebEx they will need to download a small piece of software and enter some basic information about themselves, but they don't need an account and no codes need to be shared.

4. Schedule a practice meeting with the student and the committee members several days before the defense, to make sure everybody knows how to do what they need to do. Set a date and time for the meeting. At the time of the scheduled practice meeting, **navigate to https://uwlax.webex.com/ and select Start a Meeting.** If you start the meeting from the desktop app you will not have all the controls mentioned below.

    Most of the controls you need will appear as a series of circles at the bottom of the screen; the rest are in the menus across the top. Click on the person button and the folks you invited will show up in the Participants panel as they join. Check everybody's audio and video connections, and then practice the following:

    a. Using the Participants panel to monitor who is in attendance and whether they have video and audio muted.
    b. Using security controls to remove a participant from the meeting, in the unlikely event that your meeting is "Zoombombed." In the participant panel, if you right-click on a participant's name you will see options for either muting or expelling them from the meeting.
    c. Having the student share a file for others to view, which is how they will show their slide show for defense. (Do that with the circular button with a picture of a rectangle with an arrow pointing up from it.)
    d. Participants "raising their hand" to indicate that they want to speak (an option by their name in the Participant panel, not visible to host). Participants using the Chat function (circle button with a chat bubble on it).

      e. Locking and unlocking the meeting, which is how you will close out first the audience members and then the student when they leave the meeting for you to deliberate. (Meeting menu.)

      f. Having student leave the meeting and then come back in.

      g. Starting a recording (circle button with a red dot in it). We recommend recording the session in case a committee member loses connectivity during the meeting.

5. Before the defense, make sure you have a secondary form of contact for each committee member and the student, so you can reach out to trouble-shoot (e.g. a cellphone number for texting). **Establish how the student will be informed to come back into the virtual room after deliberations are completed**. Let the student know that the session will be recorded.

6. The day of the defense, ask all committee members to reboot their computers, to maximize the chances that everything goes smoothly. Open your meeting room in WebEx approximately 15 minutes prior to the event – to allow the student time to set up and check all functions. Use the Participant menu to select "Mute on Entry."

At the start time, remind everybody other than the student to mute their microphones. Begin recording the meeting. Give the audience an overview of what to expect, and let them know they will have the chance to ask questions after the presentation if that is part of your department's typical procedures.

After the presentation, ask audience members to use the Chat function or "raise their hands" to ask questions (if applicable).

After Q&A, ask audience members and/or your student to leave the meeting. You can monitor this in the Participants panel. After everybody has gone, lock the meeting.

For private committee deliberations, ask the student to leave the meeting.

Contact student in manner previously decided upon when you are ready to let them know the outcome of your deliberations. Unlock door to let them back in.

Follow your standard procedures for informing program personnel about the outcome of the defense. As mentioned above, a signed signature page is not required at this time. Instead, the Chair of the committee should email gradstudies@uwlax.edu with the names of all committee members and the information that they have approved the thesis once they have done so.

To access the recording, navigate to your WebEx home page at https://uwlax.webex.com and open up Recordings in left-hand navigation menu.

Collaborate Ultra

Melissa Bingham has agreed to serve as a contact point for questions about using Collaborate Ultra for defense meetings.

1. To host a meeting in Collaborate Ultra, it is recommended you create a new master course that you can devote to using for the defense meetings. To create a new master course, click the Help button at the bottom of the Global Navigation on the left side of Canvas. Click Create a Master Course and then enter a course name, course code/short name, and select the department from drop-down menu. Click the Create Course button. When the notification appears at the top that the course has been created, click the Let's Go link.

2. In your new thesis defense meetings course in Canvas, go to the Collaborate Ultra link in the left side course navigation. Click the Create Session button. Name the session (could be the name of the student doing the defense). It is fine to have the session Start time be immediately as it will default to the time you created the session. Click the checkbox for "No end (open session)" so that the session will remain open (you can adjust the date after the defense is over to close out the session). A guest link will appear, and the guest role should be set as participant. Click the two squares next to the Guest link to copy the link. This is the URL you will share with folks to let them attend the meeting.

3. Once the defense is scheduled, share the date and time along with your copied Guest link with the student, committee members, and any others you want to invite. Anybody you provide with the guest link will be able to join the meeting simply by clicking the Guest link on the right day at the right time. It is recommended that if you plan to publicly advertise the defense via email within your department and/or in the Campus Events Calendar and expect a large number of attendees that you use WebEx for conducting the meeting instead of Collaborate Ultra.

4. Schedule a practice meeting with the student several days before the defense, to make sure the student is comfortable with the system. (Make sure the Collaborate Ultra session is set up with a start time early enough to allow this.) IMPORTANT: At the time of the scheduled practice meeting, you will need to join the session through your Canvas account by going to Collaborate Ultra within the thesis defense course that you created the session in. Click on the session in Collaborate Ultra and click the Join session button. Joining the session through Canvas (instead of via the Guest link) is needed so that you will be in the session as a "moderator" and will be able to allow the student to share their screen. When the student joins through the guest link, they will be a "participant". Once you and the student are in the room, you can both share audio and video by using the buttons at the bottom of the screen. You will click the purple arrows at the lower right side to open the Collaborate panel. The Collaborate panel contains an area for chat among attendees (word bubble icon) and a list of attendees (people icon). Open the attendee list and find the student's name. Click the three dots to the left of their name and select "Make presenter". Then instruct the student to also open their Collaborate panel via the purple arrows and select the icon for Share Content. The student should have their presentation slides open on their computer. The student will select "Share Application/Screen", select Application Window, select their slides from the list, and press Share. Make sure you are now able to see the student's slides and have them move through a few of them.

5. Before the defense, make sure you have a secondary form of contact for each committee member and the student, so you can reach out to trouble-shoot (e.g. a cellphone number for texting). IMPORTANT: establish how the student will be informed to come back into the virtual room after deliberations are completed. Make sure the student is OK with the plan to record the session; this is best practice in case a committee member loses connectivity during the meeting.

6. The day of the defense, join the meeting early *through your Canvas course* and have the student join the meeting early with the Guest link. Give the student permission to share their screen by making them a "presenter" to make sure everything is functioning properly (see Step 4 above).

   At the start time, remind everybody besides the student to mute their microphones. Begin recording the meeting by clicking the three lines in the upper left corner to open the Session menu and selecting Start Recording. Give the audience an overview of what to expect and let them know they will have the chance to ask questions after the presentation.

   After the presentation, ask audience members to use the Chat function or "raise their hands" to ask questions so that you can moderate the questions.

   After Q&A, ask audience members to leave the meeting. You can monitor this in the Attendees panel. For private committee deliberations, ask the student to leave the meeting.

   Contact student in manner previously decided upon when you are ready to let them know the outcome of your deliberations. At this point they can rejoin the session.

   Follow your standard procedures for informing program personnel about the outcome of the defense. As mentioned above, a signed signature page is not required at this time. Instead, the Chair of the committee should email gradstudies@uwlax.edu with the names of all committee members and the information that they have approved the thesis once they have done so.