

Organisation of scientific defenses during pandemic-related limited presence operations

Decision of Faculty Council FKR IV 2/12-20.05.2020 (13 : 0 : 0)

Background: As long as access and travel restrictions continue, there must be an alternative solution for holding scientific debates. Preconditions for conducting examinations at the TUB will be announced in the **letter of the crisis management team of the TU Berlin dated 23.04.2020**. The hygiene and protective measures to be observed in each case can be found in **the letter of the crisis management team dated 05.05.2020**. These instructions for the realisation of scientific defenses can be adapted in case of essential changes of the situation. **Please always inform yourself about the current version.**

The following procedural instructions are aimed at the fact that the physical meeting of members of the PhD Committee, the doctoral candidate and the public will not be possible in one room at the TU Berlin and that the defense must represent a compromise between minimized physical presence and maximum legal security (partial presence). In the current exceptional situation, the video-based connection of commission members is considered possible in principle; likewise, an exclusively virtual scientific defense in urgent, specially justified exceptional cases.

Principles for scientific defenses using the videoconference option

- The chairperson of the PhD Committee is responsible for the proper performance of the defense, which is organised by the Faculty Administration except for the preparation of the meeting.
- Members of the PhD Committee and the university public are digitally connected via a TUB-certified videoconferencing tool, currently WebEx - tubMeeting (<https://tu-berlin.webex.com/>), Jitsi or DFNConnect. Doctoral candidates and members of the doctoral committee have to familiarize themselves with the use of the tool beforehand (setting up the presentation, parts of the screen, etc.).
- Preliminary statements by the doctoral candidate and members of the doctoral committee
 - o Agreement to carry out the defense by videoconference.
 - o Confirmation that the necessary IT equipment (hardware, software, Internet connection, etc.) is available for this purpose.
 - o Confirmation that you are familiar with the functioning of the videoconferencing tool used.
 - o Agreement that the scientific defense will be interrupted and repeated if a trouble-free realisation should not be possible.
- If the scientific defense cannot be carried out without disturbance, the sitting should be stopped and the defense repeated. In this case, a new invitation must be issued, and the time limits and modalities of the invitation must again be observed. The joint evaluation can be made up on the same day.
- The invitation and minutes shall refer to the special format of the scientific defense. The invitation shall be sent at least 14 days before the date of the planned scientific defense.
- In the case of partial presence, the invitation is also the basis for the issue of a certificate for temporary access to the building by TU's Chancellor.
- The involvement of the university public is achieved by timely registration of interested parties via their own university e-mail address. We kindly ask you to make use of this only in case of justified interest. Private persons (e.g. relatives) are not permitted.
- The scientific defense is divided into three sections. A separate digital meeting room will be set up for each section and access will be communicated to the respective participants in good time.
- In the case of a **partial presence**, the doctoral candidate, the committee chairperson and the first reviewer (from the TU Berlin) will be in a sufficiently large room at the TU Berlin that offers the technical requirements for a videoconference. A technically experienced person must be brought in

within minutes to restore a failed videoconference. This person must not be the doctoral candidate or a member of the doctoral committee.

Realisation

Invitation and participation of the university public (guests):

Besides the date of the scientific defense, the invitation contains the date by which guests can register with their own TUB e-mail address and express their interest in participating in the defense. The registration for participation is possible for guests until 09:00 a.m. of the working day preceding the scientific defense at the responsible office in the Faculty Administration (example: defense Monday, registration for guests until Friday 9:00 a.m.). It is pointed out that potential guests should only attend with a legitimate interest in order not to overstretch the capacity, stability and bandwidth of the transmission and to ensure the feasibility of the defense for the doctoral candidate and the members of the PhD Committee.

The access information will be sent to the guests by e-mail no later than 15:00 on the working day preceding the defense. The meeting will be prepared by the doctoral candidate, a member of the doctoral committee or the secretariat of the respective research group in which the doctoral candidate is working on his/her doctoral thesis. The sending of the access links and the invitation to the defense will be done by the Faculty Administration. **Participants are to be informed that recording the defense is prohibited.**

The dissertation shall be displayed to the persons named in § 8 (1) sentence 2 of the doctoral regulations by placing the thesis in a tubcloud for at least 14 days prior to the scientific defense; on request, the Faculty Administration shall provide a link and password for the cloud. The right of the members of the PhD Committee, the full-time university professors and the members of the Faculty Council to inspect the expert opinions is also made possible by providing them in a cloud and communicating the link on request. If the Dean allows the persons named under § 8 sentence 2 letter c) to view the expert opinions, he or she will inform the responsible office in the Faculty Administration, which will then provide the respective people with the link in the tubcloud. It must be ensured that the expert opinions are made available in a different viewing area than the dissertation.

Conduct of the scientific defense:

It is divided into the following three sections with the persons participating in each. Participants will receive the relevant access information for each section by 3 p.m. of the working day preceding the scientific defense at the latest.

Sections:

1: Defense

Participants: doctoral candidate, members of the doctoral committee, university public

2: Voting of the members of the PhD Committee on the result of the PhD

Participants: members of the PhD Committee

3: Communication of the result

Participants: doctoral candidate, members of the PhD Committee

A stable Internet connection must be available throughout the scientific defense. The doctoral candidate and the members of the PhD Committee must always be connected via video and audio link. At the beginning of the first part of the defense all participants will be called by name. In order to improve the quality of the broadcast, the university public should only be connected via audio link if necessary.

In addition, nos. 2. to 8. of the information sheet "Guidance for the organization of scientific defenses using videoconferencing" from 25.09.2019 apply.

Technical and practical information:

Experience shows that the following measures lead to an improvement of the digital connection: The use of headphones improves intelligibility. In order to minimize background noise, it is advisable to mute your microphone as long as you do not want to speak yourself. In case of connection problems, guests should switch to the audio-only connection. The moderator ("host") should make use of the possibility to mute the guests - as long as the question round is not opened.

In case of a **partial presence**, disinfection (tables, door handles, keyboard etc.) should be ensured after the defense. In the building, facemasks must be worn until the beginning of the defense, if possible also during the defense. The applicable distance regulations must be observed.

Minutes/Protocol:

The technical conditions and any technical malfunctions / interruptions are noted. The members of the PhD Committee as well as the doctoral candidate assure in the minutes that they were able to follow the discussion at any time, and the doctoral candidate confirms his/her ability to examine. The authenticity of the minutes, including the guest list, is confirmed by electronic signatures or e-mail confirmations from institutional e-mail addresses or by the original signature on a printout sent by post to the Faculty Administration.

The provisional certificate will be issued by the chairperson in case of a partial presence defense.