*Proposal to change the approved modality for Program of Study committee meetings as well as thesis and dissertation proposal and final defense meetings.*

**Current**

### [4.4.2 Examinations](https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=4&search=remote&section=4.4#search)

Despite efforts to achieve full, in-person participation, students may discover that one or more committee members cannot be physically present on campus for an examination at a time that suits most others. Three options are available when one member cannot attend:

1. The member who cannot be physically present for the examination may participate remotely if that person is engaged in the session for its entirety. A video-audio connection is preferred, though audio-only is permitted. A student can arrange for this remote participation with approval of a [Preliminary or Final Oral Examination with Committee Member at a Distance](https://secure.grad-college.iastate.edu/distance/) form prior to the exam.
2. Complete the [Request for Committee Substitution at the Preliminary or Final Oral Exam](https://secure.grad-college.iastate.edu/committee-substitution/) form before the examination to arrange for a temporary, substitute committee member who will serve with voting rights only for the examination that the permanent member cannot attend. This option can be used in cases in which the member’s absence is planned, or in cases of emergency/unplanned absences. The substitute must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the absent member. Although not required, the absent member may participate for part or all of the examination by use of any form of remote connection, but the absent member may not vote.
3. The committee member who cannot be physically present may be replaced permanently on the committee by another member of the graduate faculty who can attend the examination and commits to fulfilling all other remaining responsibilities of POS committee service. The new member must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the member being replaced. To make this replacement, a new POSC should be routed and approved.

Special arrangements can be made when it is necessary for two committee members to participate remotely, but only if there are at least five members on the committee. Any oral examination that involves two remote faculty members must be held in a location preapproved by the Graduate College. Preapproved locations will be equipped with technology for high-quality videoconferencing and will be staffed with experts in the use of the technology. Those experts must be contacted by the student and/or major professor(s) at least three weeks in advance to schedule the space and to confer about any necessary pretesting of technology. The experts or their designees must agree to monitor the examination through its entirety, to strive to correct any technical problems quickly, and to notify the Graduate College within three days after the examination of any problems with videoconferencing. The student, the student’s program(s), or the major professor(s), will be responsible for paying any fees associated with use of space and technical assistance. The Graduate College may nullify an examination in which the integrity of the process could not be maintained due to technical difficulties.

Students are not allowed to participate in their preliminary examination at a distance. If a student’s entire Ph.D. degree program is completed at a distance, a waiver of this requirement may be sought for students who would face hardship in getting to campus for their exam.

**Proposed**

### 4.4.2 Examinations

The student, in consultation with their committee chair(s), may decide on the meeting format. An in-person meeting on a campus or a remote meeting arrangement may be considered as options best-suited for their examination or meeting. Factors to consider may include (but are not limited to) comfort level, availability of committee members to be physically present in an on-campus meeting room for an examination that suits most others, and desired meeting room equipment or technology to meet examination goals. Hence, the Graduate College no longer distinguishes between physical or remote meeting attendance.

Online platforms allow for common examination and meeting activities such as introduction, presentation, question and answer, deliberate, and committee decision, to take place. This type of meeting format also advances inclusion (e.g., extend invitation to observers, support student and faculty goals and needs, offer greater flexibility). If a synchronous, remote meeting arrangement for the student and committee members is preferred, the following points detail recommended best practices for these meetings:

1. Choose videoconference software that best meets the student’s goals and needs and is monitored by the university’s [Information Technology Services such as Zoom or WebEx](https://www.digitalaccess.iastate.edu/meetings).

2. Videoconference technology must allow the student and committee members to communicate throughout the examination and access or view all materials presented.

3. Assign the student and committee chair(s) as co-hosts to promote optimal remote meeting room management (e.g., breakout rooms, muting/unmuting, share screen).

4. Students and committee chairs(s) are encouraged to login to the meeting room 10 minutes early to troubleshoot any meeting challenges (e.g., screen share).

5. The student, in consultation with their committee chair(s), may invite observers to the meeting. The student should communicate a remote meeting arrangement plan to their committee members at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled exam or meeting. This plan should describe:

* 2-3 goals that will be achieved by inviting observers to the meeting
* the meeting location/link/room identification number and password (if applicable)
* the number of observers expected, invited, or confirmed maximum limit
* the meeting activities that observers would be welcomed to view (e.g., student presentation, student responding to committee members’ questions),
* observer expectations (e.g., enable waiting room, muted upon meeting room entry, video off, remain muted, hide all non-video participants, refrain from using the chat until invited by the committee chair(s), prevent removed participants from rejoining the meeting)
* communicate that observers (as well as the student) will not be permitted to hear the committee’s private deliberations about the student’s performance or meeting outcome. Committee members will move to a breakout room or a separate remote meeting room to deliberate confidentially.

Committee members who have reservations about the remote meeting arrangement plan are required to bring these concerns to the attention of the student and committee chair(s) at least five days prior to the scheduled meeting.

6. In the event of technical difficulties, the student and committee chair(s) should proactively provide the affected committee member(s) with information about how to join the meeting room via phone. In rare cases, it may necessary for student or committee chair(s) to setup a new meeting link/address and reconvene and continue in a different room. If none of the options resolve the technological difficulties and allow full participation of a committee member, the committee chair(s) are responsible for making the decision to delay the examination without prejudice to the student and/or resume the examination as promptly as possible.

Complete the [Request for Committee Substitution at the Preliminary or Final Oral Exam](https://secure.grad-college.iastate.edu/committee-substitution/) form before the examination to arrange for a temporary, substitute committee member who will serve with voting rights only for the examination that the permanent member cannot attend. This option can be used in cases in which the member’s absence is planned, or in cases of emergency/unplanned absences. The substitute must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the absent member. Although not required, the absent member may participate for part or all of the examination by use of any form of remote connection, but the absent member may not vote.

The committee member who cannot be present (either physically or by remote) may be replaced permanently on the committee by another member of the graduate faculty who can attend the examination and commits to fulfilling all other remaining responsibilities of POS committee service. The new member must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the member being replaced. To make this replacement, a new POSC should be routed and approved.

Current

### [7.1.2 Final Oral Examinations](https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=7&search=oral%20examination&section=7.1#search)

Despite efforts to achieve full, in-person participation, students may discover that one or more committee members cannot be physically present on campus for an examination at a time that suits most others. Three options are available when one member cannot attend:

1. The member who cannot be physically present for the examination may participate remotely if that person is engaged in the session for its entirety. A video-audio connection is preferred, though audio-only is permitted. A student can arrange for this remote participation with approval of a [Preliminary or Final Oral Examination with Committee Member at a Distance](https://secure.grad-college.iastate.edu/distance/) form prior to the exam
2. Complete the [Request for Committee Substitution at the Preliminary or Final Oral Exam](https://secure.grad-college.iastate.edu/committee-substitution/) form before the examination to arrange for a temporary, substitute committee member who will serve with voting rights only for the examination that the permanent member cannot attend. This option can be used in cases in which the member’s absence is planned, or in cases of emergency/unplanned absences. The substitute must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the absent member. Although not required, the absent member may participate for part or all of the examination by use of any form of remote connection, but the absent member may not vote.
3. The committee member who cannot be physically present may be replaced permanently on the committee by another member of the graduate faculty who can attend the examination and commits to fulfilling all other remaining responsibilities of POS committee service. The new member must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the member being replaced. To make this replacement, a new POSC should be routed and approved.

Special arrangements can be made when it is necessary for two committee members to participate remotely, but only if there are at least five members on the committee. Any oral examination that involves two remote faculty members must be held in a location preapproved by the Graduate College. Preapproved locations will be equipped with technology for high-quality videoconferencing and will be staffed with experts in the use of the technology. Those experts must be contacted by the student and/or major professor(s) at least three weeks in advance to schedule the space and to confer about any necessary pretesting of technology. The experts or their designees must agree to monitor the examination through its entirety, to strive to correct any technical problems quickly, and to notify the Graduate College within three days after the examination of any problems with videoconferencing. The student, the student’s program(s), or the major professor(s), will be responsible for paying any fees associated with use of space and technical assistance. The Graduate College may nullify an examination in which the integrity of the process could not be maintained due to technical difficulties.

Under rare circumstances (which must be defined by the graduate program’s handbook or governance document), a graduate student may participate in their final oral examination at a distance. For both master’s and Ph.D. students, the Graduate College must be notified in advance of the examination. The student will submit the [Final Oral Exam with Student at a Distance](https://secure.grad-college.iastate.edu/student-at-distance/) form, which will require approval from the major professor before the Graduate College will approve. Whenever a student defends at a distance, the entire POS committee is expected to be on campus and available at a single location to facilitate the formulation of an objective evaluation, unless the program has received a waiver for this requirement. Technical capability for real-time visual and spoken communication must be established. Graduate programs may establish a student fee for technical costs associated with videoconferencing.

| **Total number of voting members** | **Maximum allowable remote faculty members** |
| --- | --- |
| 3 | 1 |
| 4 | 1 |
| 5 | 2 |

Any oral examination that involves two remote faculty members must be held in a location preapproved by the Graduate College. Preapproved locations will be equipped with technology for high-quality videoconferencing and will be staffed with experts in the use of the technology. Those experts must be contacted by the student and/or major professor(s) at least three weeks in advance to schedule the space and to confer about any necessary pretesting of technology. The experts or their designees must agree to monitor the examination through its entirety, to strive to correct any technical problems quickly, and to notify the Graduate College within three days after the examination of any problems with videoconferencing. The student, the student’s program(s), or the major professor(s), will be responsible for paying any fees associated with use of space and technical assistance. The Graduate College may nullify an examination in which the integrity of the process could not be maintained due to technical difficulties.

Proposed

The student, in consultation with their committee chair(s), may decide on the meeting format. An in-person meeting on a campus or a remote meeting arrangement may be considered as options best-suited for their examination or meeting. Factors to consider may include (but are not limited to) comfort level, availability of committee members to be physically present in an on-campus meeting room for an examination that suits most others, and desired meeting room equipment or technology to meet examination goals. Hence, the Graduate College no longer distinguishes between physical or remote meeting attendance.

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1. Choose videoconference software that best meets the student’s goals and needs and is monitored by the university’s [Information Technology Services such as Zoom or WebEx](https://www.digitalaccess.iastate.edu/meetings).

2. Videoconference technology must allow the student and committee members to communicate throughout the examination and access or view all materials presented.

3. Assign the student and committee chair(s) as co-hosts to promote optimal remote meeting room management (e.g., breakout rooms, muting/unmuting, share screen).

4. Students and committee chairs(s) are encouraged to login to the meeting room 10 minutes early to troubleshoot any meeting challenges (e.g., screen share).

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* observer expectations (e.g., enable waiting room, muted upon meeting room entry, video off, remain muted, hide all non-video participants, refrain from using the chat until invited by the committee chair(s), prevent removed participants from rejoining the meeting)
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Committee members who have reservations about the remote meeting arrangement plan are required to bring these concerns to the attention of the student and committee chair(s) at least five days prior to the scheduled meeting.

6. In the event of technical difficulties, the student and committee chair(s) should proactively provide the affected committee member(s) with information about how to join the meeting room via phone. In rare cases, it may necessary for student or committee chair(s) to setup a new meeting link/address and reconvene and continue in a different room. If none of the options resolve the technological difficulties and allow full participation of a committee member, the committee chair(s) are responsible for making the decision to delay the examination without prejudice to the student and/or resume the examination as promptly as possible.

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The committee member who cannot be present (either physically or by remote) may be replaced permanently on the committee by another member of the graduate faculty who can attend the examination and commits to fulfilling all other remaining responsibilities of POS committee service. The new member must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the member being replaced. To make this replacement, a new POSC should be routed and approved.