College of the Environment COVID-19 Response Guidance:
Clarification on Graduate Defenses

**Issue Date:** 8 March 2020
**Primary Point of Contact:** Julia Parrish, (jparrish@uw.edu, 206-221-5787 (o), 206-276-8665 (c))

**Relevant UW Guidance:**
- [UW Graduate School Instructions for Video Conferencing in Doctoral Examinations](#)

Unit **Graduate** Instructional Leadership-

This memo has updated information on **graduate defenses**. It is based on an earlier memo sent to GPCs and GPAs (see below), a recent clarification from the Graduate School, and recommendations from Seattle and King County Public Health. Please disseminate as you see fit.

**Can defenses be held?** Absolutely. Following the Graduate School's [Instructions for Video Conferencing in Doctoral Examinations](#), please provide Zoom capability for any required attendee (committee, student), and for anyone wishing to view the defense, as an "opt out" option must be available to all participants.

**Can the defense be public?** Recommendations from Seattle and King County Public Health include avoiding bringing large groups of people together in close proximity for events and gatherings. Therefore, please abide by the following guidelines:
- Provide remote access (e.g., Zoom) and advertise it. Make sure to inform viewers to mute their audio before the start of the presentation.
- Ask people who are sick, or are in high risk groups, to access the event remotely.
- Try to find ways to give people the space to practice social distancing. Reserve a larger-than-needed room so people can, at a minimum, sit every other seat. Please tell them to do that.
- Practice good hygiene.
- Make hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies available. Please announce that availability to attendees.
- Disinfect high touch surfaces (e.g., table tops, chair arms, door handles) before and after the event. Standard cleaning products are effective against COVID-19. Do not rely on janitorial services to do this, as event cleaning is outside of their regular duties.
- Consider holding any celebration in a food service facility where attendees are served individually (e.g., a restaurant). If food is served at the event, take food safety measures by avoiding self-serve silverware and communal snacks. Instead, use pre-packaged prepared food and drinks.

Text of the original email sent to GPCs and GPAs by the Graduate School:

*As the situation with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve, some of you have contacted the Graduate School to ask about our requirements regarding video conferencing in doctoral examinations.*
The Graduate School is committed to ensuring that students who are self-isolating and unable to attend a general or final exam in person as a result of COVID-19 caused by the novel coronavirus are allowed to take their exams by video conference so they can make progress and graduate on time. We encourage you to work with your students and members of their committees on a contingency plan should the student or any member of their committee not be able to be physically present for an exam as a result of COVID-19.

For exams scheduled during Winter Quarter 2020 and Spring Quarter 2020, we are allowing the following exceptions (no petition necessary) to the requirements listed in Instructions for Video Conferencing in Doctoral Examinations.

- The Graduate School Representative (GSR) may participate by video conference.
- The student is not required to participate by video conference at an academic institution, and therefore, a proctor (faculty or administrative personnel) does not need to be present throughout the entire examination.

If you have questions about video conferencing during exams, please contact GEMS at gemshelp@uw.edu

If you have any questions on any of the above please feel free to contact Julia Parrish or Stephanie Harrington.