

November 8, 2018

**PROFESSOR PAUL YU, Interim Dean
Graduate Division**

SUBJECT: Teleconferencing at PhD Exams and Defenses

At its October 8, 2018 meeting, the Graduate Council considered a proposal submitted by the chairs of the Departments of Anthropology, Communication, History, Literature, Music, Political Science, Philosophy, Sociology and Visual Arts to update the rules for how doctoral committee members participate in PhD qualifying exams and defenses. While the Council affirms that defenses and exams are most effective when all committee members are physically present, we also agree with the department chairs that circumstances do not always make that possible and delaying qualifying exams and defenses puts an undue burden on students. Therefore, the Council approved the following provisions to facilitate the scheduling and administration of PhD qualifying exams and defenses:

San Diego Senate Regulation 715, [Requirements for the PhD Degree at San Diego](#), requires that the doctoral committee conduct the qualifying examination and final oral examination (the dissertation defense). The preferred means to conduct these examinations is when all members of the doctoral committee are physically present. The Council recognizes, however, that practical exigencies do not always make this possible. Therefore, the Council approves the following rules for conducting PhD qualifying exams and defenses:

- 1. A doctoral committee member can participate in one of three ways: physically present (meaning they are in the room), telepresent (meaning they participate by live video teleconference), or in advance (if they must be absent on the exam date, it is permissible to examine the candidate in advance of the exam date).*
- 2. More than half of the doctoral committee must be physically present. No more than two members may be telepresent.*
- 3. The committee chair, or one co-chair, must be physically present.*
- 4. The outside tenured member must be physically present or telepresent.*
- 5. If an emergency situation arises that affects the number of committee members present, the committee chair (or co-chairs) may decide how to proceed. There must be sufficient expertise among present members (either physically or telepresent) to examine the student.*
- 6. Departments and programs may impose more restrictive requirements regarding how to conduct these exams, as they deem appropriate.*

For MA or MS thesis defenses, the rules above apply with the following modification:

- 1. More than half of the thesis committee must be physically present. No more than one member may be telepresent.*

In addition, the Council strongly encourages the Graduate Division to investigate the possibility of implementing procedures for committee members to certify exam and dissertation results electronically. The Council notes that UCLA has the capability to approve theses and dissertations electronically: <https://grad.ucla.edu/academics/graduate-study/file-your-thesis-or-dissertation/>.

The Council thanks the chairs of the above-named departments for bringing this proposal forward for consideration. The Council requests that the Graduate Division notify all departments and programs about these revised requirements and update its Graduate Adviser Manual and any other places stating the rules for conducting qualifying exams and thesis or dissertation defenses.

Sincerely,

Sorin Lerner, Chair
Graduate Council

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