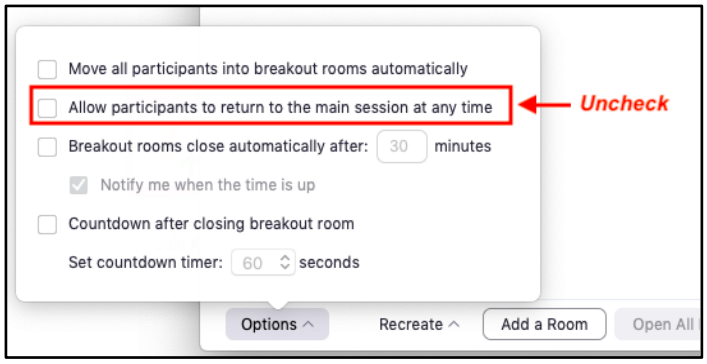
Graduate Education
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Resources for a Virtual Oral Defense

Preparation

Oral Defense Committee:



- Take time to become familiar with Zoom
  - Become familiar with Host functions, as you will be made Host during the voting portion.
  - Practice with a colleague or family member, using Breakout Rooms. A Breakout Room will be used as a "virtual hallway" for the student when the committee discusses privately.
  - Know how to create a breakout room, send a participant to the room, and adjust settings to only allow the student back to the main room when invited.
- Refer to this Zoom guide from DU's IT department
- Remind the student to take time to adjust Zoom settings and practice ahead of time.
- Exchange phone numbers with the student, in case you have technical difficulties during the defense/exam and need to communicate with one another.

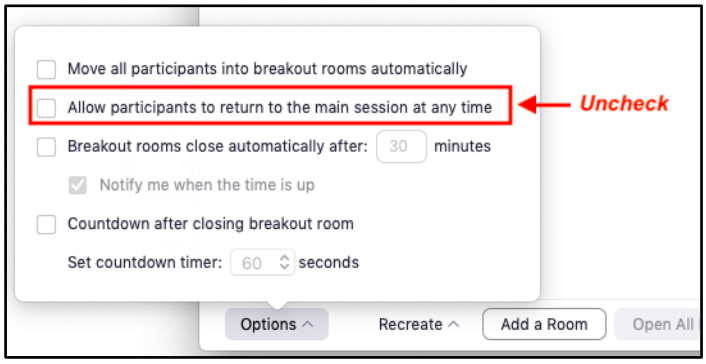
Students:

- Download Zoom for your virtual oral defense. Zoom is available to all DU students. Your virtual defense must include video for all committee members to view you and your presentation.
  - Log in to udenver.zoom.com with your DU email and PioneerWeb password. You will be prompted to download the device-appropriate app. Refer to this Zoom guide from DU's IT department.
  - Include your Zoom link on your Schedule of Oral Defense form. This form needs to be submitted to the Office of Graduate Education 4 weeks before your scheduled oral defense.
- Consider using the following settings, to avoid distractions during your presentation or exam:
  - Mute participants upon entry
  - Turn off Chat function
  - Turn off sound when participants join or leave
- To avoid potential unwelcome guests (hackers, etc.), consider using the following settings:
  - Require a meeting password when you set-up your Zoom meeting
  - Ensure that only you, the host, can share your screen
  - Once your full committee has joined the Zoom meeting, lock the meeting to ensure no one else can view and participate in your oral defense
- Practice! Gather a few family members or friends on Zoom for a trial run.
  - Practice in the same environment you'll be hosting the presentation and exam, to test for internet connection, sound quality/background noise, sharing your screen and presentation, and headphone use (if necessary).
  - Practice with the Managing Participants button, where you can mute or unmute participants, participants can raise hands, etc. (these skills will be useful during the Q&A portion of the defense).
  - Exchange phone numbers with your committee, in case you have technical difficulties during the defense/exam and need to communicate with one another.

Voting

Oral Defense Committee:

- Choose who will become the Host. Choose whoever is most comfortable using Zoom. Ask the student to use the Manage Participants button to make the chosen committee member the new Host.
- Host will create a Breakout Room and add the student to the room when the committee needs to discuss in private.
    - Adjust Breakout Room settings to only allow the student back to the room when invited.
- Have a clock or timer visible. Time can go surprisingly fast during virtual meetings!



Students:

- Use the Manage Participants button to make the chosen committee member the Host.
- Have blank paper and a pen next to you, in case you need to draw/write and show the committee during the exam. You could also try the Whiteboard function in Zoom (select this option under Share Screen).
- Have other devices (phone, tablet, etc.) with you, in case you need to use it as a second camera to demonstrate drawings/writing. (Remember to mute these devices!) You can download the Zoom or Microsoft Teams apps on your phone and/or tablet beforehand.
- At a given time, the committee will need to discuss and vote privately without you. Join the breakout room created, and wait to be invited back to the main room.

Final Steps

Signatures and Forms:

The Office of Graduate Education prefers electronic or digital signatures, if possible. If email approval is necessary, please follow the following format ONLY:

- The outside chair starts an email thread including all necessary approvers, plus Office of Graduate Education recipients.
- The subject should be clear & complete (e.g. "Email Approval of XXX for <Student's Last Name>). We will need to be able to search, catalog and archive these messages, and vague subjects make that impossible.
- Each approver uses REPLY ALL to the thread with their decision so that everyone involved can see everyone's decision, and all decisions are linked together in a single thread for archiving.

Celebrate!

- Take a Picture! This is a unique situation and you have a good story to tell. Take a screenshot with your committee, or a selfie! Tell us about your dissertation/thesis research and how your virtual defense went on our DU Graduate Life Twitter account or email us at gradservices@du.edu.

Tech Support

If you find yourself needing technical support, contact one of these service desks:

DU's IT Service Desk
Phone: (303) 871-4700
Request help online here

Zoom Tech Support
Support & Tutorials: Zoom Help Center

Thank you to the Graduate School at the University of Colorado Denver for providing many of the resources and tips provided in this document.