

Guidelines & Best Practices for Online Thesis/Dissertation Defenses

A Quick Guide to the Presentation

The Graduate School will allow thesis and dissertation defenses to be held remotely while the University continues online instruction. Please remember that with all dissertation defenses, the Graduate School requires an announcement be made two weeks prior to the meeting.

UGA has a license for Zoom, which we recommend you use. Your advisor should schedule a meeting in Zoom. Be sure to use the UGA license — sign in at uga.zoom.us — because Zoom meetings started with the free version of Zoom are limited to 40 minutes. Students are encouraged to invite friends, colleagues, and family to online thesis and dissertation defenses, much as they would if the presentation were face-to-face. Instructions for inviting guests are provided below, along with suggestions that can be shared with guests to help the presentation go smoothly.

At the defense day and time, the advisor will need to Join the Zoom Meeting and designate themselves as the host using a 6-digit Host Key. This key is listed near the bottom of their Zoom profile accessible by signing in to <https://uga.zoom.us/>. For a defense: Before the student presentation begins, the advisor (host) should mute all of the participants (or ask participants to mute themselves) and ask the student to share their screen in order to make the slide presentation visible to attendees. The student should share the screen without notes by adjusting the Display options in PowerPoint. Following the presentation, the student will entertain questions from the audience and then invite non-committee members to leave the meeting. The advisor (host) can also remove participants manually by right clicking on their names in the Participant List.

After the public portion of the defense, the committee will still be able to engage in both questioning of the student and private deliberation. This can be done using breakout rooms or by simply asking all participants to leave after the public portion (and confirming this by looking at the participant list) and then placing the student “on hold” for the deliberations.

Please note that online classes and defenses have suffered from what is known as ZoomBombing. In some cases, uninvited trolls have introduced unwanted and offensive content or harassed presenters. Zoom has provided an article about this and how to protect your zoom meeting rooms: <https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-the-party-crashers-from-crashing-your-zoom-event/>

Scheduling a practice Zoom Meeting defense with the student (and committee members if possible) is highly recommended in advance of the defense. See “Scheduling a Zoom Meeting” and “Other Helpful Information” below.

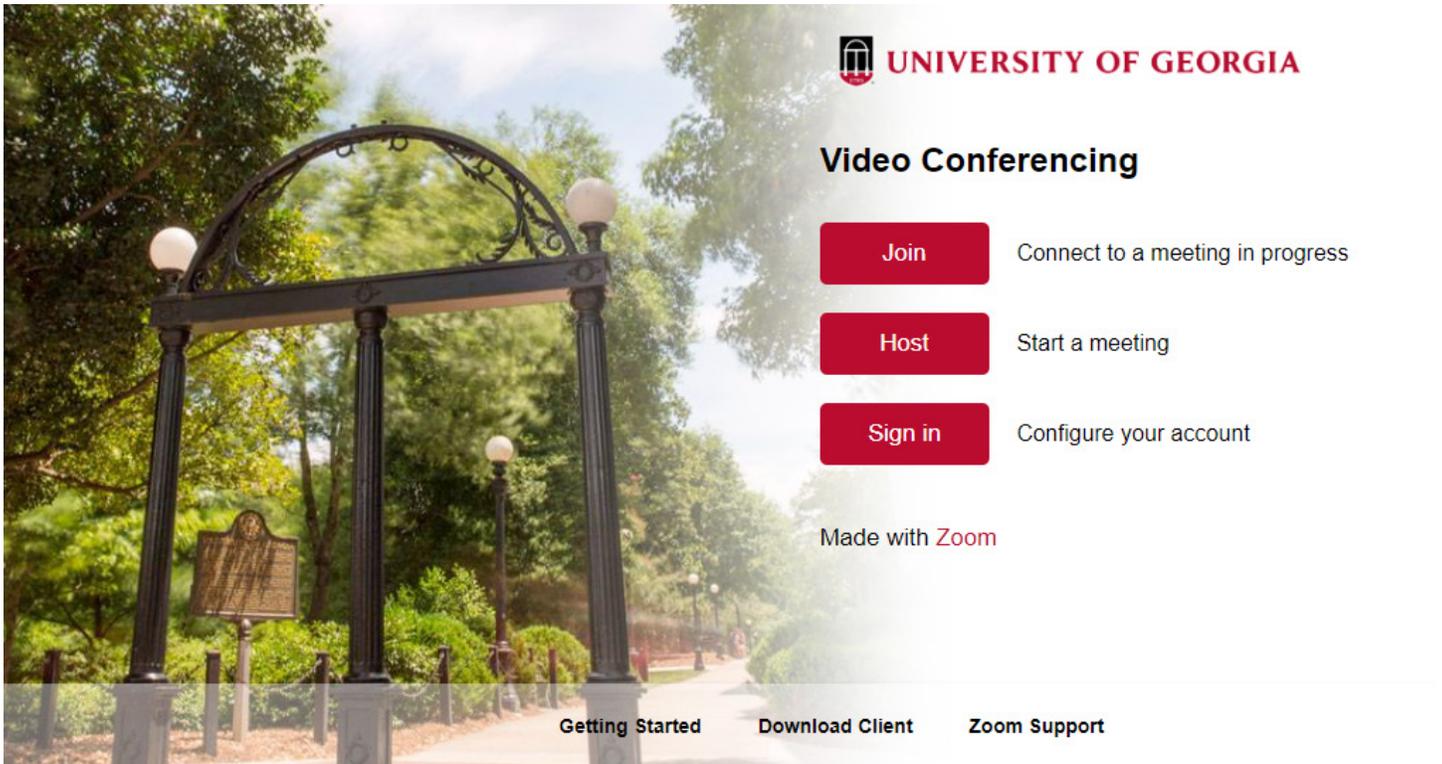
Finally, it is best to have an alternate plan if there are internet connectivity problems with Zoom. One option is to have the student share the presentation with his/her committee (by email or through a link to a OneDrive file, for example) and to have the advisor collect the phone numbers of the various committee members for a conference call.

After the Presentation

Forms can be signed using an electronic signature or signed physically then scanned. If you do not have access to a scanner there are a variety of apps that can scan the form and convert it into a PDF file (for examples, see: <https://www.cnet.com/how-to/best-scanning-apps-for-android-and-iphone/>). Once the form has been signed by the **entire committee**, it can be emailed to your Graduate Coordinator for their signature and transmission to the Graduate School.

Detailed Instructions: Scheduling a Zoom Meeting and Inviting Participants

Zoom can be run in most browsers. Go to <http://uga.zoom.us> and click on "Sign In." Then click on Meetings on the left side of the window:



If you click on **Sign in**, you will see your Zoom profile page and options on the left side.

If you plan to use breakout rooms, scroll down first to get your Host Key number. Click on **"Show"** to see the number.

Sign-In Password *****
Host Key ***** [Show](#)
Signed-In Device [Sign Me Out From All Devices](#)

Now scroll up and click on **Meetings**.

Profile
Meetings
Webinars
Recordings
Settings
Account Profile
Reports

Change

Department Grad Sch-Grad Sch Dean's Off
Account No. 50008449

Personal Meeting ID 478-212-7269
<https://zoom.us/j/4782127269>
x Use this ID for instant meetings

Click on **Schedule a New Meeting**

Profile
Meetings
Webinars

Upcoming Meetings

Schedule a New Meeting

You can name the meeting, set the date and time, set the duration (It is helpful to schedule the meeting 15-30 minutes before the defense time so people can join and test audio/video of the committee if needed). Most meeting options are fine as they appear in the default. However, it can be helpful to choose to mute all participants as they join the meeting and to add another host (like an advisor) who can control who is muted during a Zoom session.

Registration Required

Meeting ID Generate Automatically Personal Meeting ID 478-212-7269

Meeting Password Require meeting password

Video
Host on off
Participant on off

Audio Telephone Computer Audio Telephone and Computer Audio

Schedule a Meeting

Topic

Description (Optional)

When

Duration hr min

Time Zone

Recurring meeting

Meeting Options

Enable join before host

Mute participants upon entry

Enable waiting room

Only authenticated users can join

Record the meeting automatically

Alternative Hosts

Click **SAVE**.

After you **SAVE**, this page appears. You can click on **"Copy the Invitation"**. It will be in your clipboard and you can paste it into an email that you send to the committee, your department, or other attendees. The direct URL is on the same line, but the complete invitation gives phone numbers for attendees to call in if the audio on their computer is not working properly.

Profile

My Meetings > Manage "My Meeting"

Start this Meeting

Topic My Meeting

Time Apr 1, 2020 01:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Add to [Google Calendar](#) [Outlook Calendar \(.ics\)](#) [Yahoo Calendar](#)

Meeting ID 801-723-022

Meeting Password ✓ Require meeting password 258873

Invite Attendees Join URL: <https://zoom.us/j/801723022?pwd=RElWn24wU0JGZ3lXZjYjYzZkNEVNU09> [Copy the invitation](#)

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Video Tutorials

Copy Meeting Invitation

Meeting Invitation

Rachel McDaniel is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: My Meeting
Time: Apr 1, 2020 01:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/364986488>

Meeting ID: 364 986 488

One tap mobile
+1 312 626 6799,,364986488# US (Chicago)
+1 646 558 8656,,364986488# US (New York)

Dial by your location
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
+1 253 215 8782 US
+1 301 715 8592 US
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Copy Meeting Invitation Cancel

The easiest way to share the invitation to guests is to click the **"Copy the Invitation"** link shown in the lower right corner above. It will open a popup window with a link and phone numbers to share. Click the **"Copy Meeting Invitation"** button to copy to your clipboard. You can then paste this into an email to your committee members or the department.

You can also use the calendar links shown above to download and add this meeting to your calendar. For more assistance, see [Zoom's video on scheduling a meeting](#).

During your thesis/dissertation defense, you will likely want to share your screen – this will allow your attendees to see either your whole screen or just one application. Here's Zoom's tutorial for how to do this: [Zoom's video on screensharing](#).

The virtual Waiting Room feature is automatically turned on by default. Once the host joins, select **Manage Participants** to view the full list of participants, then, you'll have the option to admit individually by selecting the blue **Admit** button or all at once with the **Admit All** option on the top right-hand side of your screen. For step-by-step instructions, please watch this [2-minute video](#). You will see a list of participants. You can highlight your name and click on **"More..."** to make yourself the Host, this requires the **six-digit Host Key** you copied in an earlier step. Once you are a host, the **Breakout Rooms** option appears on your bottom tool bar. The host can create two Breakout rooms: Breakout Room 1 for the student and committee, and Breakout Room 2 for the committee only to allow for private discussion. The advisor will manually assign people to the breakout rooms; participants will accept their invitation to join Breakout Room 1 first, and the advisor (host) will join this room as well. Others cannot join this portion of the Zoom Meeting. When the committee is finished questioning and is ready to deliberate, the committee and advisor (host) will join Breakout Room 2 and the student will wait separately. When the committee is ready to invite the student back, Breakout Room 1 can be recreated.

Other Helpful Information About Holding Remote Defenses

- Give yourself time and have alternate plans in case things go wrong. Set up the connection early, and ask the committee to join early to check that everything is working. Have one or more backups, including something as simple as a phone based conference call.
- Have the advisor or someone on the committee (other than the defending student) set up or co-host the Zoom meeting so they can manage the call, freeing the student to focus on their presentation.
- If there is adequate bandwidth, you may want your presentation audience to enable their video. This can help the student feel more connected.
- Audience members should make sure their microphones are muted, and use either the “raise hand” feature or the chat box to ask questions.
- When sharing your screen you will only be able to see a limited number of other participants. If you want to see more people, you can screen share from one computer and join the call from another computer to see all the participants.
- If the video and audio are interrupted or do not run smoothly, you may want to have the audience stop their video. Since the presenter often cannot tell if there are connection issues, the committee member managing the call should manage this via chat to avoid interrupting the presenter, if possible.
- Committee members, use your video, if possible, during the private portion of the defense. This is an inherently stressful activity, and many of the usual positive encouraging social cues get lost with voice-only communication.

Even though we must drastically change how thesis and dissertation defenses are done to keep our students and our community safe, passing a defense is an enormous accomplishment and should be celebrated as such. Students and their committees are encouraged to explore socially-responsible ways to celebrate.

**We wish you the very best in your defense
and look forward to celebrating your success!**

Thank you to the UGA Department of Geography for their work
in compiling these guidelines.



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