Earth, Atmospheric & Planetary Sciences

Spring 2020 PhD Defense or Public MS Defense Virtual Presentation Guidelines

PhD defenses and Public MS Defenses by students in the Department of Earth, Atmospheric & Planetary Sciences will be conducted online starting March 30, 2020 and continuing until further notice. It is recommended that students use Zoom Meetings for the defenses. To allow the candidate and committee to focus on the intellectual content of the online defense, we will have a “Master of Ceremonies”, or MC (unless otherwise indicated, this will be Brandon Milardo) moderate the public portion of each defense.

Student Instructions:

Before the defense:

- More than one week before your defense, recruit your defense chair and remind them that they will need to run the private Committee Zoom Meeting and report the results to the Education Office.
- Identify your defense MC (unless otherwise indicated, this will be Brandon Milardo) and get the Zoom meeting ID and password for the public defense (the “Public Defense Zoom Meeting”) from your MC.
- Communicate with the Education Office about the advertising for your defense.
- Send the meeting link and password to any family and friends who plan to attend your talk.
- Think about your setup for the defense.
  - Identify a location that is as quiet as possible.
  - It’s fine to use headphones or earbuds to help with sound quality.
  - Be aware of what is in the background while you are presenting.
  - Dress professionally, as you would in an in-person defense.
- Plan and conduct a rehearsal with your Zoom MC.
  - Make sure the sound quality is adequate
  - Practice sharing/unsharing your screen
  - Practice using Zoom’s annotation tools to draw or highlight features on your slides
- Send a copy of your defense slides to your Zoom MC in case of technical difficulties.
- If you would like to have a virtual celebration after your defense, see some possible options below. Some of them require advanced planning.

During the defense:

- Student and MC should join the meeting at least 20 minutes prior to the scheduled start time to set up the presentation and troubleshoot any connection problems.
- Public talk
  - Focus on giving your presentation.
  - Pause briefly from time to time to allow the MC or chair to call on anyone with a question.
  - The Zoom MC will moderate questions during and after the talk by participants who “raise their hands”
In case of a dropped connection, re-join the Zoom meeting. Contact the MC if you cannot re-join.

- Private session with thesis committee
  - At the end of the public defense, you and your thesis committee exit the Public Defense Zoom Meeting in order to join the private Committee Zoom Meeting and discuss your thesis.
  - At the end of this discussion, your committee will ask you to leave the meeting while they deliberate.
  - Wait to be invited back to the meeting to discuss the results of their deliberations. Do not rejoin until you are invited. The defense chair will provide instructions on how to rejoin the meeting.

**Thesis Defense Chair Instructions:**

Before the defense:

- The EAPS Education Office will create separate Zoom meetings for the public and private components of the defense and send invitations to the committee members and the student. The committee chair will be designated as a host for the private Committee Zoom Meeting.

During the defense:

- Introduce the candidate
- Hand off to the thesis advisor if s/he wishes to say a few words
- When there are no more questions in the public defense, remind the committee members and the student to leave the Public Defense Zoom Meeting and join the closed Committee Zoom Meeting.
- Host the closed meeting.
- After the committee finishes their closed discussion with the student, ask the student to leave the meeting so the committee members can discuss in private. Establish clearly how the student will be notified when it is time to rejoin the meeting (for example, an email or a mobile phone call or text message).
- After the committee has finished discussing in private, invite the student back to the Committee Zoom Meeting and present the committee’s decision.
- Email Brandon Milardo in the Education Office with the defense result.

Note: The EAPS Education Office is working on creating an electronic version of the EAPS Doctoral Thesis Examination Report Form. We will follow up with the students on the Spring 2020 degree list, their advisors, and committee members.
Defense MC Instructions:

Before the defense:

- Set up the Public Defense Zoom Meeting
  - Name the meeting name “First Name Last Name – EAPS PhD Defense Public Talk. Indicate the time of the meeting.
  - Set “Require meeting password” and note the password (this will provide security while also allowing non-MIT committee members to attend)
  - Set participant video to ON
  - Allow audio from both phone and computer
  - Under “Advanced Options”, select “Mute participants on entry”, “Enable join before host”, and designate the student as an alternate host by entering her/his MIT email address.
  - Provide the meeting link and password to the EAPS Education Office so that it is included in the announcement about the defense/presentation.

- Set up the private Committee Zoom Meeting
  - Name the meeting name “First Name Last Name – EAPS PhD Defense Committee Meeting. Indicate the time of the meeting. Set “Require meeting password” and note the password
  - Set participant video to ON
  - Allow audio from both phone and computer
  - Under “Advanced Options”, select “Enable join before host” and designate the committee chair as an alternative host by entering her/his MIT email address.
  - DO NOT record the closed portion of the defense.

- Send invitations to the public and private Zoom meetings to the thesis committee and the student.

- Schedule a rehearsal with the student
  - Have the student test audio and practice displaying their slides
  - Have the student try out any videos to make sure they run properly
  - Practice muting and un-muting participants who “raise their hands” to speak

- Get contact info (ideally phone numbers) for the student and committee members to use in the event of dropped connections during the defense.

- Within a day of the defense, get a copy of the student’s slides in case of technical difficulties.

During the defense:

- Student and MC should join the meeting at least 20 minutes prior to the scheduled start time
to set up the presentation and troubleshoot any connection problems.

- Lay out the Zoom protocol. Suggestions:
  - Everyone keep your microphones muted, unless speaking.
  - Use the Zoom “raise your hand” feature to speak, please do not interrupt. The MC and Chair will keep track of hand raising and call on people to speak.
  - Only interrupt the presentation for a clarifying question about the data or slide presented. More in-depth questions should be held until after the presentation. The Chat window can be used to “save” questions for later.

- Allow the defense chair and thesis advisor to welcome audience and introduce the candidate

- Manage the audience during the talk:
  - Make sure everyone but the speaker is muted
  - Call on audience members who raise their hand to speak. Monitor the participants list for raised hands. If there is a hand raised, gently interrupt between slides or during a pause, let the student know that there is a question, and invite the person with the raised hand to unmute and ask. The chair might also do this, but keep an eye on things in case the chair becomes engrossed in the student’s presentation.
  - Re-mute participants after they’ve had a chance to ask questions (if they forget to mute themselves)

- After the talk:
  - Un-mute the audience to clap for the speaker.
  - Moderate questions from the audience (the committee chair can also participate here if desired)
  - After the student and thesis committee exit the Public Defense Zoom Meeting in order to join the private Committee Zoom Meeting, inform audience members that they may remain in the Public Defense Zoom Meeting to talk among themselves if they like.

**Post-Defense Party Options for Students** (not exhaustive or mutually exclusive)

- Host a post-defense Zoom party yourself – either send the link with your defense announcement or to your guest list.
- Ask your Zoom MC if you can use the same link for your party. (May require testing.)
- Talk to your supervisor or a close friend about having a “virtual toast” via an agreed-upon platform of choice.
- You can set the time, with an acknowledgement that you won’t join until after your post-defense committee discussion, or you can email a just-in-time announcement.
- Craft an announcement to send yourself to the community and/or your friends & family.
- Ask a friend or colleague to send an announcement to the community.