

Remote Honors Thesis Defense Guidelines

Fall 2020

honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis

Given the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, we encourage all students to hold remote Honors thesis defenses until further notice in order to ensure the safety of all students, thesis advisors, and committee members.

Use **Zoom** for your defense, available for free to all University of Maine students and faculty. Visit maine.zoom.us/download to download the application to your computer. If Zoom will not work for the purposes of your defense, please let us know.

We ask students and faculty to familiarize themselves with Zoom before their scheduled defense. This may be a new platform for some students and faculty, so extensive preparation is key to a smooth defense. Do several test runs in order to become comfortable with Zoom and its features, especially Screenshare (see "Zoom Etiquette" below for more details).

Advisor Guidelines for Remote Defense

- The advisor should plan to be the master of ceremonies for the defense, as well as the “host” of the Zoom meeting. This way the various parts of the defense and subsequent discussion of level of Honors can be managed by the advisor (host has extra permissions with respect to muting or other functions).
- Recommend to the committee to write down and hold their questions until after the presentation portion of the defense is complete.
- During the deliberation part of the defense, the advisor should ask the student to leave the Zoom call so that the committee can speak privately. Once deliberation is complete, the advisor will notify the student (via phone call, text, or email) that they should join the call again to hear the committee’s feedback and receive their level of Honors.

Student Guidelines for Remote Defense

- Ensure that you are a co-host of the Zoom meeting in order to be able to Screen Share.
- Remember, your total thesis defense should take about 2.5 to 3 hours--the first hour for the thesis, the second hour for the reading list, and the remainder of the time for deliberation and assignment of the level of Honors. We recommend making a slide that simply lists all of the texts on your Reading List for ease of discussion.

- Practice, practice, practice! Even though it will be virtual, you are still giving an important presentation so preparation is key. This involves both practicing your presentation and practicing with Zoom to make sure the technology works smoothly.
- Plan to dress in an appropriate, professional outfit for your remote defense. Even though you won't be there in person, it will still make you appear more professional and can even boost your confidence in presenting.
- If you would still like to have an “audience” for your defense, even though they will be virtual, go for it! You can share the Zoom link for the defense with them. Just remember that they will have to leave the call after the thesis presentation portion is complete.
- Zoom Etiquette
 - Please familiarize yourself with the **Screenshare** tool. Using this, you will be able to share your screen with your committee and easily show your thesis presentation (whether that be PowerPoint, Google Slides, etc.).
support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362153-Sharing-your-screen
 - Make sure that you are in a quiet space when you hold your thesis defense, away from family, roommates, pets, or other people or things that may make distracting noises. You may also wish to wear headphones with a microphone to reduce any background noise.
 - Make sure that nothing is open on your computer or visible in your surroundings that you would not want your committee to see or hear. You could also utilize an appropriate virtual background to hide your surroundings.
support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background
 - If your internet is lagging and causing disruptions, ask your committee members to turn off their video while you are presenting. This will preserve the bandwidth of the Zoom chat and will typically help maintain the stability of your internet connection.
 - In order to prevent background noise from your committee members from distracting you as you present, it is advisable to ask your committee members to keep their microphones muted until they wish to speak. Advisors--as meeting hosts, you are able to mute others' microphones as necessary.

Thesis Form Submission

Form 4 (Defense Scheduling)

You should send out a Doodle poll to your committee members in order to find a thesis defense date and time that works for your full committee. For December grads, we recommend that you schedule your defense for mid- to late November or early December, in order to allow yourself time to make final edits to your thesis document before the final submission deadline.

Once you confirm your thesis defense date and time, your **advisor** needs to submit the Thesis Form 4 Google Form: tinyurl.com/honorstf4.

- **To graduate in December:** you must defend and submit Form 6 and your final thesis document no later than Monday, **January 11, 2021**.
- **If you need more time:** If you need to continue working on your thesis into next semester, you can become a May 2021 grad, and do so without any further course enrollment or tuition fees. Your advisor will assign you a “TH” grade at the end of the Fall 2020 semester, and a letter grade once you complete your thesis in the summer.

To qualify as a May Grad, you must defend and submit Form 6 and your final thesis document no later than Tuesday, **June 1, 2021**. You must let Student Records know that your semester of graduation has changed, either on MaineStreet (instructions: studentrecords.umaine.edu/graduation/) or by emailing them at umrecord@maine.edu. Please also notify the Honors College if you are planning to become a May Grad.

Form 5 (Level of Honors) and Form 6 (Final Acceptance)

Forms 5 and 6 will be turned in digitally using the Google Forms linked below. In order to indicate advisor approval in the absence of a physical signature, **the advisor must fill out the forms on behalf of their student**. The forms automatically track the email of the submitter, so that way we are able to confirm that the advisor completed the form. **Please note: the thesis advisor’s submission of Form 5 informs the Honors College of the thesis committee’s collective decision on the level of Honors and obviates the need to gather individual committee member signatures.**

- Form 5: tinyurl.com/honorstf5
- Form 6: tinyurl.com/honorstf6

Please, do not hesitate to reach out to the Honors staff with any other questions or concerns you may have regarding the thesis defense. We are here to support you in any way possible during this uncertain time.

honors@maine.edu
(207) 581-3263

REMOTE DEFENSE CHECKLIST

General (students, advisors, and committee members)

- Thoroughly review this full document**
- Student and advisor schedule or defense date with committee
- Advisor submits Thesis Form 4 confirming the defense date and time (tinyurl.com/honorstf4).
- Familiarize yourself with Zoom features--screenshare, muting, virtual backgrounds, etc.
- Create an agreed-upon form of communication for the defense (for when the student must leave for committee deliberation). Advisors, if you want to call or text your student to invite them back after the deliberation, make sure you have their phone number ready.
- Advisor submits Form 5 for the student immediately after the defense, indicating the level of Honors on behalf of the full committee (tinyurl.com/honorstf5).
- Advisor submits Form 6 for the student once the final document is complete (tinyurl.com/honorstf6) **PLEASE NOTE: we will not certify the student for graduation until we receive a completed Form 6 from the advisor and the final, properly formatted thesis from the student.**

Student-Specific

- Send out this document (Remote Honors Thesis Defense Guidelines) to your full committee one month before your defense
- 2 weeks before your defense, send your committee your thesis document, Reading List, and links to the thesis rubrics
- Practice giving your defense presentation, and practice using Screenshare in Zoom
- Submit your final, properly formatted thesis document to Cara via email (cara.doiron@maine.edu) once your advisor has submitted Form 6.
- Close to the end of the semester, after you have defended, we will be sending out information about Medallion engraving, steins, and Minerva grad profiles. Please provide this information when we request it to ensure you receive your graduation materials.

Tips from the Mayo Clinic on Staying Safe During Extended Screen Time

- Blink often to refresh your eyes. Many people blink less than usual when working at a computer, which can contribute to dry eyes. Blinking produces tears that moisten and refresh your eyes. Try to make it a habit to blink more often when looking at a monitor.
- Take eye breaks. Throughout the defense, give your eyes a break by looking away from your monitor. Try the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.
 - The thesis advisor can mandate several breaks throughout the defense to enforce this tip.
- Check the lighting and reduce glare. Bright lighting and too much glare can strain your eyes and make it difficult to see objects on your monitor. The worst problems are generally from sources above or behind you, including fluorescent lighting and sunlight. Consider turning off some or all of the overhead lights.
 - If you need light for writing or reading, use an adjustable desk lamp. Close blinds or shades, and avoid placing your monitor directly in front of a window or white wall. Place an anti-glare cover over the screen.
- Adjust your monitor. Position your monitor directly in front of you about an arm's length away so that the top of the screen is at or just below eye level. It helps to have a chair you can adjust, too.
- If you need to refer to print material during the defense, place it on a document holder. The goal is to reduce how much your eyes need to readjust and how often you turn your neck and head.
- Adjust your screen settings. Enlarge the type for easier reading. And adjust the contrast and brightness to a level that's comfortable for you.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/eyestrain/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20372403>