



Dean of Graduate Studies

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IUE 303/20 (CA 284) Revised

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### **Guidelines for PhD Submission Deadline and Defences during the COVID-19 Emergency**

Due to the COVID-19 Emergency Measures in Italy and elsewhere, on 25 February 2020 with subsequent amendments and clarifications in March, April and July 2020, the Dean of Graduate Studies has authorized the following interpretations and adjustments of the standard procedure for Thesis Submission and Defences set out in Chapters 9 and 11 of the Academic Rules and Regulations. The adoption and ongoing adjustment of COVID-19 Guidelines was approved by Academic Council on 13 May 2020. Departments will be informed of any further modifications to these COVID-19 exceptional measures authorized by the Dean and when they will cease to apply.

#### ARR-article 11.3. Extension of student status and 11.4 Right to submission of thesis

“No extension of student status beyond the normal five-year limit, and therefore no submission of a thesis after five years, is allowed except on the basis of extenuating circumstances of a personal or a professional nature which have interfered with a record of good progress and have caused unforeseen delay. Evidence of such circumstances should be presented in a timely manner to the Entrance Board. In order that the Board may make a decision in such cases whether to grant an extension, and, if so, for what period of time, before the end of the five-year period there must be placed before the Committee: (i) evidence of any such extenuating circumstances, (ii) evidence of the current state of progress of the thesis, and (iii) a detailed plan for completion and submission within a specified period of time. If a final draft has been submitted before the end of the 60<sup>th</sup> month of registration (or of an extension period) but has not been assessed by the supervisor within that period, student status will be extended until an assessment has been made.

#### 11.4 Right to submission of thesis

The right to submit the thesis is dependent on student status, that is to say, only doctoral researchers who have duly registered may submit. A dissertation draft submitted before the end of the 60<sup>th</sup> month of registration shall be assessed in accordance with articles 9.4, 9.5 and 9.6. If the assessment concludes that the submitted draft cannot be defended, the candidate shall be notified of this decision. The candidate has the right to appeal against this decision on non-academic grounds.”

#### Interpretation of articles 11.3 and 11.4

COVID-19 disruption arising during the period of student status will be considered as an extenuating circumstance of a personal and professional nature.

ARR-article 9.5 on timeline for defence after submission:

“The Department shall schedule the defence no later than nine months after the delivery of the jury reports, except where an extension for resubmission has been granted to the researcher or where unforeseen delays have occurred due to the late delivery of the reports or the unavailability of members of the Examining Board. The Department shall in such cases make a reasoned request for extension of the nine-month limit for scheduling the defence to the Dean of Graduate Studies.”

Exceptional authorization from the Dean re article 9.5:

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, thesis defences scheduled during this period can be postponed. *This will be allowed even if it means going beyond the 11 months after submission.*

There is no need to ask for special authorisation in advance until further notice. However, the *Departments need to inform the Dean of Graduate Studies e-mail of all changes taking place to scheduled thesis defences for the official records.*

ARR-article 9.8 on presence of candidate and members of the Examining Board:

“Under normal circumstances, the candidate and all four members of the Examining Board are required to be present at the public thesis defence at the EUI. The absence of members is not condoned except in cases of force majeure. In such cases, the minimum required presence is one external and one internal member.”

Exceptional authorizations and guidance from the Dean re article 9.8:

As the COVID-19 situation is evolving in Florence and elsewhere, departments can evaluate on a case-by-case basis how they wish to conduct thesis defences in the 2020-2021 academic year. Three options can be chosen from under current circumstances.

**In-person defences during COVID-19:**

**In-person defences can be organised where the candidate and Committee can be at the EUI.** While these follow our normal rules and practices, the following COVID-19 issues should be taken into account. As thesis defences must be public, room bookings should take this into account and compliance with safety requirements, which may for instance require advance registration, must be ensured. The disadvantages with this mode under current safety restrictions are two-fold. Members of the public who wish to attend might be unable to do so because of space limitations to comply with safety requirements. Family members or others external to the EUI may also not be allowed to attend in person due to applicable EUI safety arrangements. Hybrid or fully remote defences are contingency arrangements for these disadvantages as well as for when *force majeure* prevents planned in-person presence by members of the examining committee or the candidate.

**Hybrid defences:**

**Hybrid defences can be organised where (a) the candidate and (b) at least one member of the Examining Committee can be at the EUI.** In this mode, some members of the Examining Committee and all or some of the public who wish to attend can do so in remote mode while the candidate, the other members of the Committee and some or all of the public attend in person. Adjusting the public in-person presence allows for a smaller room to be booked at the EUI.

Organizational Guidelines for Hybrid Thesis Defences during COVID-19 restrictions:

1. *During the two weeks prior to defence, the thesis will be available for public consultation by any EUI member as a password protected pdf document that will be accessible through the department on request. The thesis should also be deposited in two copies in the Institute's Library to be freely consulted during this period by any member of the Institute.*
2. *Departments shall arrange for candidates to sign and send the standard CADMUS authorisation to publish before the defence for Academic Service to issue the Certificate.*
3. *To comply with the requirement of the public defence, Departments will announce the Public Defence online (under the Thesis Defences section on the website). The events news section will indicate that the defence will take place in hybrid mode and invite those who want to participate to contact the departmental administrative staff member indicated as the organiser of the defence. The organizer will register requests for participation taking note of those will participate remotely (sending them the Zoom Link) and those who will participate onsite (taking account of the maximum number of onsite presence in view of health and safety indications). It is important not to distribute the Zoom link more generally in advance to safeguard Defences from privacy issues and hacking.*
4. *The EUI trialled a hybrid Executive Committee meeting on 24 June 2020 and this can be used as a basis for Departments to obtain the necessary technical support and equipment for hybrid defences.*

**Remote Defences:**

**Remote defences are retained for those situations where either (a) the candidate cannot travel to Florence or (b) none of the Examining Committee can be in Florence.**

In such circumstances, the Dean authorizes remote participation by everyone, including the candidate (by skype/zoom). If the candidate and the Department agree to hold the defence remotely, the defence should follow as much as possible, the standard defence procedures set out in articles (9.9, 9.10 and 9.11).

In keeping with article 9.9, the Thesis Defence shall be public. The Defence should be advertised and any EUI member should be allowed to join the public part of the defence by being given access to the remote defence (via zoom link or equivalent) in compliance with the organizational lines below. The requirement of public consultation of the hardcopy of the thesis in the Library in the two weeks prior to the defence will be fulfilled in a different manner by providing a different mode of public consultation via the departments.

The procedures of the Examining Board and Deliberation set out by art. 9.10 & 9.11 shall be applicable to thesis defences organized remotely.

For the deliberation and defence reports, the departmental administrator shall send the publishing form and an electronic copy of the relevant page from the "Thesis Defence Book" to the Chair of the Examining Board before the remote defence session. These shall be completed by the Chair and signed (including electronically) by each member of the Examining Board. These copies shall then be printed and included in the register with a note indicating that this was a remote defence conducted under special authorization of the Dean of Graduate Studies due to the COVID-19 emergency.

Organizational Guidelines for Remote Thesis Defences during COVID-19 restrictions:

1. During the two weeks prior to defence, the thesis will be available for public consultation by any EUI member as a password protected pdf document that will be accessible through the department on request.
2. Departments shall arrange for candidates to sign and send the standard CADMUS authorisation to publish before the defence for Academic Service to issue the Certificate.
3. To comply with the requirement of the public defence, Departments will announce the Public Defence online (under the Thesis Defences section on the website). The events news section will indicate that the defence will take place in remote mode and invite those who want to participate to contact the departmental administrative staff member indicated as the organiser of the defence in order to register as a participant and receive a Zoom Link. It is important not to distribute the Zoom link more generally in advance to safeguard defences from privacy issues and hacking.

Family members and close friends usually also attend the defence. This should be facilitated by the Department for remote Defences by also providing family and friends with the remote link in coordination with the candidate who should provide their e-mail addresses.

The Departmental administrative assistant will organize the Zoom defence session (or equivalent) to create a preliminary meeting between the members of the Examining Board via Zoom by using the "waiting room" option. The candidate and attendees would be admitted in the call when the preliminary meeting is over. The "waiting room" option can also be used for the deliberation by the Committee at the close of the defence before calling the candidate and anyone else attending back in to award the defence and congratulate the new doctor.

4. The Department will send an electronic version of (a) the Thesis Book and (b) the publishing form to the Chair of the Examining Board. In liaison with the departmental administration, the Chair would then send the e-version of the Thesis Book to the other members in order for them to sign it as well. The publishing form, completed during the defence, will be returned by the Chair to the departmental administrator. The administrative staff will keep the digital files, then print the signed documents, and staple them on the official Thesis Defence book upon return to the EUI premises.
5. The Department will notify the President's Office about the outcome of the Defence. When a Defence has been successfully completed, the Office of the President will send the letter of the President via email to the Candidate.

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