



# **UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL**

### **PROCEDURE FOR ONLINE EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH PROJECTS, DISSERTATIONS AND THESES**

#### **1. Introduction**

Advances in technology have transformed teaching and learning globally. Online learning or electronic learning is rapidly gaining ground as an alternative method of learning or as a support to traditional face to face learning. This trend has gained momentum in the advent of unprecedented emergencies such as the Corona virus pandemic that has disrupted academic calendars at all levels in most countries. The biggest challenge to educational managers is how to ensure there is a level of normality in teaching and learning. However, as much as electronic learning has been embraced, very few institutions have adopted online examinations

The Graduate School is proposing online examination of theses, dissertations and research projects for graduate students to enhance timely completion and better services to international students. Currently, the rules and regulations governing administration of examinations do not include examinations done outside university physical premises. Below are the principles and procedures for conducting online or examination.

#### **2. Principles and procedure for conducting oral examinations online**

##### **2.1.Principles**

- 2.1.1. Online oral Examination can only be held in situations in which face to face option is justifiably not possible such as in the case of a lockdown or the students and or Board of Examiners are not able to congregate in one place

- 2.1.2. The online oral examination will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of Statute XXXIII of the University of Nairobi for oral Examination for PhD and Master's Theses, Dissertations and Research Projects
- 2.1.3. In order to maintain high academic standards, the assessment must remain fair and robust. Therefore, approval is still required for a remote oral examination and certain protocols must be observed.
- 2.1.4. Although the oral examination will take place under different conditions, the expectations for the conduct of the examination including examiner input and the behavior of all participants is the same.

## **2.2.Process**

- 2.2.1. The Dean/Director (for thesis) Chairman (for dissertation and research project) student are to discuss whether the oral examination can be postponed until any relevant travel restrictions are lifted.
- 2.2.2. If a postponement is not possible the following steps apply:
- i) Obtain the consent of all participants for the examination to take place remotely using online video calling.
  - ii) At the same time all participants must confirm that they have access to the following:
    - a. A reliable internet connection with sufficient speed to facilitate video calling from multiple locations.
    - b. Reliable and suitable hardware (web-cam, PC/laptop, headphones).
    - c. The appropriate software (the default being google suite or KENET Videoconferencing facility).
    - d. A private and quiet space for the duration of the examination where they will not be interrupted.
    - e. A test call with all participants 48 hours before the exam is due to take place.

- iii) The Dean/Director should submit the request to the Director, Graduate School for approval.
- 2.2.3. The Dean/Director should inform the Board of Examiners of the intention to conduct the examination remotely.
- 2.2.4. The Dean/Director will facilitate the rapid re-organization of examinations that will now need to be conducted remotely by requesting the Director Graduate School who will liaise with the Director ICTC to provide and support the video conference for the oral examination.
- 2.2.5. Once permission is granted by the Director, Graduate School and the Dean are responsible for ensuring that all participants involved in the examination are informed of the arrangements. This includes setting a time which means that no participant is expected to be present at an unreasonable hour; reasonable hours normally being 08:00 – 17:00 but will depend on individual circumstances.

### **2.3.Detailed instructions: Procedure for an online oral examination**

These must be followed in order to ensure a fair and robust online oral examination.

#### **2.3.1. Before the examination day**

- i) All participants must provide a contact telephone number at least 3 days before the examination day
- ii) All participants must have a test call 48 hours before the examination is due to take place, preferably at the scheduled time. This is not only to ensure the technology works but that each location is suitable. It is also an opportunity for the examiners to be clear about how the examination will be conducted, including procedures for a drop in connection or abandoning the examination due to technical problems.
- iii) The candidate should only carry the thesis, dissertation or research projects and a writing pad
- iv) The Director Graduate School may be present to observe the process.

### **2.3.2. The examination day**

#### **a. Before the examination starts**

- i) The approved examination procedure for oral examination of the thesis, dissertation and research projects should be followed.
- ii) Each party must introduce themselves and their role.
- iii) The Dean/Director will confirm the process for the examination including the procedure for any drop in connection and any technical issues which results in the examination being abandoned
- iv) In a case the candidate is a disabled, the Dean /Director must make appropriate arrangements. For instance, if the candidate is deaf, there will be need to allow for his or her sign language interpreter to participate during the online examination.

#### **b. During the examination**

- i) All parties must remain visible throughout.
- ii) The candidate should be in a clearly identifiable premises within the university premises
- iii) For Candidates who may not be able to come to university premises for the oral examination, permission must be obtained from the Chair of Senate, through Director Graduate School to use another suitable place .
- iv) The examination will follow the normal format for an oral examination.
- v) PhD oral examination will be recorded, and the tape of the proceedings should be securely and confidentially kept and handed over to the Graduate School for safe custody. The tape will be handed over together with the consolidated report.

#### **c. End of the examination**

- i) The student will be asked to confirm that the online examination process using video calling was conducted in a fair manner and this shall be recorded in the consolidated report.

*d. After the examination*

- i) Board of Examiners will deliberate the oral examination and give their recommendations
- ii) All the deliberations and recommendations should be clearly captured in the consolidated report.
- iii) Deans/Directors will make appropriate arrangements for the signing of the consolidated reports by all the BOE members.

**2.3.3. In the event of a technical failure**

- i) If the connection drops for one or all participants then all reasonable attempts should be made to re-establish the connection.
- ii) If, after a reasonable number of attempts and time, it is not possible to establish a stable connection for all participants, the examination must be abandoned and rescheduled if necessary.
- iii) A reasonable period to wait will be longer if the candidate always remains visible to at least one examiner. If the candidate is no longer visible, then a reasonable time to wait would be much shorter to ensure the examination is still robust.
- iv) In such an event the Chair (Dean/Director/ chairman) will be responsible for conferring with other participants (by phone if necessary) and having the final decision on whether to abandon the attempt.
- v) If sufficient discussion has taken place, it may be possible to recommend an outcome.

- vi) It is not permissible for the examination to be conducted by audio only or by telephone.

### **3. Recommendation**

It is recommended that theses (PhD and masters) dissertations and research projects be conducted using online tools in situations where the concerned participants cannot come together for an accepted reason