

Recommendations for the implementation of ongoing promotion procedures during the COVID19 pandemic

Date: May 20, 2020

According to the 5th SARS-CoV-2 Containment Ordinance of the State of Saxony-Anhalt dated 02.05.2020, which is expected to be continued beyond 27.05.2020 in a slightly modified form, exams may currently be carried out on-site at universities, provided that general protection and hygiene measures, measures to minimize contact, and distance rules are observed (see § 1 para. 6 of the 5th SARS-CoV-2-EindV):

- persons with recognizable symptoms of COVID-19 disease or any cold symptoms are to be excluded from participation,
- the persons present are recorded in an attendance list, which must contain at least their first and last name, full address and telephone number,
- the attendance list must be kept for a period of four weeks after the end of the examination in the sense of an event and, if necessary, handed over to the responsible health authority on request; however, this data must be deleted at the latest two months after the end of the event.

In the absence of special regulations, doctoral defenses are to be treated as "examinations" in the above sense. The current doctoral regulations of the OVGU assume the physical presence of the candidates and commission members and that the colloquium will take place in public.

The continuation of proceedings begun in the summer semester 2020 can be pursued by the faculties according to the following variants:

1. The disputation will be postponed until after the lifting of the contact restrictions in accordance with the then valid SARS-CoV-2-EindV; it will be conducted in accordance with the then valid regulations of the doctoral regulations.
2. The disputation is conducted regularly (in a larger room where minimum distances can be maintained).

The public will be admitted by videoconference or, depending on the applicable regulations, by restricted admission/exclusion by decision of the Faculty Council. Only the candidate, the members of the PhD commission/reviewers, and the PhD supervisors are allowed in the room. External reviewers can participate via video conference, provided that the candidate has agreed to this type of handling in deviation from the applicable regulations by submitting a separate declaration, see the [suggested text](#).

3. The disputation is conducted in whole or in part as a video conference. This variant is only possible if all participants in the disputation have agreed to the video conference in accordance with the doctoral regulations (written documentation).

With regard to the candidate's participation, the following additional conditions apply:

In order to ensure direct communication and interaction between the candidate and the commission, the shortest possible delay in transmission paths and high data throughput must be ensured. In particular, it must be ensured that the candidate is able to see all members of the PhD commission/reviewers, PhD supervisors at all times as required by the regulations (not only the person who is currently asking questions) and vice versa. This requires a stable, reliable and professional video conferencing system.

On the part of the candidate who is absent, an institution should be visited which has a corresponding video telephony infrastructure available. Possible options are for example:

- Goethe Institutes
- (foreign) universities
- German schools abroad
- German consulates
- German embassies.

It must be ensured that the candidate is supervised by a reliable and suitable person during the disputation. Possible supervisors are:

- full-time (German-speaking) employees of the above-mentioned institutions
- (German-speaking) professors or scientists at (foreign) universities.

It is the task of the supervisor to ensure the proper procedure with regard to the participation of the candidate. After the disputation is over, the supervisor must confirm this in writing. This includes in particular that no inadmissible aids have been used and that the image and sound transmission has been trouble-free.

For privacy reasons, a secure video conferencing tool should be used.

- Documentation of the examination result

A two-stage procedure is proposed, which is in any case anchored in most promotional examinations. After the oral discussion of the commission via video conference, the candidate will be informed of the exam result "under reserve". The votes will be sent to the faculty.

- Access to reviews before the defense

This can be made possible through a video conference between the candidate and a representative of the faculty, in which the report is displayed on the screen so that it can be read but not copied. Alternatively, it would also be possible to read the report over the telephone.

If the procedure is to be carried out according to variant 1, it should be examined what hardship the possibly considerable extension of the procedure over time represents for the candidate. This applies in particular if the conclusion of the procedure is a prerequisite for the next professional steps. It should be avoided not to complete any doctoral procedures in 2020.

Therefore, option 2 should be used during the pandemic if possible.

There is no entitlement to conduct the doctoral procedure according to variants 2 or 3, as these variants are currently not provided for in the doctoral regulations.

Due to worldwide travel restrictions, situations may arise in which option 3 should be used; it should be the absolute exception.

Suggested text Consent of the doctoral candidate

Declaration of consent

On the modified procedure for the conduct of the defense of doctorates

on DD.MM.YYYY, place

Topic:

I (name, first name, born on DD.MM.YYYY) agree that due to the current travel restrictions resulting from the SARS CoV-2 pandemic, the external reviewers as members of the PhD commission (first name and last name) will not participate in the colloquium in person, but via video chat/conference.

Based on the current regulations of the Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg in general and taking into account the applicable state law restrictions, I further agree that, in deviation from § xy of the doctoral regulations applicable to me, the participation of other participants – except for the members of the PhD commission – is not permitted and that the colloquium will take place *"not in public"*, even if no timely appointment has been made by the faculty council.

Place, date

Signature