

Protocol for Digital PhD defence – Updated 13 May 2020

In the light of the COVID-19 virus pandemic can my scheduled PhD graduation continue?

Yes. The Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) Doctorate Board gives PhD candidates the choice, either:

- (a) continue with the PhD graduation ceremony but in a fully digital way, or
- (b) postpone the ceremony and reschedule (as a regular ceremony) as soon as possible after we are free of COVID-19 measures but in any case, not before September 2020.

PhD candidates who are scheduled to defend their thesis in the coming weeks will be individually contacted by the Beadle's Office.

What is a fully digital PhD graduation ceremony?

When a PhD defence is fully digital, all participants, i.e. the PhD candidate, the chair, committee members and the doctoral supervisors, call each other via secure video conferencing software. For the purposes of clarity, participants do not come physically to either the Erasmus University Rotterdam nor to the Erasmus MC. The paranymphs can join the defence. There will be no members of the public.

Will I still receive a diploma after my graduation?

Yes. The Doctorate Board has decided to temporarily lift the requirement for signatures of committee members on the PhD diploma. This means that at the time of the ceremony, the diploma will only be signed by the Rector and the primary doctoral supervisor(s). The diploma will be sent by mail or handed over in person once COVID-19 measures have been lifted.

What is the dress code for a fully digital PhD graduation ceremony?

The chair and the promotor will wear a gown. Although the character of an online ceremony is very different to a live ceremony, it is still advised **to the other participants** to adhere to the customary dress code. Furthermore, if the ceremony is combined with a livestream (see below), there will be an audience watching.

What is the protocol for online PhD defence?

- One week before the date of the defence an invitation for a ZOOM-meeting is sent by the Beadle's Office to all participants (as a check to make sure all participants can access and are comfortable with the video conference software).
- 30 minutes before the ceremony begins the Beadle opens the ZOOM-meeting for all participants, except for the candidate.
- 5 minutes before the ceremony begins the candidate is invited to join the ZOOM-meeting by the Beadle. The chair may use the time before the start of the ceremony to explain the procedure.

- Once all participants have logged in, the chair opens the session and welcomes all participants.
- The candidate uses his/her laptop to show the room in which s/he is present. **Three people in total are allowed to be in the same room (paranymph/partner/family member). There is only one zoom-connection, with the candidate, in this room.**
- The chair asks the candidate to present her/his work in 15 minutes (layman's terminology).
- The chair opens the session of 45 minutes in which questions are asked to the candidate; the regular order is followed: external committee members, internal committee members, supervisors and -in case of a promotion of an Erasmus MC candidate - co-supervisors.
- After 45 minutes the Beadle announces, 'Hora Est', which stops the 45 minutes of the actual defence.
- The candidate logs off; the chair opens the discussion session of 15 minutes in which the result of the defence is decided.
- Once the committee has come to an agreement – after 15-20 minutes - the Beadle invites the candidate back into the ZOOM-meeting.
- The chair reopens the session and the chair addresses the candidate (the regular ceremonial language is used but words as 'handover' (the diploma) are changed into 'show' (the diploma).
- The chair asks the doctoral supervisor to address the candidate for the 'laudatio' (commendation).
- The chair closes the session and the members of the committee may congratulate the candidate.
- The Beadle closes the ZOOM-meeting

Is live-streaming allowed?

A live stream may be combined with the ZOOM-meeting (if technically possible) to allow for the audience to follow the ceremony. This may only occur with explicit permission of the candidate and the participants of the graduation ceremony. Privacy of all participants should be respected in accordance with national and European guidelines.

These measures will be valid until recalled by the Rector.

Doctorate Board, 13th May 2020, Erasmus University Rotterdam