

Guidelines for Physics PhD oral exams conducted via CarmenZoom

Last revised 2-July-2020

The following suggested guidelines are based on the Graduate Handbook and existing rules for video conferencing during exams (which are superseded at least in part now, because these rules say only one member of the committee can participate remotely). Please send suggestions based on your experiences to furnstahl.1@osu.edu.

1. Committee members should identify and iterate logistical questions or special issues by email and/or zoom in advance of the exam.
2. Exam should be completed in two hours, unless there are technical problems (e.g., zoom or internet goes out for one or more committee members for a few minutes), in which case it can be extended within reason (up to 30-45 minutes).
3. The exam shall be conducted by CarmenZoom. The committee chair (usually the main advisor) is responsible for setting up and hosting the zoom meeting. The time allocated should begin at least 15 minutes before the start of the exam and allow 3 hours in total duration in case of delays. (The start may be 30 minutes before the exam because scheduled-meeting start times for CarmenZoom are spaced at 30-minute intervals unless adjusted by hand.)
4. The candidate should connect to the zoom meeting and try out screen sharing at least 15 minutes before the start of the exam. The committee should join 5-10 minutes in advance to allow for introductions and to try out zoom logistics.
5. A public part of the exam is allowed. The public portion shall be at most 45 minutes, during which the candidate makes an oral presentation, typically using slides shared from his/her computer through zoom. A zoom link will be sent in advance to invited guests (the link should not be generally broadcast). Per Physics custom, questions by the committee during the presentation are allowed, and questions by guests are allowed at the discretion of the committee. At the end of the presentation or by the 45-minute mark, whichever is earlier, all guests will be dismissed (the host must ensure they have exited) and the closed portion of the exam will continue.
6. Committee members are each guaranteed roughly 15 minutes for questions during the private portion, but they can defer some of their time to other committee members. Per Physics custom, any committee member can follow up on questions initiated by another member. A whiteboard can be shared on zoom (it is an option when you share your screen and works with a mouse or your finder on a touchpad) if needed to answer questions. Another solution that allows the candidate to write answers is to connect to the zoom meeting independently with a cellphone using the Zoom app and propping the phone so the camera shows a piece of paper for writing equations or drawing pictures. Whatever solution is used, it should be tested in advance of the defense.
7. At least 10-15 minutes must be reserved at the end of the exam for committee deliberation. The candidate must exit from the exam at this time (or can be sent to a Zoom breakout room) but should remain in contact by email or messaging so he/she can rejoin the exam at short notice.