

The exceptional procedure for the presentation and defense of doctoral theses via videoconference resulting from the measures adopted to combat COVID-19

In view of the provisions of Royal Decree 463/2020 of 14 March, which decreed a state of alarm as a result of the exceptional circumstances derived from the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the instructions of the Vice-Chancellor of Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) in his statement of 11 March indicating that “the suspension of in-person educational activities does not imply the complete suspension of activities, as they must always be replaced where possible by remote activities, taking into account the special nature of each degree,” the Doctoral School of Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (EDUAM) has established the following exceptional procedure for the presentation and defense of doctoral theses via videoconference. This procedure will cease to be valid as soon as the exceptional measures that justify it are lifted.

One. The director of EDUAM may authorize the defense of doctoral theses via videoconference in duly justified cases, on receipt of a reasoned request from the doctoral candidate, with an approval by the thesis supervisor(s) (See section four).

Two. To guarantee that the doctoral thesis can be defended in public, the videoconference will be accessible to the public on request to EDUAM. Any member of the public with a doctorate who participates via the videoconference may ask questions and make comments when determined by the Chair of the thesis committee (this will be, as in the normal in-person sessions, after the round of questions from the members of the committee).

EDUAM will guarantee the confidentiality of the deliberations of the members of the committee by setting up an **independent virtual session** in addition to the public session for the thesis defense.

Three. The following will be required as prior and necessary conditions for the presentation and defense of the thesis via videoconference:

1. The members of the committee must guarantee they are available to participate in the defense via videoconference. They must also guarantee that they have the technological means necessary to participate in the process.
2. The members of the committee and the doctoral candidate must accept the platform provided by EDUAM (Microsoft Teams).

3. The members of the committee must confirm that they accept to send their votes on the Cum Laude grade, where appropriate, and on the option for an Extraordinary Award, by e-mail to the Head of the Doctoral School and the Chief of Section (beatriz.caro@uam.es, gloria.esteban@uam.es) who will preserve the confidentiality of the votes. The e-mails will be eliminated after filing the votes.
4. All those taking part must accept the protocol for action included in this Resolution (See section four).

Four. To request the presentation and defense of a doctoral thesis via videoconference, the doctoral candidate must send the request duly justified and approved by his/her thesis supervisor(s), to the following e-mail address: doctorado.gestion@uam.es. The message subject must be: "SURNAME(S)_NAME_SOLICITUD DEFENSA TELEMÁTICA".

The **doctoral candidate** and/or his or her thesis supervisor(s) must also include documents certifying compliance with requirements 1 to 4 of section three of this procedure. These documents must be submitted in PDF format via e-mail, in accordance with the models provided in [Annex 1 and 2](#), clearly specifying the e-mail addresses of the sender and addressee. The e-mail must be sent to the address doctorado.gestion@uam.es for inspection and verification. The subject heading must read: "SURNAME(S)_NAME_REQUISITOS DEFENSA TELEMÁTICA". The messages must be written in Spanish or in English.

Five. The following protocol must be followed before the presentation and defense of the doctoral thesis by videoconference:

1. EDUAM will inform the doctoral candidate, the secretary and the rest of the members of the committee via e-mail of the approval of the defense. Next, the **doctoral candidate** must send a copy of the doctoral thesis in PDF format to all the members of the committee; and the **secretary** will send to doctorado.gestion@uam.es a message indicating the date and time of the defense, including the name of the doctoral candidate, the title of the thesis, the thesis supervisor(s), doctoral program and members of the committee.
2. EDUAM will open two sessions on the Teams platform: one of them public, for the presentation and defense of the doctoral thesis; and the other restricted to the committee evaluating the doctoral thesis.
3. EDUAM will send an e-mail notifying the approval of the defense of the thesis, and indicating its date and time, to the doctoral candidate, thesis supervisor(s) and members of the committee. The information will be published on the EDUAM website to inform the whole university community, and adding the URL of the public online connection. This URL will not require credentials (password) to access the session. EDUAM will also send the members of the committee the URL for the restricted session, to ensure confidentiality of the committee's deliberations.

Six. The following protocol must be followed for the presentation and defense of the doctoral thesis by videoconference:

1. The secretary or the chair (if possible, linked to UAM) will act as moderator of the videoconference and call on the members of the committee and the doctoral candidate to be available at least 15 minutes before the start of the public presentation in order to carry out the technical connection tests. The moderator must also attend the on-site public EDUAM management session that will oversee the recording. Once connected, the secretary, or the person acting as moderator of the session, will confirm the identity of the doctoral candidate, who must display his or her ID or passport (or other valid identification) to the camera so it can be seen by all the members of the committee. Once all the above has been checked, the secretary will send a message by e-mail to doctorado.gestion@uam.es, confirming that everything is correct and that the defense may be carried out, in accordance with the following format:

[Name and Surname] with Spanish ID / Passport No. [...], acting as secretary of the committee HEREBY CERTIFY that I have identified the doctoral candidate for the purpose of defense of the doctoral thesis by videoconference on [date] as [Name and Surname(s) of the doctoral candidate], with Spanish ID/Passport No. [...].

The message subject must be: "SURNAME(S)_NAME_CERTIFICADO IDENTIFICACIÓN".

2. Next, the Chair will open the public session for the presentation and defense of the doctoral thesis, with its normal structure: introduction by the Chair of the members of the committee, presentation of the doctoral thesis by the doctoral candidate, and the round of questions from the members of the committee. The Chair will then give the floor to holders of doctorate degrees among the public viewing the session via videoconference (including thesis supervisors and tutors). To guarantee the videoconference runs smoothly, all the participants must follow the moderator's instructions and have their video/audio disabled, except when they are given the floor. If any technical problems arise that cannot be solved within 30 minutes, the Chair, or the secretary acting under orders from the Chair, if acting as moderator, will close the session, which will be considered invalid.
3. Once the public session of presentation and defense of the doctoral thesis has concluded, the committee will deliberate in a parallel session to which access will be restricted. After deliberating, the members of the committee will elaborate the evaluation report on the doctoral thesis, its presentation and defense, which will be drafted by the secretary. They will also agree on the grade to be given to the thesis. Next, the Chair will close the deliberation process and the secretary will close the virtual deliberation session. The committee will return to the public virtual session of the presentation and defense of the doctoral thesis, at which the Chair will publicly announce the

grade and the secretary will close the virtual room of the public session. The recording ends at this point. The session restricted to the committee will continue without being recorded.

4. If the thesis receives the grade *Sobresaliente* (Outstanding) unanimously, the secretary will ask the members of the committee to issue a secret vote on whether to grant a *Cum Laude*, as well as a confidential recommendation to consider submitting the thesis as a candidate for the Extraordinary Prize. For this purpose they will receive a link to the confidential form by e-mail.
5. Finally, the secretary will send the minutes of the defense of the thesis and the evaluation report on it in PDF format to the members of the committee, who will sign it digitally. If one or more members of the committee do not have an electronic signature, the secretary will sign by proxy. To do so, the member delegating the signature must notify the secretary of this by e-mail. This e-mail must be received by the secretary before the day of the thesis defense, and a copy of it in PDF format will be added to the Minutes. All this will be sent by the Secretary to the following e-mail address doctorado.gestion@uam.es indicating in the subject heading: "SURNAME(S)_NAME_ACTA E INFORME TESIS DOCTORAL".
6. If the person acting as secretary of the committee does not have an electronic signature, the Academic Secretary of EDUAM will sign the minutes digitally, adding a note specifying that he or she is doing so after verifying the grade through the recording of the thesis defense session, as well as the evaluation report on the doctoral thesis, its presentation and defense. The minutes and report will be sent by e-mail to the members of the committee, who must indicate that they accurately reflect the session, via e-mail to doctorado.gestion@uam.es, with subject heading "SURNAME(S)_NAME_ACEPTACION DEL ACTA".

ANNEX 1

*ACCEPTANCE AND AVAILABILITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE
COMMITTEE*

Name and surname(s): _____

Chair / Secretary / Member (1, 2, 3): _____

I hereby declare:

1. That I agree to participate in the defense of the doctoral thesis of Mr/Ms _____ via videoconference using the Microsoft Teams platform.
2. That I have the technological means necessary to participate in the process.
3. That I accept to send my vote on the Cum Laude grade, where appropriate, and on the option for an Extraordinary Award by e-mail to beatriz.caro@uam.es and gloria.esteban@uam.es.

Date: _____

ANNEX 2

*ACCEPTANCE AND AVAILABILITY OF
THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE*

Name and surname(s): _____

I hereby declare:

1. That I agree to participate in the defense of my doctoral thesis via videoconference using the Microsoft Teams platform.
2. That I have the technological means necessary to participate in the process.
~~That I understand the operation of the IT tool provided for the secret voting of the *Cum Laude* grade and the option for an Extraordinary Award (Google Forms).~~
3. That I accept the protocol for action specified in section 4 of the Resolution “The exceptional procedure for the presentation and defense of doctoral theses via videoconference resulting from the measures adopted to combat COVID-19.”

Date: _____