



Date: October 8, 2021

To: Deans, Chairs, Head Graduate Advisors, Equity Advisors, Graduate Student Affairs Officers

From: Lisa García Bedolla, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate Division

Re: New Policy Regarding Remote and Hybrid Qualifying Exams

Dear Deans, Department Chairs, Graduate Student Affairs Officers, and Head Graduate Advisors,

Effective October 4, 2021, the Graduate Council has approved a revision to the policy governing in-person and hybrid attendance of qualifying exams and all higher degree milestone exams. This revision is now reflected in our Guide to Graduate Policy, [section F 2.6](#).

Remote Participation by Committee Members or Hybrid Format

If the student requests and/or agrees, a Qualifying Exam may be held entirely remotely or in a hybrid format (i.e., some members are physically present and some are remote). Remote participants will interact via Zoom or other technology that allows them to communicate and share visuals from different locations. Student consent to the format must be obtained **before** the exam is conducted. All students and examiners are urged to review [“Best Practices for Zoom Qualifying Exams”](#) prior to the exam to ensure that there are no technical issues or other impediments to the conduct of the exam.

If the exam is hybrid and the student is physically present, then the chair of the committee also needs to be physically present. This requirement has a dual rationale. First, the chair is responsible for ensuring that the exam is conducted properly, but a chair who is not present in person could be unaware of some of what is happening in the exam room. Second, if the hybrid nature of the exam negatively affects the student’s ability to answer questions, then the exam chair’s presence can help them make an assessment and determine how best to proceed. Any exceptions to this requirement need the approval of the academic unit’s Head Graduate Advisor before the exam.

In all instances, the exam must be held with the entire committee present for the length of the exam. A student may not be examined separately by committee members.



Berkeley
Graduate Division

If any committee member cannot attend either in-person or remotely, the exam should be rescheduled or the committee reconstituted. The Graduate Division can expedite reconstitution of committees under these circumstances.

Programs may require in-person only exams for all students, but the faculty must vote to approve this option and programs must state this requirement clearly in all written documentation about the exam requirement for students.

This policy applies to all graduate degree milestone exams (e.g., preliminary, comprehensive as defined in the *Guide to Graduate Policy*).

Timeline for implementation:

- **Fall 2021:** Blanket waiver initiated in Spring 2020 extended through Fall 2021. No change in practice.
- **Spring-Summer 2022** (interim process while permanent process is being programmed in the system): Students will be asked to confirm the format of the exam as an attachment to the QE application eForm.
- **Fall 2022:** A selection box that records the format of the exam will be added to the QE results eForm.

If you have questions about this policy, please contact Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs Linda Song (lhsong@berkeley.edu). If you have questions about the timeline for implementation, please contact Jeret Lemontt (lemontt@berkeley.edu).

Sincerely,

Lisa García Bedolla

Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate Division