A public defense has traditionally been part of the process by which a student demonstrates mastery of a subject for a Master’s or Doctoral degree. In the face of concerns about COVID-19, the ‘public’ part of this tradition should be curtailed. USU is not suspending critical academic activities, so defenses may still take place. However, attendance at what would otherwise be a public presentation should be limited to the student and the supervisory committee. If the venue for the defense is large enough to allow for a larger audience and maintenance of an appropriate social distance, other faculty from the department may attend. If there are committee members who are not USU faculty, they must participate by teleconnection. The Graduate School has, for some years, allowed individuals to participate in a defense by teleconnection, so this does not involve any change in policy or practice. USU committee members who are at high risk for infection may also participate by teleconnection, as may the student. The ‘public’ presentation may be videotaped or live-streamed.

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