CORONA MEASURES: Public Doctoral Defence via Bongo Virtual Classrooms

A public defence is a legal requirement, which by definition cannot take place behind closed doors. Under the circumstances, however, Ghent University will allow public defences to take place in an entirely digital format, provided that the proceedings are live-streamed. This live-stream must be clearly advertised (e.g. in the invitation to the doctoral defence, or by requesting that portaal@ugent.be includes the URL to the live-stream feed in the appropriate UGent agenda item). Please note that doctorates where limitations and/or confidentiality has been imposed to protect research results that can create value cannot avail themselves of this option (cf. OER art. 97 §8).

For a public defence, you need a general session which is publically accessible, and a private deliberation room into which the Examination Committee can withdraw.

Please find a walkthrough of how to use Ufora’s built-in webinar function, Bongo Virtual Classrooms, for a public doctoral defence below.

UFORA- BONGO Virtual Classroom

Ufora has a built-in webinar option that will allow the doctoral candidate and the members of the Examination Committee to live-stream from home.

You can make a webinar on any course website to which you have admin rights, including (if you have one) your own Ufora Sandbox.

If you don’t have admin rights to any course websites, you may need to ask your promotor to create a webinar in one of their courses.

How to create webinars?

A detailed manual on how to use the tool can be found here (Dutch-language manual here). You can also find a video-tutorial in Dutch on how to create a webinar via this link.

To create a webinar please choose the option ‘Bongo virtual Classroom’ under the tab ‘Overige tools’
You will then get the following screen:

Click on the ‘+’ sign in the bottom right corner of your screen to create a new Meeting.
You will then be able to schedule a meeting. Here you can fill in the title, date and time of the meeting. Note that the webinar opens at the date and time that you specify. We recommend that you schedule the webinar to start 15-30 minutes before the actual proceedings start. This will give you time to set up your presentation, and sort out any technical difficulties. You can also choose the duration of the webinar: we suggest setting the duration to its maximum duration (240 minutes).

When scheduling your meeting don’t forget to click on the option ‘Allow external participants’.

When all the required fields are filled in, click the save button.

External participants/attendants can join via a link that you can shared with them via e-mail. This link will be available under ‘Actions’ (‘Copy External Link’).
Maximum number of participants is 150. Questions can be asked via microphone or via public chat

To start the webinar choose the option ‘launch’ under actions. You will then receive the following screen:
Click on ‘Enter Meeting Room’ to access the webinar.

![Figure 7](image)

Choose ‘Microphone’ in order to be heard by the others.

**Roles**

The creator of the webinar is automatically moderator. You are able to assign different roles for the different members of the webinar.

If the doctoral candidate did not create the webinar themselves, we advise giving them the role of ‘presenter’. The candidate will then be able to share his/her screen and presentation. Please view the screenshots below.

![Figure 8](image)

Click on the name of the doctoral candidate. A menu will appear with different options. Choose ‘make presenter’.

The presenter can now share his/her screen or upload a file that can be viewed by all attendees.
The presenter has an extra button next to his camera button. By clicking on this button you will see the screen below. Choose the ‘App-window’ in order to make the appropriate file visible.
A second option is to upload a presentation. You can do this by clicking on the ‘+’ button, and choosing the option ‘upload a presentation’.

Figure 11
You will then see the following screen where you can upload a file (i.e. the PowerPoint presentation of the doctoral defence).

Figure 12: Once your file is uploaded, choose start. You will then be redirected to the virtual webinar.

Testing before the start of the webinar

Preferably use Chrome, Firefox or Edge as your browser. If you experience any difficulties, try using another browser. A wired network is advised, as using WiFi may result in a poor connection (which may lead to lag, sound distortions, and fuzzy picture). To avoid feedback, use headphones with a microphone, and request that all members of the Examination Committee do the same. For more information, see the following link.
Deliberation room for the Examination Committee via BONGO virtual classrooms

Bongo virtual classroom allows for the creation of ‘breakout’ rooms, but stress testing these breakout rooms has shown that they do not lend themselves well for use as a deliberation room for the Examination Committee. There are two solutions to this issue:

1. a second webinar, scheduled at the same time as the first one, and for the same duration. This second webinar can then be used as the deliberation room. Note that the deliberation room should not be recorded, and only the members of the Examination Committee should be invited to/receive the link to this second webinar. Note that someone other than the candidate must create the deliberation webinar: the candidate should not have access to it.

2. a Starleaf videoconference as the channel for the deliberation. This is a viable option, but here too it is important that deliberation can take place behind closed doors. Only the members of the Examination Committee should be invited to this videoconference.

**Important:** Before deliberation begins, double-check that none of the members of the Examination Committee are still visible/audible in the webinar with the audience. Deliberation must take place behind closed doors. You can either ask each member of your Examination Committee to turn off their microphones and webcam on their end (fig. 15) or you can use the presenter’s admin rights to turn off all microphones and webcams (fig. 16 & 17).

**Figure 15:** Members of the Examination Committee can turn off their own microphone & webcam manually by clicking the microphone and the camera icon.

**Figure 16:** The presenter can use their admin rights to turn off everyone else’s microphone and webcam. To do this, click the three vertical dots in the top right corner of the screen and select “settings.” The following screen will appear (see Figure 17):
PROCEDURE DOCTORAL DEFENCE USING UFORA BONGO VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

1. Welcoming the Examination Committee

Before the defence is scheduled to start, the Examination Committee gathers in its online deliberation room (either a second Bongo session or a Starleaf conference call). The chair welcomes the jury members and briefly explains the public PhD defence exam procedure. At that point attendance is noted of the Examination Committee members.

2. Start of presentation + questions

The members of the Examination Committee leave their online deliberation room, and join the public Bongo webinar, making sure that their microphones are muted until it is their turn to question the candidate. Only the candidate and the members of the Examination Committee should have their webcams activated (max. 7 webcams can be activated simultaneously, so it may be necessary to switch out who is visible). The presentation of the candidate will be visible on the webinar screen through screen sharing.

3. Deliberation

After the presentation and the questions, the Examination Committee returns to its online deliberation room. Double-check that only the members of the Examination Committee are present in the deliberation room. Once the members of the Examination Committee are all present, make sure that none of them are visible or audible in the main Bongo webinar, as deliberation must take place behind closed doors.
4. Announcement of result + closing PhD defence

Once deliberation is over, the members of the Examination Committee once again re-join the public defence webinar. The chair will announce the result. The supervisor will be invited to say a brief word. The candidate will be invited to say a word of thanks. The chair will close the PhD defence.