

# Synchronous defences at UOC

## University master's degree final projects

Starting from the semester 2020-2, all master's degree final project defences are **synchronous** and **public** (i.e. in real time and in front of an audience). The aim is to ensure that the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) online learning model meets the quality standards set by the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU).

Master's degree final projects are defended in live videoconferencing sessions in which a dialogue about the project is established between the student and the assessment committee. These sessions are made public on a [website](#) that can be accessed by anyone in the UOC community.

This document sets out the general characteristics of the synchronous defence process for master's degree final projects, as well as aspects to be taken into account and examples of courses where they have been introduced.

## Features of synchronous defences

### Public

Defences are scheduled in advance. Each student is assigned a date and a time. They are available to watch publicly on this [website](#).



### Duration

Defences can last anything from **20 minutes** to **2 hours**, depending on whether or not the entirety of the project is presented.



### Assessment committee

The UOC's Academic Regulations<sup>1</sup> state that assessment committees for master's degree final projects must:

- Be composed of **3 members**.
- Include at least one **UOC faculty member**.

<sup>1</sup>[UOC Academic Regulations](#)

Text approved by the Executive Management Committee on 18 December 2012 and by the Standing Committee of the Board of Trustees on 9 April 2013, and amended by the Executive Board on 1 February 2016, 31 July 2017, 28 October 2019, 27 July 2020, and 15 February 2021.

- **Synchronous participation of final project tutors** in defence sessions varies from programme to programme.
- In **UOC-specific programmes** with a defence, the assessment committee is composed of two members: a UOC faculty member and the project tutor.
- At the end of the defence session, the committee **draws up an exam record**.

Synchronous defences are attended, following prior agreement, by at least one member of the assessment committee, who will act as **spokesperson**. They are responsible for questioning and cross-questioning the student during the defence session. It is recommended that the other members should also be able to attend the defence session live or watch it later.



### Presentation of the final project

Students must make an audiovisual presentation of the final project or report. This can be submitted to the classroom via the Present@ tool a few days before the defence or directly during the synchronous session, as established for each programme.



### Asking questions

The spokesperson or the committee members attending the synchronous defence will question and cross-question the student, sparking an academic debate around the final project presented. The committee members may share the questions with each other in advance of the defence session.



### Assessment of the defence

The final project assessment committee assesses the synchronous defence. This can be done either individually and then shared, or jointly.



University master's degree final projects that contain **confidential information** or are in the process of obtaining intellectual or industrial property protection will be defended **without an audience**, and the members of the committee will be required to keep the contents secret and confidential.

# Aspects to take into account

## Before the defence

- Provide students with clear guidelines and resources to write the report and make the presentation (synchronous or asynchronous).
- Plan the defence process using the [synchronous final project management tool](#).
- Provide students with information about the defence process.
- Give the assessment committee access to the presentation and documents submitted by students.
- Decide and share with the assessment committee how the defence process is to be carried out, including its duration, the participating members and criteria for preparing questions (if applicable).
- Establish the assessment tools to be used for the defence.

## During the defence

- Ensure the smooth running of the defence: [learn how to use the video conferencing tool](#), log in a few minutes in advance, ensure you have a good connection and that the microphone and camera are working properly, confirm students' identities, record the session, etc.
- Create a good atmosphere during the defence, encouraging appreciative dialogue, mutual respect and students' trust.
- Give short feedback on the final project.
- Ask questions that enable students to show the knowledge they have acquired and that they are the author of the work.

## After the defence

- Collect the assessment committee's feedback on the defence.
- Provide students with the assessment committee's final report.

# Synchronous defences

Faculty	Faculty of Psychology & Education Sciences	Faculty of Computer Science	Faculty of Health Sciences	Faculty of Information & Communication Sciences	Faculty of Economics & Business	Faculty of Arts & Humanities	Faculty of Law & Political Science
Course Programme Coordinating professor	M2.364 Final Project Quality Management and Evaluation in Higher Education Marcelo Maina	M2.980 Final Project Data Science Ferran Prados	M3.527 / M3.627 FP Nutrition and Health Alicia Aguilar Anna Bach Marina Bosque	M0.764 / M3.364 FP Corporate Communication, Protocol and Events Elisenda Estanyol	M1.269 / M1.369 FP Human Resources Management Pilar Ficapal	M5.216 Final Project Humanities Francesc Núñez	M0.967 Final Project Cities and Urbanism Mirela Fiori
Number of students	≈ 30 to 50 students	≈ 100 students	≈ 100 students	≈ 100 students	≈ 150 to 200 students	≈ 50 to 60 students	≈ 30 to 40 students
Duration of sessions	20 to 30 minutes	20 to 25 minutes	20 minutes	20 to 25 minutes	45 minutes	1 hour	2 hours
Assessment Committee	1 committee member as spokesperson (optional tutor / coordinating professor)	3 committee members (coordinating professor + 2 external assessors)	2 committee members (coordinating professor + spokesperson)	3 committee members (coordinating professor + tutor + external assessor)	2 committee members (tutor + external assessor)	3 committee members (coordinating professor + tutor + external assessor)	3 committee members (coordinating professor + tutor + external assessor)
Presentation Format	Asynchronous on Present@	Asynchronous on Present@ + 3 min synchronous	Asynchronous on Present@	Asynchronous on Present@	Synchronous	Synchronous	Synchronous
Duration	10 to 12 minutes	10 to 20 minutes asynchronous + 3 minutes synchronous	15 minutes	10 minutes	15 to 20 minutes	15 to 20 minutes	20 minutes
Defence Duration	20 to 30 minutes	20 to 25 minutes	10 minutes	20 to 25 minutes	25 to 30 minutes	45 minutes	1 hour 40 minutes
Questions	Shared among the committee members before the session	Asked directly at the session	Shared among the committee members before the session	Shared among the committee members before the session	Asked directly at the session	Asked directly at the session	Asked directly at the session
Assessment of the defence	Shared assessment tool	Shared assessment tool	Shared assessment tool	Collaborative assessment tool*	Shared assessment tool	Shared assessment tool	Shared assessment tool
Other	The questions to be asked at the defence session are prepared in a document in advance. The tutor can suggest questions.	Students make three-minute presentations with four slides (introduction, aims, results and findings) about the final project to help give focus to the defence.	The questions to be asked at the defence session are agreed 24 hours in advance and added to an Excel spreadsheet.	Each member of the committee submits their own questions, which are shared before the session through the Collaborative assessment tool.	The tutor and external assessor attend the defence session and ask their questions. They then complete the assessment tool individually and share their assessments. In the event of disagreement, a faculty member becomes involved.	The three committee members meet for 10-15 minutes just after the defence to jointly complete the assessment there and then.	During the session, the final project is the subject of expert discussion. The three committee members jointly assign a grade immediately after each session.

\*This tool was piloted during the semesters of 2019-2 and 2020-1 and is pending evaluation so it can be made available for all final projects.