

FOUNDATION UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD

SOP FOR ONLINE EDUCATION – 2020

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SOP FOR ONLINE EDUCATION – 2020

1. **Introduction:** In view of the discontinuation of the face to face teaching and other academic activities due to Covid-19, HEC has allowed universities and degree awarding institutes to continue online teaching and learning during the interrupted Spring Semester 2020 by using a variety of distance-learning approaches without compromising the quality of Online Education, health and safety nets. Accordingly, to ensure the quality of Online Education, the FUI has formally adopted SOP for Online Education that covers major areas, namely the university, the course, the faculty, the students the library, the technology, the examination, the laboratory, for Online Education.
2. **Objectives:** To safeguard the students' academic loss by maintaining the quality in education, This SOP covers various aspects of Online Teaching and Learning based on prevailing best practices and safety measures.
3. **Strategy for Implementation:**
 - a. The University started online teaching just after the closure of the University from **16th March till 30th April 2020**. During this period student's teacher interaction will remain to continue through LMS and students were engaged in a specially designed academic assignment, quizzes and projects and case studies. Due to the unpredictability of the situation, the faculty was asked to prepare and upload 100% lectures through the use of the innovative practice to dissemination online education.
 - b. Foundation University Islamabad (FUI) is multi Discipline University having Medical Sciences and Non- Medical Sciences programs under the Annual and Semester System. The details guidelines regarding Online Education are given as under.
 - (1) **Semester System**
 - (a) Under normal circumstances, a semester comprises 15-16 weeks teaching. Spring 2020 commenced in FURC/FUSC on 03 Feb 2020, in FUIRS from 10 Feb 2020 and in FUCN on 20 Jan 2020. Accordingly, FURC/FUSC provided 6 weeks, FUIRS provided 5 weeks while FUCN provided 7 weeks face-to-face teaching (also conducted the Midterm Exam. Initially, the Campuses were asked to complete Online Teaching by 30th April 2020, later on, as per GOP and HEC decision, due to closure of Universities till 15th July 2020, all FUI Campus were directed to make Completion/ revision of Online education by 10th July 2020. The details instructions for Campus/College/ are given as under:-
 - (b) **FURC/ FUSC** will have a total of 12 weeks (6 weeks before and 6 weeks after lockdown) of face-to-face teaching. The total academic shortfall is only 3-4 weeks. Considering the special circumstances, 15 weeks of teaching is to be provided to the students. So accordingly:
 - i. To complete the shortfall, Deans and HODs will ensure that faculty uses FUI LMS and MS Teams for online classes. The shortfall will be covered through online classes till month 10th July 2020. A weekly report every Monday of the classes, planned and held, will

be sent to the Registrar Office through eoffice / email.

- ii. Since the Midterm Exam is not being held as per the DCM decision, HoDs will ensure that faculty members design special assignments, projects, quizzes to mark them as a part of the Midterm Exam. A detailed Assessment and Examination Policy is given in subsequent paras.
 - iii. Faculty Leave planned from 13 -28 Jun 2020, Shall be held in the month of May 2020.
- (c) **FUIRS** is having 11 weeks (5 weeks before and 6 weeks after lockdown) of face-to-face teaching thus the academic shortfall is 4-5 weeks. To ensure 15 weeks of teaching following to be done:
- i. Dean/ HODs will ensure that faculty uses FUI LMS and MS Teams for online classes till 10th July 2020. A weekly report every Monday of the classes, planned and held, will be sent to the Registrar Office through eoffice / email.
 - ii. Since the Midterm Exam is not being held as per the DCM decision, HoDs will ensure that faculty members design special assignments, projects, quizzes to mark them as a part of the Midterm Exam. A detailed Assessment and Examination Policy is given in subsequent paras.
 - iii. Faculty Leave, planned from 8 Jul to 13 Sep 2020, shall be held in the month of May 2020.
- (d) **FUCN** will have 13 weeks (7 weeks before and 6 weeks after lockdown) of face-to-face teaching thus the academic shortfall of 2-3 weeks. To ensure 15 weeks of teaching following to be done:
- i. Principal to ensure that faculty uses FUI LMS and MS Teams for online classes till 10th July 2020. A weekly report every Monday of the classes, planned and held, will be sent to the Registrar Office through eoffice / email.
 - ii. FUCN has already conducted the Midterm Exam.
 - iii. Faculty Leave, planned from 25th May to 7th Aug 2020, Shall be held in the month of May 2020.

(2). **Annual System**

- (a) **FUMC and FUCD&H** to ensure that online teaching continues till 10th July 2020. A weekly report every Monday of the classes, planned and held, will be sent to the Registrar Office through eoffice / email.
- (b) Six days a week classes will be held from 15th July 2020 to 2nd Oct 2020.
- (c) All Exams will be rescheduled and communicated to FUI by 10th July 2020
- (d) Faculty Leave, planned from 22 Jun to 31 Jul 2020 shall be held in the month of May 2020.

4. Regular classes will commence w.e.f 14th September 2020. However, due to unpredictability of the situation, if campus closure continues even after 15th July 2020, the

remaining academic shortfall will be completed through real-time online classes till the opening of the campuses. Faculty members must prepare their course plans accordingly.

For Semester System, on the opening of campuses, minimum two weeks face-to-face teaching will be ensured prior to exams. It's pertinent to mention that all the plans can be revisited after the situation is completely clear. Spring semester can also be extended beyond 14th September 2020, if required. It's is again reiterated that LMS part of CMS will remain a permanent feature of student-teachers academics interaction in the University henceforth.

a. **Delivery of Online Courses**

- (1) Campuses shall adopt MS Teams as the conference-call-software for delivering and recording a lecture for online education. Passwords of both faculty and students have already been provided to the campuses.
- (2) IT Department has already shared step-by-step tutorials on using MS Teams. These are simple to use, however, in case of any problem the faculty and students can seek help from IT support services already intimated.
- (3) IT Department has customized the LMS interface that is more focused and user friendly. Each faculty member has to ensure to complete all fields given in the assigned section of courses including the objectives/outcomes of the course properly defined.
- (4) Quizzes, Assignments, projects etc should be added in the section of all academic weeks. HoDs to provide guidelines to faculty members and ensure and inspect their profile/course section are complete in all respect. The lectures will be delivered live. The live lectures will also be recorded and made available on LMS for later viewing.
- (5) If a live lecture cannot be delivered, for any reasons, makeup lecture is to be made available with the permission of HoDs and Deans.
- (6) Students should preferably view the live streaming of the lectures on MS Teams. However, if a student is unable to attend the live session, he/she should make sure that he/she has listened to all of the recorded session by the end of each week.
- (7) Students who do not have internet access should reach out to places with Internet availability and download the lectures on a weekly basis. In other cases, on special request, CDs may be mailed to the Students on their addresses.
- (8) Similarly, for subjects where interaction through the whiteboard is essentially required, relevant whiteboard/notebook written videos regarding e.g. mathematical problems will be shared by the faculty members to effectively communicate the concepts.
- (9) Every faculty member is required to create a WhatsApp group for coordination purpose only. No academic corresponding shall be made through the group.

5. **Consultation Hours / Faculty Attendance**

- a. The Faculty members will dedicate one hour per week for students' consultation. During this period, interactive discussions can be held and students' queries will be answered in real-time. Students should make use of the consultation hours to ask questions related to the lecture. Students should read the lecture material thoroughly and ask questions to resolve any ambiguities.
- b. FUI has already issued instructions regarding the availability of the faculty on the Campuses. It is, however, the prerogative of the concerned Campus Director to decide the attendance/availability of faculty as per campus operation and requirement. Faculty, however, is not allowed to go out of the station without proper leave sanctioned.

6. **Assessment & Evaluation**

- a. To ensure the learning students should complete assignments/quizzes etc and submit online each week.
- b. Students must submit the labs assignments online on a weekly basis for the courses in which labs are being conducted online. In cases, where online labs are not possible mainly due to the involvement of specialized lab equipment, students will be provided in the demonstration videos, to maximize their understanding of the lab task.
- c. Since students of less privileged areas may not have the internet facility and even may not be able to submit online assignments/quizzes they should be allowed to submit their assignments and quizzes etc once face to face teaching is resumed. Special assignments and quizzes may be designed for such students. For the same reasons, attendance policy is only to be implemented on the face to face teaching.

7. **Students Feedback on Online Education.** To improve the online education process, students should be enabled to provide feedback and suggestions about online education.

8. **Academic Guidelines on Online Teaching.** After the commencement of on Online Teaching since 16th March 202, a lot of problems related to IT, faculty and students training and accessibility etc were faced and resolved. The month of May 2020 was declared as a summer break. From 1st June 2020 onward, Online Teaching was improved with better efficiency and quality. Accordingly, the Campuses were issued further instructions in view of GOP and HEC notification regarding the closure of University after 1st June 2020. The details are given as under.

a. **Revision of Online Teaching / Practical Subjects**

- (1) All colleges will commence online teaching from **1st June to 10th July 2020**. To facilitate the students, efforts will be made to cover maximum theoretical lectures during this period while with more than normal load of practical subjects during face-to-face teaching.
- (2) The colleges with the semester system will cover practical subjects or revision from **13th - 18th July 2020** during face-to-face teaching.

b. **New Admissions & Commencement of Fall 2020 Semester**

- (1) **Fall-2020 Semester** will commence from **14th Sep 2020**. As a one-time special measure, the new intake of Fall 2020 may deposit fee in two instalments, i.e. 60% at the time of admission and 40% prior to the start of the Midterm Exams
- (2) Considering the GoP Ministry of Education policy, the entry test of the undergraduate program, except for BSEE, for Fall-2020 semester (and possibly Spring- 2021) will not be held. Campuses will develop and communicate a policy to prepare the merit lists accordingly to the Registrar Office by **8th June 2020** for approval
- (3) In case lockdown continues after **15th Jul 2020**, Colleges will ensure that the degree of graduating batches is not delayed. A policy in this regard may be developed by respective campuses and shared with the Registrar Office.

c. **Conduct of Final Examination**

- (1) All final examinations under the semester system shall be held from **20th Jul 2020 onwards**.
 - (a) The COVID-19 implementation Committee will ensure the implementation of all precautionary measures during exams period as per Government Policy.
 - (b) FUIRS can commence exams from **6th Aug 2020** onwards. Whereas, Colleges following the annual system will commence their routine face-to-face classes.
 - (c) For semester system retake of exams can be held as a one-time special case. The campuses will communicate exam dates.
 - (d) Campuses further can plan on-campus exams in slots/department or faculty wise or any other innovative method by following COVID-19 precautions.
 - i. A separate policy for online Viva-Voce Examination is given in subsequent paras.
 - ii. A details Assessment and Examination Policy is attached given in subsequent paras.

d. **Online Education Progress Report**

- (1) All HoDs are required to forward the **Subject-wise Progress Report** of the planned/ scheduled and conducted online sessions through respective Principals/Deans and Campus Director to Registrar Office by every Monday of the preceding week.

e. **Course Readiness Certificate**

- (1) All faculty members are required to fill in advance **Week-wise Plan** for the complete duration of the online period on LMS by **1st June 2020**, and send a confirmation email to their respective HoDs with a copy to Deans/ Principals/ Directors. HoDs shall ensure the complete **Week-wise Plan** along with Course Outline and Objectives are uploaded in LMS and will submit a **completion certificate** of each faculty. The same will also be submitted to the Chairperson **Online Academic Council**

(OAC) for vetting and determining the course readiness.

- (a) Being the chairpersons of the respective OAC, Campus Directors are required to ensure the quality of course in the light of HEC guidelines. A certificate of Course Readiness of each course will be forwarded to Registrar Office by **5th June 2020**.

f. **Student Readiness.**

- (1) All Campuses are required to collect student information including place of residence, contact information, type of internet access, Prefer Mobile service provider, nature of devices. The detail be shared with Registrar and Quality Assurance (QA) Office by 30th June 2020.
- (2) The Campuses shall further develop a support system in consultation with the Student Affairs Office and IT Department to address the students complaints regarding connectivity and other related problems with Online education. Summary of the Complaints registered, resolved by the Campus Online Academic Council (OAC) and shall be reported to FUI - Online Academic Council accordingly.

g. **Technology Readiness and Training**

- (1) FUI has developed its IT-related infrastructure/equipment (LMS/CMS, MSTEAMS) and necessary training has also been provided. FUI has also provided access to **Coursera** (an online database of more than 3800 online courses including the courses on how to design and deliver a course online), **Digital Libraries** and **Edex** to faculty members, students and admin for further facilitation. DQA can be contacted for the purpose. Respective Director Campus will liaison with the **FUI Technology Readiness Committee** for the smooth online streaming, LMS/CMS support and other necessary technology matters as prescribed by HEC.
- (2) The Campuses shall further ensure the provision of teaching material in the form of CDs to those students who do not have Internet access in their areas preferably on fortnightly bases.

h. **Course Completion Certificate.** Campuses will submit an online **course completion certificate** of each department and faculty by **16th Jul 2020**.

i. **Research Output and Plagiarism**

- (1) The FUI pays full attention to broaden research activities and extend full support to the researchers. Therefore, efforts must be made by the faculty to produce more research papers and seek external funded projects. Presently, most of the faculty members are working from home, so they have enough time to write research proposals and complete pending research projects/ publications. ORIC will coordinate and ensure.
- (2) Faculty members are instructed to follow the plagiarism policy strictly while evaluating students' assignments/projects etc.
- (3) FUCD&H will commence HO training w.e.f 1st Jun 2020 as per their plan. FUIC will ensure the enhancement of private practice as per new policy.

j. **Revision of Curriculum**

- (1) All college, Deans and HODs/DME/ DME&R will ensure revision/updating of the curriculum. A **certificate to the effect** will be forwarded to the Registrar Office by 16th June 2020.

9. **Familiarity with FUI Policies.** It has been noticed that most of the faculty members are not familiar with FUI policies and instructions issued from time to time. Many complain because of ignorance of rules and regulations. Therefore, HoDs are to ensure that all faculty members are well aware of the rules and read of policies, letters, and instructions. Respective Campus Directors are requested to play a proactive role to develop such a culture. Campuses will ensure that essential components of this policy are communicated to all students through all possible means.

10. **Completion of Admin Related Tasks.** This time will be effectively utilized by admin to complete all admin-related tasks especially those, which cannot be undertaken while classes are in progress.

11. **Assessment and Examination.** As mentioned earlier Foundation University Islamabad (FUI) is multi Discipline University having Medical Sciences and Non- Medical Sciences programs under the Annual and Semester System. In the wake of the current pandemic situation, a need was felt to re-adjust the Assessment and Examination policy with revised weight-age as a one-time measure. The details guidelines regarding Assessment & Examination covering both aspects of University opening before and after 15th July 2020 is given as under:

a. **Annual System**

- (1) **MBBS / BDS).** MBBS & BDS are regulated by PM&DC. As these programs include large clinical and practical training components, the duration of various modules and blocks and assessment criteria cannot be largely altered.

Option-1. In case FUI is open on 15th July 2020.

- (a) There will be no Pre-annual examination in MBBS & BDS programs. The internal assessment assigned to Pre-annual examination will be attributed to Post-online teaching assessment, for which a comprehensive table of assessment will be developed for standardization.
- (b) Internal assessment of BDS shall remain as 10%. However the internal assessment of MBBS that amounts to 30% are likely to be revisited in light of the extent of compromise on our internal assessment tools. This issue will be addressed timely by BOF of FUIC.
- (c) Online classes will continue as per the structured time tables of each class.

- (d) If colleges open by 16th July, all the professional examinations will be concluded on December 20 except the final year which normally falls in Jan/ Feb next year.
- (e) All the academic teaching and training of all the classes will be carried out comprehensively while adjusting part of the curriculum taught during online teaching.
- (f) All the final professional examinations of all the classes will be carried out as per the table of specification without compromising on the standard of examinations. However, the pattern of end of module/ block/rotation/ term examinations can be modified depending without affecting the standard.

Option 2. If the Campus remains closed after 15th July 2020.

- (a) If campus closure is extended beyond 15th July, then the whole academic session will move forward proportionally and online classes shall continue as per the notified time table of each class.
- (b) If PM&DC issues any instructions on teaching and assessment of MBBS/BDS programs, then these instructions will be adopted through statutory bodies.

b. Semester System (Health-Related Programs)

- (1) **FUIRS.** In the wake of the current pandemic situation the following guidelines shall be adopted for the spring semester 2020:

Option 1. In case FUI is open on 15th July 2020.

- a. Marks allocated for Midterm Examination shall be adjusted in Internal Assessments and Final term Examination.
- b. The final term examination will commence from 06th August 2020.
- c. The final term paper will consist of 50 MCQs, each carrying one mark (Total 50 marks).
- d. The time duration for the final term paper will be 50 minutes.
- e. Paper will include the whole syllabus taught during regular classes as well as in online classes.
- f. Revised marks (percentage) distribution will be as follows:-

Type	Existing marks distribution as per rule (age)		Revised marks (age) distribution only for semester spring 2020	
	Subjects with viva	Subjects without viva	Subjects with viva	Subjects without viva
Mid-Term exam	30%	40%	-	-
Assignments, Quizzes, Class test, Presentations	10%	10%	30%	40%

Viva/OSPE	20%	Nil	20%	Nil
Final Exam	40%	50%	50%	60%

Further Distribution of Assignments and Quizzes etc will be as under:-

a. Subjects with viva (30%)

- (1) 20% marks for the assignments and quizzes etc for the duration of online teaching.
- (2) 05% marks for timely submission/Attempt of assignments and quizzes.
- (3) 05% marks for the regular classes (10th Feb to 15th March).

b. Subjects without viva (40%)

- (1) 30% marks for the assignments and quizzes etc for the duration of online teaching.
- (2) 05% marks for timely submission/Attempt of assignments and quizzes.
- (3) 05% marks for the regular classes (10th Feb to 15th March).

c. For Clinical Exams, Following percentage is proposed:

- (1) OSCE/OSPE: 80%
- (2) Logbook 20%

(Option 2. If the Campus remains closed after 15th July 2020.

- (1) Final term Examination will commence after 15th August 2020.
- (2) Written & Oral Examination will be conducted on MS Teams
- (3) Final term examination paper will consist of 30 MCQs/50 MCQs (for subjects with Viva & subjects without Viva respectively), each carrying one mark.
- (4) Paper will include the whole syllabus taught during regular classes as well as in online classes.
- (5) Revised marks (percentage) distribution for online examination will be as follows:

Subjects with VIVA

Exam	Mode	quantity	Marks per task	Total Marks
Assignments, Quiz & SEQs (30%)	Assignments	3 (objective oriented)	10+10+10	30
VIVA (30%)	Online VIVA	1	30	30
Participation (10%)	Attendance	75%	10 (75%= 04 marks) (76%-85%= 06 marks) (86%-95%= 08 marks) (>95%= 10 marks)	10
Final Term (30%)	MCQs	1 (30 MCQs) Allotted time: 25min	30	30

Subjects without VIVA

Exam	Mode	Quantity	Marks per task	Total Marks
Assignments, Quiz & SEQs (40%)	Assignments	4 (objective oriented)	10+10+10+10	40
Participation (10%)	Attendance	75%	10 (75%= 04 marks) (76%-85%= 06 marks) (86%-95%= 08 marks) (>95%= 10 marks)	10
Final Term (50%)	MCQs	1 (50 MCQs) Allotted time: 45min	50	50

For Clinical exams, following weightage criteria is to be adopted: -

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|-----|
| (1) | OSCE on MS Teams | : | 20% |
| (2) | Internal assessment | : | 10% |
| (3) | Logbook | : | 20% |
| (4) | Case-based video presentation | : | 20% |
| (5) | Clinical viva | : | 30% |

- (2) **FUCN**. The following guidelines shall be adopted for the spring semester 2020:

Option-1. In case FUI is open on 15th July 2020.

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) & Post RN BSN degree programs that are being offered at FUCN are regulated by Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC).
- In case of any instructions regarding the Nursing Program received from Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) and HEC shall be followed accordingly.
- Online classes will continue as per structured time tables.
- FUCN when open by 16th July 2020, all the academic teaching & training of all the classes will be carried out comprehensively while adjusting part of the curriculum taught during online teaching and semester final examinations will be conducted as scheduled by 4th to 12th of September 2020.

Option-2. If the Campus remains closed after 15th July 2020.

- Policy as defined in FUIRS will be followed.

(3) **Semester System - General & Engineering Programs**

FURC/FUSC. The following guidelines shall be adopted for the spring semester 2020:

Option-1. In case FUI is open on 15th July 2020.

- (a) Mid Semester Exam marks (Undergraduate & Postgraduate) are adjusted in the Internal Assessment and Final Term Exam as follows:
- (a) Internal Assessment 40%
 - (b) Final Exam 60%
- (b) **Examination/ Assessment Plan - Undergraduate Students (Not graduating after Spring Semester 2020).** The assessment to promote the students will be conducted through on campus as per following:
- (1) Open Book Exam/Open Notes/closed book - 25%
 - (2) Assignments (1-2 major assignments) - 20%
 - (3) MCQs - 15%
- (The above-mentioned assessment is out of 60%, already earmarked for End Term Exam)

(3) **Examination/ Assessment Plan - Undergraduate Students (Graduating after Spring Semester 2020).** The assessment to promote the students will be conducted as per following:

- (a) Open Book Exam/Open Notes - 25%
- (b) Assignments (1-2 major assignments) - 20%
- (c) MCQs - 15%

- (The above-mentioned assessment is out of 60%, already earmarked for End Term Exam)

- (d) **Final Year Project:** Final year students will demonstrate/present their project as per existing practice.

(e) **Examination/ Assessment Plan - Postgraduate Students**

In case of PG students, the assessment procedure will remain the same (as under) whether the university opens on 15th July 2020 or otherwise:

- (1) Term Paper/Case Study/ Research Article - 40%
- (2) Take-Home Exam/Assignments/Oral presentation - 20%
(It may be stand-alone or with any combination)
- (The above-mentioned assessment is out of 60%, already earmarked for End Term Exam)

(2) **Option 2. If the Campus remains closed after 15th July 2020.**

(a) **Examination/Assessment Plan - Undergraduate Students (Not graduating after Spring Semester 2020).**

The assessment to promote the students will be conducted online as per following:

- (a) Open Book Exam/Open Notes - 35%
- (b) Assignments (1-2 major assignments) - 25%
- (c) MCQs - 0%

- (The above-mentioned assessment is out of 60%, already earmarked for End Term Exam)

(b) **Examination/ Assessment Plan - Undergraduate Students (Graduating after Spring Semester 2020)**

The assessment to promote the students will be conducted as per the following:

- (a) Open Book Exam/Open Notes - 35%
- (b) Assignments (1-2 major assignments) - 25%
- (c) MCQs - 0%

- (The above-mentioned assessment is out of 60%, already earmarked for End Term Exam)

(c) **Final Year Project:** Policy is covered in subsequent paras.

(d) **Examination Moderation Committee.** To keep uniformity across the online examination, a campus wise paper moderation committee has been constituted to recommend the related matters to the Online Academic Council (OAC). The composition of the Moderation Committee (MC) shall be as under:-

- (1) Dean of Faculty (Concerned) - Chairman
- (2) HOD of Deptt (Concerned) - Member
- (3) Faculty Member (Concerned) - Member

It is pertinent to mention here that the theoretical portion of studies can be covered by online lectures but practical experiment portions cannot be done, as desired by different accreditation bodies. For this purpose, it is decided that the practical / experiment portion for UG students (who are not graduating after this semester) will be pended and will be conducted in next semester. However, for the graduating students, the required practicals will be conducted even after their graduation and prior to awarding the degree (to fulfil the requirement of accreditation bodies)

- a. **Online Thesis / Dissertations and Related Issues.** In view of the discontinuation of the face to face teaching and other Academic Activities due to Covid-19, it has become imperative that the genuine needs of the Undergraduate/Postgraduate programs students regarding their thesis/dissertation are adequately addressed. This guideline covers exactly this aspect starting from the allocation of the supervisor to their final defence, for all

the UG / PG programs, the details of which are given below.

These guidelines are applicable to all Undergraduate/Postgraduate programs of FURC, FUSC, and Postgraduate programs of FUIC. It will be effective for the period when face to face classes/ instructions are closed due to Covid19, which is currently up to 15th July 2020 or till it is further extended by the Govt.

a. BS Programs:

- (1) The students eligible to do their final project are encouraged to select their prospective supervisor through email/telephone or any available remote access method, as early as possible. In case of any difficulty, HOD's help may be sought so that project work can start on time.
- (2) The student will finalize the topic with the help of the supervisor and carry out its implementation under his/ her guidance.
- (3) When the project is complete to the entire satisfaction of the supervisor, the project defence will be organized online as per the procedure given in subsequent paras. Other formalities as per the existing policy of FUI, will also remain applicable.

b. MS Programs:

- (1) Topic and Research Proposal. The eligible scholars opting for the thesis should select their supervisor as per procedure given in para 3(a) and should work on their respective research topic/proposal under guidance from their supervisor.
- (2) After approval by the supervisor, the final research proposal (prepared as per format already notified), shall be emailed by the scholar's Supervisor to the 2x experts of the Deptt, to be notified by the HOD. Reports by the experts will be submitted to the HOD. Improvements recommended by the experts, if any, must be incorporated before calling for a meeting of the GERC for proposal defence. The defence will be conducted online as per arrangements noted in subsequent paras.
- (3) Dissertation Defense: The HOD and supervisor will ensure the draft dissertation is error-free and a formal plagiarism check has been performed, before calling for the GERC meeting for the purpose.

16. **PhD Program:** All PhD programs will be continued as per existing practice with taking care of all possible COVID-19 precautions issued.

17. The above SOP is issued to ensure, as far as possible, that FUI students graduate on time; with minimal delays from the Covid-19 disturbances, but also ensuring adherence to quality of education and research standards set by the FUI. However, the competent authority of FUI may authorize any change in the above rules from time to time in view of the uncertain circumstances and on case to case basis.

1. The following procedures must be adopted for holding online Defence.

- a. **Responsibility:** It will be the responsibility of the HOD to coordinate with the external/internal examiners, exam committee, GERC members, about the time,

date and video link address etc, to ensure a timely start of defence.

- b. **Access to ICT Tools**: It will be the responsibility of the IT Deptt to ensure that all members of the Defense Committee, as well as the candidate, have the appropriate technology to participate in the online defence; (b) that the technology is tested before the defence; and (c) that remote participation is uninterrupted and, if interrupted, the defence shall be paused/postponed until the connections are fully restored.
- c. **All Proceedings to be Recorded**: The proceedings of the online defence will be recorded with prior information of all members of the Defense Committee, the candidate, and maintained as confidential record with the University, for the possible evaluation by the University or the HEC.
- d. **Electronic Signatures**: The digital signatures of the Defense Committee shall be taken and considered sufficient to certify the results of the defence.
- e. **Announcement of Result**: Controller of Examination with approval of the Rector will announce the result after receiving it from the designated authority.

