

Board of Examiners and Non-Examining Independent Chair Checklist for Virtual Vivas

Should be read in concert with:

1. [Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research programmes](#)
2. Viva Voce Examinations by Virtual Means – Temporary Policy in Response to Impact of Coronavirus Outbreak
3. Virtual Viva flowchart
4. Supporting guidance on the use of Microsoft Teams

BoE = Board of Examiners Y* = Responsibility of the Lead Internal Examiner NEIC - Non-Examining Independent Chair		
	BoE	NEIC
Schedule viva date with all participants, including schedule test and pre-meeting time for Board of Examiners prior to arrival of candidate (and supervisor, where observing), bearing in mind: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scheduling of the test and viva should wherever possible ensure participants have sufficient time to practice so that they can become familiar with the technology before the viva takes place. 2. allowing time before the viva formally starts for everyone to log in and confirm they are comfortable, with their surroundings and with operating the technology. 3. the proceedings are likely to take a little longer to allow for delays and any technical hitches. 	Y*	
Send invitations in Microsoft Teams^ for the test, ensuring that the test is no less than 2 working days ahead of the viva <i>^or alternative platform, provided approval has been given by PGR Support ahead of the viva</i>		Y
Inform PGR support contact of viva schedule and send the invitation for the pre-meeting and the viva itself, ensuring that the timings above are adhered to	Y*	
Ensure approval for virtual viva is in place before proceeding	Y*	Y
Receive Microsoft Team guidance and test Microsoft Teams with participants ahead of viva (refer to step-by-step guides)	Y	Y
Ensure that you understand the arrangements for managing the candidate (and supervisor, where relevant) joining/leaving/re-joining the meeting and that all participants in the viva are aware of these.		Y
Confirm whether test successful to PGR support contact		Y
If test not successful make arrangements to postpone viva	Y*	
Proceeding with viva where approval given and successful test has taken place:		
Confirm have details of PGR support contact and IT helpdesk in case of problems during viva	Y	Y
Commencing the viva		
Part One: Pre-Meeting , prior to the arrival of the candidate (and supervisor, where observing):		

Confirm that no-one is present in meeting other than Examiners and NEIC		Y
Introductions		Y
Housekeeping: ask all present to confirm that they have made arrangements to ensure that they are not likely to be disturbed (e.g. prompt all to check that forms of disruption such as email, mobile phones, SKYPE, TEAMS etc have been set to appropriate settings to avoid disruption, and that other members of household, where relevant, know not to disturb)		Y
Confirmation that all examiners and the NEIC have received and understand the regulations for the award in question along with the 'Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research Programmes'		Y
Confirmation that all examiners and NEIC have received and understand the 'Viva Voce Examinations by Virtual Means –Temporary Policy in Response to Impact of Coronavirus Outbreak'		Y
Confirmation that all examiners have copies of the examiners' preliminary reports	Y*	
Outline by the NEIC of the viva schedule and process, such as the expectations regarding viva length and the process for informing the candidate of the outcome of the examination		Y
Confirmation by the examiners of priority areas about which the examiners wish to ask questions and discussion of the order of questions.	Y	
Ask the examiners to agree how they will keep a record during the viva to ensure that, if technological or other problems means the viva is halted, it can be successfully recommenced at a later date.		Y
Confirm how the NEIC will be keeping a record to allow them to report back on the conduct of the viva.		Y
Part Two: Viva , following the arrival of the candidate (and supervisor, where observing)		
Introductions		Y
Confirm that the candidate is happy to proceed with a virtual viva		Y
Confirmation of the candidate's identity (by checking ID candidate presents to camera)		Y
Housekeeping: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ask candidate (and supervisor, where observing) to confirm that they have made arrangements to ensure that they are not likely to be disturbed (e.g. prompt to check that forms of disruption such as email, mobile phones, SKYPE, TEAMS etc have been set to appropriate settings to avoid disruption and that other members of household, where relevant, know not to disturb)) 2. Check that all participants have access to drinking water and anything else they may need. 3. Confirm points of contact for IT support if needed, e.g. if any participant loses contact with viva (details of PGR support contact and IT helpdesk) 4. Confirm arrangements for halting viva, and for confirming postponement of viva in writing if needed (refer to 3.f. of 'Viva Voce Examinations by Virtual Means – Temporary Policy in Response to Impact of Coronavirus Outbreak') 5. Confirm arrangements for taking breaks, if needed/required, and for resuming following a break 6. Remind all participants that they must not make a digital recording of the viva 		Y

<p>7. Remind participants that you will be keeping a record and reporting to the College DPGR after the viva should anyone present be unable to confirm that the holding of the examination by virtual means had no substantive bearing on the examination process at the end of the viva, but that you will be vigilant to determining whether any disruption that might happen can be considered to be significant during the viva.</p> <p>8. Explain to candidate that you may mute your microphone whilst the Board of Examiners lead questions to the candidate but you will remain on screen and will be available to the candidate should they have any problems or concerns. This also means you will check whether the candidate appears to be ok, and if necessary hold a private conversation with them to resolve the problem. This may mean leaving the viva meeting for a short-term to talk privately to the candidate and then then returning to negotiate a short break in proceedings.</p>		
Explaining the process of the viva to the candidate, and what happens at the end of it		Y
Questions to Candidate (led by examiners)	Y	
<p>Conclusions (ending the viva):</p> <p>i. Provide information to the candidate on what will happen next;</p> <p>ii. Confirm that the candidate is satisfied that they were given a fair chance to defend their thesis and seek confirmation that the holding of the examination by virtual means has had no substantive bearing on the examination process.</p> <p>iii. Seek confirmation that the holding of the examination by virtual means has had no substantive bearing on the examination process from the other participants (NEIC; Examiners; Supervisor)</p> <p>iv. If any concerns expressed explain that you have taken a record and will now report to the College DPGR and your PGR Support contact, who will consider how to proceed.</p>		Y
<p>If all participants satisfied that the holding of the examination by virtual means has had no substantive bearing on the examination process:</p> <p>i. Check if the Board feels it is appropriate to offer the candidate an opportunity to return to the viva location after the Board's private discussion to receive preliminary feedback;</p> <p>ii. If the Board feels it is appropriate: offer the candidate an opportunity to return to the viva location after the Board's private discussion to receive preliminary feedback, and explain to candidate how you will notify them (and supervisor, where observing) when they should return;</p> <p>iii. If the Board does not feel it is appropriate: remind candidate how the outcome will be communicated to them</p>		Y
Part Three: Following the departure of the candidate (and supervisor, where observing):		
Confirm that no-one is present other than the examiners and the NEIC		Y
Discuss next steps if any concerns were expressed about holding the viva by virtual means, e.g. agreeing with examiners the extent to which it is appropriate for them to discuss their initial recommendations at this point		Y
Where appropriate, initial consideration of whether or not the thesis is the work of the candidate and whether it meets the assessment criteria for the award in question (see 7.2 'Purpose of the Viva').	Y	

If candidate is to return: Ask examiners to consider whether only general feedback will be given to the candidate on their return or whether they choose to inform the candidate of their preliminary recommendation.		Y
Remind examiners of the need to provide feedback on conducting a virtual viva and of the timescale for completing their report		Y
Where relevant, invite candidate (and supervisor, where observing) back, ensuring that the supervisor is not present without the candidate		Y
Part Four: return of the candidate (and supervisor, where observing) (optional):		
Confirm that the candidate (and supervisor, where observing) are now back in attendance		Y
If examiners are informing the candidate of their preliminary recommendation: <u>Disclaimer</u> - to explain that these are only preliminary recommendations, in accordance with the following principle: The Board of Examiners may if they choose, inform the candidate of their preliminary recommendations. However, in doing so it must be made absolutely clear to all concerned that this may not be the final recommendation that the Board of Examiners makes in its written report. Furthermore, this will be a recommendation only, which the Board of Examiners may be asked to amend by either the Pro-Vice-Chancellor & Executive Dean of College or the Dean of the Faculty. Candidates should be aware that until they receive formal confirmation of the outcome from the Postgraduate Administration Office any information received is only provisional		Y
Preliminary notification and explanation of recommendations (if this is felt to be appropriate) and of the nature of the amendments likely to be required in order for the thesis to meet the criteria for the award in question.	Y	
In ending the viva ensure that the supervisor where observing is not present after the departure of the candidate.		Y