

## ASSESSMENT, PROGRESSION AND AWARDING: TAUGHT PROGRAMMES HANDBOOK

### Annex L – Viva Voce Process

#### 1 General Principles

- 1.1 The Viva Voce Process exists within the marking process in order to address potential academic conduct concerns where evidence of an offence is not always obtainable, and to provide markers with a means by which they can satisfy themselves that the student can demonstrate knowledge of the assessment and topic in question to be assured of the legitimacy of the assessment. To avoid adding undue delay to the marking process, the viva **should** be held as soon as possible. Where there is evidence of an academic conduct offence the matter can be referred to the Academic Conduct Procedures.
- 1.2 The process provides:
- Assurance to students that we have the means to explore perceived academic conduct offences within assessments where there is insufficient evidence to immediately refer the assessment into the Academic Conduct Procedure to ensure the integrity of assessments.
  - A deterrent to students who may consider engaging in academic conduct offences.
  - An additional tool for staff marking assessments to explore perceived academic conduct offences within assessments where there is insufficient evidence to immediately refer the assessment into the Academic Conduct Procedures.

#### 2 Criteria

- 2.1 The viva process **should** be implemented if a member of the marking team finds one or more of the following concerns within an assessment:
- The content of the assessment falls outside of the topics taught on the module or provided within the recommended reading materials for the module.
  - There is evidence in the assessment of third-party involvement (such as track change comments in the assessment or document metadata).
  - The student has responded to an entirely different title without explanation.
  - The language and/or syntax used in the assessment are incoherent or monotonous and/or the sophistication of the language and/or syntax are inconsistent with the contents of the assessment.

- e) The language and/or syntax are at a level of sophistication beyond that anticipated of a student working at this stage of study or language level.
- f) The language and syntax used in certain sections of the assessment response are demonstrably different from that in other sections of their assessment or their previous assessments.
- g) The sources used are not on the reading list for the module and are a significantly unusual resource for the student to have obtained and/or cited.
- h) Sources referenced do not match the content of the assessment.
- i) Sources referenced are not real.
- j) The methods used in the assessment are substantially different from those taught on the module.
- k) The assessment contains methods and/or data that fall under the university's research ethics approval policy. The student has failed to obtain research ethics approval for this assessment.
- l) The anticipated mark for the assessment falls outside that expected for anyone within the cohort and/or is excessively high for a student working at that stage of study or language level.
- m) The student has failed to complete the honour pledge and/or academic honesty declarations for the assessment in question.
- n) The assessment timeframe is too short in which to have written the assessment.

### **3 Viva Voce**

- 3.1 Through the course of the viva conversation a student will be asked to demonstrate their knowledge of the work and the topic in question, and relevant sources. If they demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of the information to assure the viva panel of the legitimacy of their assessment, then the assessment will be returned to the standard marking process with no further action taken.
- 3.2 If through the viva a student fails to assure the viva panel of the veracity/authenticity of their assessment, then the team may decide to refer the case to the departmental Academic Conduct Officer (ACO) for investigation.
- 3.3 A student cannot prevent this from happening by failing to appear at their viva.
- 3.4 The viva panel will produce a report of the viva to act as evidence for the Academic Conduct investigation. This report will also accompany the moderation material for

consideration by External Examiners at the Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee (APAC).

- 3.5 The viva forms part of the marking process, and as such, it is possible for a student to submit a formal appeal in relation to any viva held with them following the relevant APAC if they felt they had grounds to do so. If, however, a viva is held and a case is subsequently referred to the Academic Conduct process, the student **must** await the outcome of the Academic Conduct investigation and follow the appeals process within Chapter 12 Academic Conduct and Practice of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.

## 4 Process

### 4.1 Determining that a viva should be held

- a) Any member of the marking or moderation team can raise concerns, and, with agreement of the module convenor, arrange for a viva to be held.
- b) The criteria for the selection of students for vivas, as outlined above **must** be consistently applied.
- c) Markers may wish to discuss their concerns with their Department Academic Conduct Officer who would be able to advise if a viva is required or if the concerns can be referred directly into the academic conduct process.
- d) Where it is agreed that a viva should be held (applying the above criteria) then the viva meeting **should** be arranged.
- e) A mark **should not** be applied to the work until the outcome of the viva and any subsequent Academic Conduct Investigation has been completed. The work **should not** be annotated with any feedback.

### 4.2 Notification of student

- a) Students **should** be notified that the marking team would like to hold a viva. Template text for this notification is provided in Appendix A – Template Invitation to Viva This email **should** go out from the relevant Professional Services Staff designated within the College Operations/Education Support team. In the invitation to the viva, the student **must** be notified of the assessment about which concerns have been raised; which of the criteria listed in section 2 above has been raised about their assessment, who will be conducting the viva and their reason for their attendance and the date and time of their viva.

- b) The Viva **should** take place as soon as possible but the student **must** have at least five working days' notice. The meeting can be conducted in-person or virtually, as appropriate.
- c) This **should** be reported to the Hub, so that they can identify the student and make a note that a viva will be taking place.

#### 4.3 The viva meeting

- a) The meeting **should** be attended by two members of staff including at least one member of the marking team.
- b) The meeting **should** not exceed 30 minutes.
- c) The focus of attention in the viva discussion will be the areas of study covered within the relevant examination or assessment.
- d) Questions **should** test students' knowledge and understanding of the topic and the work produced.
- e) Vivas **should** normally follow a question and answer format and **should** pertain to the criteria identified from 2.1 a-n above). The questions can address any aspect of the assessment, and there is no minimum or maximum number of questions that might be asked. The nature and quantity of the questions **should** be sufficient to enable the viva panel to determine with the assessment is the work of the candidate.
- f) The viva **should** be conducted in English, but if relevant (i.e. for certain language modules) some questions may be posed in the language being assessed by the assessment in question so as to appropriately ascertain the student's language abilities.
- g) The student **should** not be asked to undertake a new assessment or test of their knowledge.
- h) No recording will be made of the meeting, however (as per 3.4 above) a report of the meeting **must** be produced and agreed by both academic members of staff present.

#### 4.4 Outcome

- a) Where the marker has no further concerns about the assessment it should be returned to the marking process. As anonymous marking will no longer be possible the marking principles relating to non-anonymous marking found in Chapter 5 of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding; Taught Programmes Handbook must be applied.
- b) Where the marker still has concerns, the viva panel should refer the case to academic conduct process as outlined within the Chapter 12 Academic Conduct and Practice

within the Assessment, Progression and Awarding; Taught Programmes Handbook. The report of the viva meeting will be provided in support of the referral.

- c) In line with the process for managing academic conduct investigations, the student **will** be notified that they are being investigated. The record of the meeting will be shared with the student as part of the Academic Conduct Investigation.
- d) The report of the viva meeting **should** be kept and the recommendation from the viva **must** be submitted to the APAC along with any other moderation material.