

ASSESSMENT, PROGRESSION AND AWARDING: TAUGHT PROGRAMMES HANDBOOK

Chapter 5 - Annex 2: Viva Voce Process

1 General Principles

- 1.1 The Viva Voce Process is part of the marking process and is intended to address potential academic conduct concerns where evidence of an offence is not always obtainable. It also provides markers with an opportunity to determine whether a student can demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the assessment and subject matter to support the authenticity and legitimacy of the submitted work. To avoid adding undue delay to the marking process, the viva voce **should** be held as soon as possible. In contrast, where there is evidence of an academic conduct offence the matter can be referred to the academic conduct process (see the [Academic Conduct and Practice Handbook](#) for more information).
- 1.2 The process provides:
- a) 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 process to ensure the integrity of assessments.
 - b) A deterrent to students who may consider engaging in academic conduct offences.
 - c) 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 process.

2 Criteria

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

- d) The language and/or syntax used in the assessment is incoherent or monotonous and/or the sophistication of the language and/or syntax is inconsistent with the contents of the assessment.
- e) The language and/or syntax is 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.
- l) The student has failed to obtain research ethics approval for this assessment.
- m) 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.
- n) The student has failed to complete the honour pledge and/or academic honesty declarations for the assessment in question.
- o) The assessment timeframe is too short in which to have written the assessment.

3 Viva Voce

- 3.1 Through the course of the viva voce 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 voce 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 voce a student fails to assure the viva voce 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 voce.
- 3.4 The viva voce panel will produce a report of the viva voce 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 voce 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 voce held with them following the relevant APAC if they felt they had grounds to do so. If, however, a viva voce 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 the [Academic Conduct and Practice Handbook](#).

4 Process

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

4.2 Notification to students

- a) Students **should** be notified that the marking team would like to hold a viva voce by email. This email **should** go out from the relevant professional services staff designated

within the Faculty Operations/Education Support team. In the invitation to the viva voce, the student **must** be notified of the assessment about which concerns have been raised including:

- 4.2.a.1. which of the criteria listed in section 2 above has been raised about their assessment,
 - 4.2.a.2. who will be conducting the viva voce,
 - 4.2.a.3. the reason for their attendance, and
 - 4.2.a.4. the date and time of their viva voce.
- b) The viva voce **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) The requirement of the viva voce **should** be reported to the Hub, so that they can identify the student and make a note that a viva voce will be taking place.

4.3 The viva voce 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 voce 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) The viva voce **should** normally follow a question and answer format and **should** pertain to the criteria identified from 2.1 a-o 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 voce panel to determine whether the assessment is the work of the candidate.
- f) The viva voce **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 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 - Marking](#) of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding Handbook **must** be applied.
- b) Where the marker still has concerns, the viva voce panel **should** refer the case to the academic conduct process. The report of the viva voce 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 voce meeting **should** be kept and the recommendation from the viva voce **must** be submitted to the APAC along with any other moderation material.