

Guidance for Best Practice on Conducting Vivas by Electronic Means

Updated May 2021

1. The University believes that viva voce examinations can be effectively conducted face to face or via electronic means.
2. From May 2021 onwards vivas can proceed electronically, can be face to face, or can be a blend of both of these methods of delivery. Permission from the DCO is not required for individual examinations, although the office can be contacted for advice. If a student wishes to postpone their viva rather than have it take place electronically, or if an agreement between all parties regarding the method of delivery cannot be reached please inform the DCO as soon as possible.
3. Face to face vivas must take place in a Covid secure way under current social distancing and health and safety advice.

If choosing an electronic method of delivery, the following guidance applies:

4. The software used to complete the viva is at the discretion of those involved although we suggest internal examiners obtain written agreement (email) that the method chosen is acceptable to all parties. Only visual electronic means are acceptable. It is not our expectation that vivas will be recorded, however if the student wishes for this to happen, and all parties are in agreement, it may occur.
5. Every effort must be made to ensure that the viva runs smoothly and without interruption, as closely as possible to a face to face meeting. All participants should be asked to ensure there are no interruptions at their venue.
6. At the start of the viva the internal examiner should make it clear that any participants experiencing technical difficulties should raise these as soon as possible. The internal examiner has the right to halt the examination and reconvene in the event of technical failures.
7. Examiners should ask the student at the end of the viva if they are satisfied that they have been able to communicate all their points clearly, and that the electronic viva was an effective means by which to conduct the viva. Examiners will be asked to make a statement regarding this in the final examination report form. Note: If a student later appeals an examination outcome on the grounds that the means of communication was inadequate, and this was not previously disclosed, an appeal is unlikely to be upheld.
8. Examiners should be sensitive to the fact the viva can be a stressful event and the outcome can be disappointing to students. It would be sensible for candidates to have someone available locally to support them if they are at a remote venue.