



Guidance for students on viva-voce examination

Scope

All full and part-time research students including those registered on a validated research degree programme preparing for examination and academic and administrative staff who have a responsibility for managing research degree provision. Additionally, all internal and external examiners with a responsibility for examining research degree students.

To be read in conjunction with [the University's Quality Manual](#)

Information for research candidates before the viva examination

Candidates should be familiar with the requirements of the degree for which they have submitted as defined by the [Framework for Higher Education](#) and outlined in the Guide for Research Students provided by Academic Services. Candidates should also be familiar with the purpose of the viva voce/oral examination, the role of the examiners and the role of the Chairperson as outlined in the University's Quality Manual.

Examiners

- The examiners have been appointed in accordance with the University's policies and processes contained within the Quality Manual. The examiners have been given a copy of the University's regulations to ensure that all parties have had the same information on rules, regulations and procedure.
- Only the examiners make the assessment.

Supervisor(s)

- The supervisor(s) may be in attendance (if they are) to provide input of a factual nature only when invited.

Chairperson

- The role of the Chairperson is to ensure that the assessment processes are operated rigorously, fairly, reliably and consistently. At the start of the viva examination the Chairperson will ask if the candidate has read the relevant information contained within the University's Quality Manual.
- The Chairperson has a neutral role in the assessment process and takes no part in the actual assessment of the research. He/she should not be called upon for specialist discipline knowledge, but for knowledge of regulations, procedures, policy and practice as defined within the University's Quality Manual.
- All Chairpersons have attended a briefing session before they can act as Chairpersons of an examination and have a checklist to follow to ensure that all candidates receive the same information and undergo the same process.

Process

- The examination will be led by the examiners who may turn to the Chairperson and Supervisor(s) for factual advice; the Chairperson for regulations, procedure, policy and practice, the Supervisor on the particular research work and study experience.
- The format of the exam: there will probably be discussion on the research and the candidate (and possibly the supervisor) will then be asked to leave the room whilst the examiners make their decision, and that the candidate (and supervisor) will then be asked back to hear the outcome.

Reports and Formal Communication of Results

- The Examiners will produce a written report of the outcome of the examination and they may make notes during the examination. They are also invited to make general comments about the University's research study provision in a separate report.
- The Chairperson will be making a record of the process by ticking the checklist and may note down comments on the process as well. These notes will not contain academic judgement.
- Both the checklist and examiners' assessment report will be made available to the candidate, examiners, supervisor(s) and Senior Tutor/Director of Research after the examination. They will be read by Academic Services and any comments or items of good or bad practice will be brought to the attention of the Chairperson of the Doctoral College Board of Studies for him/her to take action or refer them for dissemination as appropriate. The original will be kept in the candidate's School/Departmental file.
- A letter will be sent to the candidate giving formal notification of the outcome of the examination and giving information on what to do next (letter of award with details of graduation, information about minor amendments or resubmission, or - very seldom - failure and appeal procedures)
- The University has an equal opportunities policy for students and only matters relating to the research study will be considered in the assessment.