



Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Response

Principles and procedure for conducting Viva Voce examinations remotely and online

****Please note that this document replaces QA7 Appendix 3 until further notice****

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1 Principles

1. In order to protect the health of our staff, students and wider academic community the University will assume that if a viva-voce examination cannot be postponed it will be conducted remotely, online using video calling.
2. In order to maintain high academic standards, the assessment must remain fair and robust. Therefore, approval is still required for a remote viva and certain protocols must be observed.
3. Although the viva will take place under different conditions the expectations for the conduct of the examination including examiner input and the behaviour of all participants is the same. In this document, 'development team' is intended to refer to both the academic and School/faculty/department staff who will help develop and/or support the apprenticeship (i.e. Assistant Registrars, Placement teams, Student Experience Officers etc.).

2 Process

4. The lead supervisor and student are to discuss whether or not the viva can be postponed until any relevant travel restrictions are lifted.
5. If a postponement is not possible the following steps apply:
 - 1) Gain the consent of all participants for the examination to take place remotely using online video calling.

- 2) At the same time all participants must confirm that they have access to the following:
 - a. A reliable internet connection with sufficient speed to facilitate video calling from multiple locations.
 - b. Reliable and suitable hardware (web-cam, PC/laptop, headphones).
 - c. The appropriate software (the default being MS Teams).
 - d. A private and quiet space for the duration of the examination where they will not be interrupted.
 - e. A test call with all participants 48 hours before the exam is due to take place.
 - 3) Submit the request to the Board of Studies (Doctoral) for approval (proforma below).
6. The Board of Studies (Doctoral) should be informed at the time of the appointment of the Board of Examiners of the intention to conduct the examination remotely. But in order to facilitate the rapid re-organisation of campus-based examinations that will now need to be conducted remotely, all requests for permission to hold a video conference viva voce examination will be considered via Chair's Action (occurs weekly).
7. Once permission is granted, the internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that all participants involved in the examination are informed of the arrangements. This includes setting a time which means that no participant is expected to be present at an unreasonable hour; reasonable hours normally being 08:00 – 19:00 but will depend on individual circumstances.

Detailed instructions: Protocols for a remote viva voce examination

These must be followed in order to ensure a fair and robust examination.

Before the examination day

- All participants must provide a contact telephone number at least 3 days before the examination day
- All participants must have a test call 48 hours before the examination is due to take place, preferably at the scheduled time. This is not only to ensure the technology works but that each location is suitable. It is also an opportunity for the Internal Examiner to be clear about how the examination will be conducted, including protocols for a drop in connection or abandoning the examination due to technical problems.
- The candidate must inform the Board of Examiners of any materials they intend to have with them.

On the day

Before the examination starts

- Each party must introduce themselves and their role.

- If the candidate has notified the Board of any materials they want to have present then these must now been shown and remain visible throughout.
- The internal examiner will confirm the process for the examination including the protocol for any drop in connection and any technical issues which results in the examination being abandoned (see below).

During the examination

- All parties must remain visible throughout.
- The examination will follow the normal format for a viva-voce examination.
- The examination will not be recorded.

End of the examination

- All participants will be asked to confirm that the remote viva using video calling has had no substantive bearing on the examination process.

After the examination

- Examiners will be invited to comment on the conduct of the viva voce examination using the standard examiner's report form and should refer explicitly to the use of video conferencing.

In the event of a technical failure

- If the connection drops for one or all participants then all reasonable attempts should be made to re-establish the connection.
- If, after a reasonable number of attempts and time, it isn't possible to establish a stable connection for all participants, the examination must be abandoned and rescheduled if necessary.
- A reasonable period to wait will be longer if the candidate remains visible to at least one examiner at all times. If the candidate is no longer visible, then a reasonable time to wait would be much shorter to ensure the examination is still robust.
- In such an event the Internal Examiner will be responsible for conferring with other participants (by phone if necessary) and having the final decision on whether to abandon the attempt.
- If sufficient discussion has taken place, it may be possible to recommend an outcome.
- It is not permissible for the examination to be conducted by audio only or by telephone.