



PhD by Research oral examinations by video link

Purpose of Guidance

Guidance for holding a postgraduate research oral (viva voce) examination remotely by video link. See Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees

Scope: Guidance is not Mandatory

Internal examiners for postgraduate research thesis assessment. Academic and support staff involved in postgraduate research degree examinations and administration. Postgraduate research students.

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Document control

Dates	Approved: 2005	Starts: 2005	Equality impact assessment: Covered by Assessment Regulations	Amendments: 28.04.15 05.05.16	Next Review: 2019/20
Approving authority	Senatus Researcher Experience Committee (REC)				
Consultation undertaken	Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees review panel, REC				
Section responsible for guidance maintenance & review	Academic Policy Officer with responsibility for postgraduate research, Academic Services				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgr_assessmentregulations.pdf Postgraduate Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study www.drps.ed.ac.uk/				
UK Quality Code	UK Quality Code Research Degrees				
Guidance superseded by this guidance	Previous versions of this guidance				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 4990				
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The normal expectation remains that the oral examination will be held in Edinburgh. If exceptional circumstances make it necessary for an oral examination to be conducted by video link, the following guidelines should be observed.

The authority for any such decision lies with the College committee with responsibility for postgraduate research matters on written application from Schools. In considering applications for the conduct of examinations in this way, College Committees will expect cases to be fully costed. An application to conduct the examination remotely, for example by ISDN link, should be considered only if circumstances make it impossible for the candidate to return to Edinburgh within a reasonable period, or if this is the only means by which the most appropriate external examiner could undertake the examination.

1. The oral should normally be held between two sites only, with the candidate accompanied by one of the examiners. A supervisor may attend, if appropriate, under the normal rules of attendance. Exceptionally, three sites may be used.

2. In any such case, the candidate must be accompanied by an approved person. Approval is granted by Colleges which will define and authorise appropriate third parties to accompany a candidate. If the candidate is abroad, such an approved person might be a British Council representative.

3. The candidate and each of the examiners must signify in writing their agreement to conduct the examination in this way. Prior to making a decision, they should have the benefits and difficulties of the technology explained. For example, the risks of loss of connection during the examination; scheduling the examination at a conventional time across different time zones may be problematic; possible time delay that could slow the flow of discussion; and that the normal forms of cueing and interrupting do not work in the same way as in face to face contact.

4. Appropriate training must be provided to candidates and examiners. If necessary, skilled operators should be present at one or all sites. Examinations should only proceed when candidates have signified in writing that they feel confident about operating the system. The candidate should not feel under any pressure to agree to being examined by video link, but, having given such an assurance, a candidate will not normally be permitted to appeal against an adverse result on grounds connected with their ability to operate the system.

5. The chair of the oral examination should ensure that compatible versions of the chosen media are to be used and adequate telecommunications links are in place.

6. Flexible seating arrangements should be made that encourage direct interaction between the candidate and examiner at the same site, rather than with the camera.

7. If the internal and external examiners are at separate sites, they must take account of their need to consult privately with each other on the conduct of the examination: how the pre-oral discussion should be conducted; the form and sequence of questions; who should take the lead at various stages of the oral; what graphics, and document viewing facilities might be required. Examiners must not be in contact with each other until each has submitted their Part I report.

8. As part of the video link, examiners should discuss and agree privately the content of Part II of the examiners' report. Their final signed report must then be submitted in the usual way.



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9. The candidate's School will be responsible for any costs which are incurred in the provision of special training to the candidate and/or the examiner[s], and in the attendance with the candidate of an approved person. Examiners' costs up to the normal limit will continue to be met from central funds for external examiners. If the examination is to be conducted remotely, the School concerned may be asked to pay only those costs which could be regarded as being beyond the normal limits. If the link is to be used because of the candidate's inability to return to Edinburgh, the school will have the discretion to require the candidate to contribute all or part of the additional costs.

Discretion to make use of video facility for examinations should rest with College Committees.

These notes should be made available to candidates when oral examinations are to be conducted by video link.

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