



PhD by Research oral examinations by video link

Purpose of Policy

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

Scope: Mandatory Policy

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: 2021/22
Approving authority	Senatus Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)				
Consultation undertaken	Doctoral College, APRC				
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Guidance superseded by this guidance	Previous versions of this guidance				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				
Keywords	Viva, PhD oral examination, video-linked viva, video-linked oral				



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Introduction

1. The University regards the physical attendance of all parties at the oral examination as most conducive to effective participation. However, some circumstances make it appropriate to consider conducting the oral examination by video link. Experience has shown that conducting oral examinations with some, or all, participants joining remotely does not reduce the quality or fairness of the examination. When conducting an oral examination with (some or all) participants appearing via video link, the following principles must be observed.

Approval

2. The authority for any decision to conduct an oral examination by video link lies with the College committee with responsibility for postgraduate research matters, based on written application from Schools. Alternatively, where a College explicitly delegates this authority to Schools, the College must keep a record of the decisions taken.
3. The student 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. The student should not feel under any pressure to agree to being examined by video link, but having given such an assurance, a student will not normally be permitted to appeal against an adverse result on grounds connected with their ability to operate the system. Where a student has questions or concerns about the process, they should discuss these with their supervisor.

Criteria

5. An application to conduct an oral examination remotely will be considered where the circumstances make it unreasonable to expect physical attendance by any of the attendees.
6. The oral examination should normally be held between two sites only, with the student accompanied by one of the examiners. A supervisor may attend, if appropriate, under the normal rules of attendance. Exceptionally, more sites may be used.
7. Where the student cannot be accompanied by one of the examiners, the Internal Examiner or Non-Examining Chair (where one is appointed) should check that the student has support available to them (for example from a friend, family member, or supervisor).

Operation of the oral examination

8. 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.
9. Where the student and an examiner are at the same site, flexible seating arrangements should be made that encourage direct interaction between the student and examiner, rather than with the camera.



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10. 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.
11. As part of the video link, examiners should discuss and agree privately (after the student has left the call) the content of Part II of the examiners' report. Their final signed report must then be submitted in the usual way.
12. Recording of any part of a video link oral examination is not permitted.

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