

Conducting vivas online: guide for examiners

PhD/MPhil candidates have the option to have their viva via video conference rather than face-to-face.

MS Teams

It is strongly recommended that the viva is held via MS Teams. It is a [College regulatory requirement](#) that vivas are recorded and with MS Teams we have a secure way of ensuring that the recording is transferred over to the Doctoral School so that it can only be accessed in the case of an appeal. With Zoom, for example, there are security concerns regarding who may have access to the recording.

If you are a non-MS Teams user, you should still be able to access MS teams as a guest via the browser version of MS Teams:

- You will be sent a link to the meeting
- When you click 'join meeting' on your invite, it will open up MS Teams in your browser suggesting you download the app.
- Ignore this and click the button that says 'Join on the Web instead'.

If there are issues with you accessing MS Teams, Skype would be the next best alternative from a recording security view point.

Meeting set up

Once the Supervisor has agreed date with all parties, the Independent Chair will set up the online meeting and will be present on the day to support the smooth running of the viva. They will send you the invite with the link to MS Teams in advance of the viva date.

It is recommended that, where possible, the Independent Chair, the examiners and the doctoral candidate do a practice call a few days in advance of the viva to ensure that everyone involved is able to access the technology satisfactorily.

On the day of the viva

Before the viva

- If you are a Royal Holloway examiner, you can access the meeting directly by clicking on the link in the invitation.
- If you are not from Royal Holloway, the Independent Chair will need to allow you in to the meeting as a guest. A notification will let them know that someone is waiting to join and they should be able to give you permission to join via this notification.
- Just as with face-to-face vivas, you should be given some time before the viva to discuss with your fellow examiner your initial thoughts on the thesis, decide on who will ask which questions etc.
- You should have received a copy of the other examiner's preliminary report from the Doctoral School prior to the viva (they are sent out once the Doctoral School has received each examiner's report).

The Independent Chair should:

- ensure that the participants are able to contact each other by phone if a technical problem should arise
- ask the candidate to show on the camera that they are in a room on their own
- If the candidate has requested that their supervisor is not present at the viva and neither the internal examiner nor the Independent Chair know the candidate, the Independent Chair should ask the candidate to show the examiners some official ID (e.g. passport / driving licence / EU ID)

- card).
- allow plenty of time before the viva is scheduled to begin for everyone to log in and to confirm they are comfortable with operating the technology e.g. make sure that the participants are aware of the Share option on the toolbar, which allows them to share a section of the thesis that they wish to focus on
- ensure that all participants know that if they need a break during the viva, they may take one
- brief everyone at the start about how they will be interacting

During the viva

- Once everyone is ready, the Independent Chair starts the recording and the viva commences.
- The supervisor should have their microphone on mute. The supervisor should not participate in the viva beyond assisting the participants if there are any connection issues.
- If there are connection issues:
 - If any of the connections break down during the viva but can be restored after a short break, the viva should continue
 - If any of the connections break down during the viva but cannot be restored after a short break, participants will be asked to come to an agreement as to whether the viva should be cancelled and a new viva date set (e.g. if this happens near the beginning of the viva, rescheduling would be the most appropriate course of action but this may not be considered necessary if it were to happen near the end of the viva)
- At the end of the viva, before you confer with your co-examiner over the outcome, the Independent Chair stops the recording and both the supervisor and the candidate leave the meeting.