

Guidance on the Role of the Independent Chair

- It is a regulatory requirement that a recording is made of the viva and in some cases the viva also conducted in the presence of an Independent Chair (i.e. for candidates whose entry form has been submitted after 1 January 2021). The examiners will be informed.
- The Independent Chair will normally be a member of Royal Holloway staff and will normally be from the candidate's department (but will not be a member of their supervisory team).
- The role of the Independent Chair is to ensure that the viva is conducted fairly and in accordance with Royal Holloway's regulations and policies.
- If the candidate has opted for a viva via video conference, the Independent Chair will be responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the viva. See '[Conducting vivas online – guide for departments](#)' for further details.
- The Independent Chair will have been sent a copy of the candidate's dissertation for information purposes only. The Chair is not expected to have read the dissertation in detail.
- The Independent Chair will also be sent an 'Independent Chair Report' form, which is to be completed at the end of the viva to indicate that the viva has been conducted satisfactorily.

On the Day of the Viva

The Independent Chair should:

1. attend the pre-oral meeting with the examiners and assist the examiners in setting an agenda for the oral examination
2. introduce the examiners and candidate and outline the procedure for the examination and its key purposes
3. record the viva
4. ensure that all main items on the agenda are addressed and that the candidate is given the opportunity to respond to all questions asked by the examiners
5. ensure that each of the examiners has a proper opportunity to contribute to the examination process
6. ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and in accordance with the University's regulations and policy
7. ensure that the supervisor, if present, only acts as an observer and agrees to maintain confidentiality in respect of the content of the examination
8. ensure that, if the supervisor is present, they are asked to withdraw before the candidate in order to provide the candidate with an opportunity to say anything to the examiners that they would prefer to say without the supervisor being present
9. at the end of the oral examination, ensure that actions required of the candidate and the examiners are clear and understood by all parties
10. ensure that the candidate is asked to withdraw before the examiners begin their final deliberations
11. complete the 'Independent Chair Report' form to indicate that they are satisfied that the viva has been conducted in accordance with the University's regulations and policy. This form will be returned to the Doctoral School (doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk) directly after the viva examination.