

Guidance on Remote or Hybrid Viva Examinations

The following viva formats are permitted by the University:

1. **In-person:** all participants are present in the same room.
2. **Remote:** all participants join online from different locations.
3. **Hybrid:** most participants are present in the same room while *one* person joins remotely. The person joining remotely might be an examiner (most likely the external examiner, particularly if they are located outside the UK) *or* the candidate. In this format, the EPC is *not* permitted to join remotely. Ideally, the candidate should be in the room with the EPC and at least one other examiner and should only join remotely in exceptional personal circumstances *or* because of an adjustment agreed between Disability Inclusion, URDC and the candidate (this should be submitted with the RD12 examination arrangements).

The candidate must not be disadvantaged by the choice of format, which should be agreed by all participants well in advance of the examination. It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to ensure such agreement is reached. The candidate should be consulted in the first instance before agreement is sought with other members of the panel. All participants are encouraged to read the UK Council for Graduate Education's [Conducting Vivas Online: A Guide for Institutions and Candidates](#) if adopting format 2 or 3; however, University regulations on vivas must be adhered to if there is conflicting advice.

No prior permission is required to conduct the viva in any of the permitted formats (in-person, remote, or hybrid). However, the EPC should briefly document the format of the examination in their account of the viva in form RD14.

In all formats, the student must show their student identification card at the start of the viva in order to verify their identity. In format 2 – or format 3 if the student is the person joining remotely – the candidate should be asked by the EPC at the start of the viva to prove that they are alone in the room: this might be done by performing a sweep of the room with their camera. In neither of these formats is the candidate permitted to record the viva. Non-visual remote connection by any participant is disallowed.

One member of the supervisory team may attend the viva with the candidate's permission (granted on form RD15); whatever the format, the usual rules apply to their attendance at the viva. If joining remotely they should mute their connection and be prepared to drop off the call if that will improve the connection. They are not permitted to record the viva.

Prior testing of online platforms is advised if the viva is to take place either remotely or in a hybrid format, however there is no requirement to prove that such advance testing has taken place. The University's recommended online platforms are MS Teams and Cisco Webex. It is advisable that there is

an agreed back-up platform should the first choice fail. Participants joining remotely should be contactable by phone by the EPC. The EPC has authority to abandon the viva if they or any other participant feels that the quality of communication is sufficiently compromised by a poor internet connection or some other problem; in the result, a second viva must be arranged. None of the permitted viva formats in themselves constitute grounds for student appeal.

Please note: a right-to-work check must still be carried out for external examiners joining viva voce examinations remotely.

University Research Degrees Committee

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