

Logistical ‘top tips’ to consider as Chair of a remote or hybrid viva

This information is supplemental to the guidance for Chairs which is available on our [webpages](#).

Chairing a remote or a hybrid viva is not very different from how you would chair a face-to-face viva. However, there are a few things which you may find helpful to pay particular attention to ensure that the candidate has been given every possible opportunity to perform at their best.

To help you conduct a viva which will be either held remotely or as a hybrid viva, a Chair’s template has been developed at appendix 1 with an indicative schedule and proposed participants, which can be adapted as appropriate.

If you do not already have contact details for all parties involved in the viva please request them from nominated co-ordinator. If you are the nominated co-ordinator please liaise with the candidate’s supervisors for this information.

Before the viva

Before the viva, the examiners and supervisors will have submitted their reports on PhD Manager. Once all reports were submitted, the system will have distributed these to the panel before the viva. The Turnitin report will have been made available to all parties on PhD Manager.

The Doctoral College will also send you a brief form to complete to confirm the identity of the External, to enable payment of their fee.

Test run in advance of the viva

Ensuring that everyone can access the proposed platform can be established during the test run. Although this could be undertaken in advance of the pre-viva meeting, it might be helpful to test access ahead of the viva date itself. This will ensure that you, as Chair, are familiar with the platform and that the other parties are also comfortable with its use. The co-ordinator will be responsible for setting up and communicating the test details.

They may also wish to arrange for an area for the candidate to wait before and after the viva, ensuring that it is not within earshot of discussions that will be taking place between the panel.

Considerations for the viva itself

At the outset consider that you may want to allow more time to explain/discuss with all participants how the viva will proceed. It may also be helpful to discuss with the panel how participants might signal if they cannot hear properly at any stage and/or need someone to repeat a question/response.

Explain that you will, as Chair, take time to check in with everyone during the viva and how, at the end of the viva, you will ask each participant whether they were satisfied with how the viva had been conducted (i.e. that the format (remote or hybrid) had not impacted on overall performance and how the viva was conducted).

There should be no recording of vivas and any recording facility should be disabled.

As Chair you should pay particular attention during the viva to any difficulties encountered with the platform and make a note of these as part of your report on the conduct of the viva. If at any point you feel that a participant has not been heard or cannot hear please intervene and check in with everyone to ensure everyone has heard/can hear properly, perhaps repeating questions as needed.

Once the viva is underway, if a connection with a remote attendee is lost and cannot be re-established, but most of the viva is complete, the panel may agree to make a recommendation based on the submitted thesis and the candidate’s performance up to that point OR they may decide to re-convene with the candidate at a later date. If a connection is lost before the majority of the viva is complete, the viva should be re-arranged for another date. Any “additional” remote viva for a candidate must be proposed again to the Doctoral College for approval; this will enable the Doctoral College to keep track of the candidate's progress.

Appendix 1: Indicative schedule for an oral examination held remotely or as a hybrid viva

Time allocation	Event	Participants/procedures
30 mins	Test run with Platform	<p>See below:</p> <p><u>Remote Viva</u> <i>For a remote viva (all parties joining remotely), this test run could be undertaken between the Chair and each party independently in advance of the viva date or undertaken with all participants prior to the pre-viva meeting. If the latter, then the candidate (and attending supervisor if applicable) will be asked to leave the meeting once successful connection has been established.</i></p> <p><u>Hybrid viva</u> <i>For a hybrid viva (only one member joining remotely, usually the External Examiner), this test run should be undertaken in advance between the Chair and that individual.</i></p> <p><i>Care should be taken that the candidate and attending supervisor are asked to wait at suitable distance from the examination room to ensure pre and post viva discussions are not overheard.</i></p>
30 mins	Pre-viva meeting	<p>Chair External Examiner(s) Internal Examiner</p> <p><i>Note: Chair to complete passport verification – this could be done as part of the test run.</i></p>
Two hours (approximately, but can vary)	Main viva	<p>All participants</p> <p><i>If a remote viva, candidate and attending supervisor invited to reconnect and re-join the meeting. Supervisor mutes their microphone.</i></p> <p><i>If a hybrid viva, the candidate and attending supervisor are invited to join the allocated room.</i></p> <p><i>When questioning is completed candidate and supervisor leave the meeting again.</i></p> <p><i>Before the candidate and supervisor leave at the end of the viva, the Chair should ask the candidate, External Examiner and Internal Examiner if the conduct of the viva was satisfactory. This should be noted by the Chair in the exam report together with details of any technical issues that arose during the viva.</i></p>
30 mins	Post viva meeting and paperwork	<p>Chair External Examiner(s) Internal Examiner</p> <p><i>Reminder: The Chair should upload agreed amendments and make sure to report on whether (or not) the conduct of the viva was satisfactory and that details are provided as necessary.</i></p>
30 mins	Panel feedback to candidate	<p>All participants</p> <p><i>If a remote viva, candidate and attending supervisor invited to reconnect via email/text and re-join the meeting If a hybrid viva, candidate and attending supervisor invited re-join the meeting.</i></p> <p><i>Outcome of oral examination is communicated.</i></p>