

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR
THE ARRANGEMENT AND
CONDUCT OF RESEARCH DEGREE
EXAMINATIONS (VIVA) IN
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS**

Document Title	Policy and Procedure for the Arrangement and Conduct of Research Degree Examinations (Viva) in Alternative Formats
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Variations approved for academic Session 2021/22 under the University's 'Framework for Variations' and in response to COVID-19 circumstances	<p><u>Paragraphs 1.2-2.3</u></p> <p>Until 31 July 2022, vivas will be held remotely, either entirely (with all participants attending by electronic means), or in part, with one or more participant(s) attending by electronic means, and one or more participant(s) attending on campus.</p> <p>It is expected that External Examiners will join remotely in all cases, unless attendance in person is expressly requested by the Examiner. Where the candidate attends in person, the Chair should accompany them.</p> <p>The arrangement for the conduct of the viva should be agreed by the Convenor of the Examining Board in consultation with the student and the examiners. Approval from the Chair of ASQC is not required for a viva to take place partly or entirely by electronic means.</p> <p>All travel should be in accordance with UK/Welsh Government guidance in place at the time.</p>
Document Owner	PGR Quality and Operations, Registry
Contact	pgr@cardiff.ac.uk
Parent Regulation	Research Degree Assessment Regulations

Related Documents	Policy and Procedure for the Conduct of Research Degree Examinations
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Alignment with the Expectations and Core practices of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education

This policy and procedure aligns with the following relevant Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

Expectations for standards	Expectations for quality
	Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
Core practices for standards	Core practices for quality
The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.
	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
Common practices for standards	Common practices for quality
The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.	The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.

	<p>The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.</p>
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Policy and Procedure for the Arrangement and Conduct of Research Degree Examinations (Viva) in Alternative Formats

Policy

1. General Statements

- 1.1 The oral examination (viva) should take place at Cardiff University on a face-to-face basis, with the candidate and all members of the Examining Board present in the same room at the same time. This will help ensure the integrity of the examination and provide the best possible experience for all participants.
- 1.2 In exceptional circumstances, the Convenor of the Examining Board may request that the viva is held in a location away from the University or via electronic media (e.g. video-conferencing facilities or Skype).¹
- 1.3 Such circumstances may include, for example:
 - .1 the inability of the candidate or examiner to travel to the UK or a University building, or to attend within a reasonable timeframe (e.g. due to ill health or visa restrictions);
 - .2 where agreed face-to-face arrangements have had to be abandoned due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. severe weather or the incapacity of a member of the Examining Board).
- 1.4 Approval will only be given where it is not otherwise possible to proceed with the viva, or where there will be an unacceptable delay in the viva being held.
- 1.5 Where agreed face-to-face arrangements have had to be abandoned and the possibility of holding a viva by electronic media is raised as a potential solution, the Convenor should first discuss with the candidate the option to reschedule the examination (since a face-to-face viva is the preferred option).
- 1.6 Approval will not be given for the viva to be conducted via telephone.
- 1.7 Use of electronic media at more than two sites should be avoided unless there are compelling grounds to justify the arrangement.

¹ Until 31 July 2022, vivas will be held remotely, either entirely (with all participants attending by electronic means), or in part, with one or more participant(s) attending by electronic means, and one or more participant(s) attending in person. It is expected that External Examiners will join remotely in all cases, unless attendance in person is expressly requested by the Examiner. Where the candidate attends in person, the Chair should accompany them. The arrangement for the conduct of the viva should be agreed by the Convenor of the Examining Board in consultation with the student and the examiners. Approval from the Chair of ASQC is not required for a viva to take place partly or entirely by electronic means. All travel should be in accordance with UK/Welsh Government guidance in place at the time.

Procedure for Holding a Viva in a Location Away for Cardiff University or by Electronic Media

2. Application²

2.1 The Convenor should submit an application to the Registry for consideration by the Chair of ASQC (or their nominee).

2.2 Each application must include written confirmation:

- .1 from the candidate and all members of the Examining Board that they agree to the alternative arrangements;
- .2 that sufficient time is allotted for the viva (taking into account any time difference);
- .3 that the viva will be held in a room (or rooms) suitable for examinations: this is particularly important where sensitive data or subjects are to be discussed.

2.3 In the case of requests to hold the viva by electronic media, the application must also include written confirmation that:

- .1 additional time has been arranged before the start of the viva to allow the participants to familiarise themselves with the medium and how they will conduct the examination;
- .2 suitable electronic media will be used and that technical support will be available throughout the examination.

3. Conduct of the Examination

3.1 The viva will be conducted in accordance with the Policy and Procedure for the Conduct of Research Degree Examinations and the additional provisions outlined in this policy and procedure.

3.2 If the candidate is attending from an alternative location and is not personally known to the Examining Board, a member of staff (such as the supervisor) must be available at the start of the viva to confirm their identity.

3.3 In addition, the candidate must be able to demonstrate that they are alone (with the exception of their supervisor, if present in the same location) and that they will not be assisted in the viva.

3.4 Audio and visual quality must be sufficient to enable the Examining Board to assure themselves of the candidate's identity and to allow uninterrupted discussion.

² Until 31 July 2022, an application will not be required to hold a viva with some or all participants joining remotely.

- 3.5 Where an electronic medium is used, care should be taken to ensure that it is properly suspended at the appropriate time to enable the Examiners to deliberate, and that the candidate is unable to hear the Examiners' discussions.
- 3.6 A contingency plan should be agreed with all participants prior to the viva to account for any electronic difficulties or other unforeseen interruptions. This should include exchanging telephone numbers and ensuring that all participants have access to a telephone, so that alternative arrangements can be made to enable the viva to continue promptly where possible.