

## **RIS REMOTE VIVAS PROCESS**

### **Outline**

After Declaration of Intention to Submit is made and examiners approved

RIS staff contact the examiners to begin the viva arrangements. A number of new confirmations related to remote format are conducted.

Tentative viva date agreed with examiners pending thesis submission.

### At submission

Student submits PDF version of thesis to [PGRThesisSubmission@tees.ac.uk](mailto:PGRThesisSubmission@tees.ac.uk)

RIS staff forward the thesis to the examiners and confirm the viva date and arrangements previously tentatively agreed

For a viva entirely online, a Zoom meeting will be created for the date/time agreed and information about joining the online meeting sent to all participants as part of the confirmation.

### Viva conduct

Entirely online vivas will be co-ordinated by a member of RIS staff in the viva meeting space. Partly remote vivas will be chaired by the internal examiner unless both examiners are external, in which case a member of staff must host the viva, accompanying the student and liaising with the examiners.

## Details to process and procedures

Exemptions to standard examination regulations will be put in place as follows:

- Independent non-Examining Chairs will not be used: Vivas will be chaired by the internal examiner regardless of whether they are partly or fully remote. In cases with two external examiners, a stand-in viva co-ordinator will be used and this role may be taken by the member of RIS staff co-ordinating the viva as well as by an academic.
- For vivas conducted entirely online, the requirement for the student to be accompanied at all times during examination will be suspended in favour of the internal examiner and/or School/RIS staff confirming the identity of the student prior to the viva commencing and the requirement that the student must be visible to the examiners throughout the examination.

### After Declaration of Intention to Submit is made and examiners approved

RIS staff contact the examiners to begin the viva arrangements. The forms and guidance for examiners are sent at this point. Specific new guidance is sent for the remote viva, depending on whether this is for the external examiner only being remote or for a viva entirely online. External examiners will be asked to confirm that:

- They are happy to proceed with the proposed remote arrangements
- They have the appropriate facility to undertake the viva remotely: suitably audio and video enabled device
- They will be sent a PDF only with the caveat that if they need a hard copy, they can print one out for themselves and claim a print expense as part of their overall fee claim, in lieu of travel costs. This printing expense will be confirmed with them in advance.
- In the case of an entirely online viva *the internal examiner* will also be asked to confirm that they have the appropriate facility to do the examination remotely.

Students will be asked to confirm that:

- They are happy to proceed with the proposed remote arrangements
- They have the appropriate facility to undertake the viva remotely: suitably audio and video enabled device if the viva is to be held entirely online. In this case, that they must have sufficient video facility (PC/tablet camera etc) to be visible to the examiners throughout the viva
- They will need to be prepared to prove their identity to the internal examiner/other staff prior to the viva commencing
- For international students abroad when undertaking the remote viva, they will need to confirm that their network access is sufficiently reliable and fast to support video/voice calling simultaneously for the duration of a normal viva

The viva date will be tentatively scheduled for a date after the thesis is submitted. This date should be agreed in consultation with both examiners allowing them to decide how long they will need to read and assess the thesis prior to the examination.

If an external examiner or a student does not want to proceed with a remote viva, then information will be forwarded to them about what to expect in terms of resumption of scheduling of standard format vivas, assuming this is available to RIS staff at the time. AD R&I in appropriate School will be notified in such cases.

### At submission

Student submits PDF version of thesis to [PRABSecretary@tees.ac.uk](mailto:PRABSecretary@tees.ac.uk) copying in [PGRThesisSubmission@tees.ac.uk](mailto:PGRThesisSubmission@tees.ac.uk)

After confirming that submitted thesis is valid, RIS staff forward the thesis to the examiners and confirm the viva date and arrangements previously tentatively agreed.

The date and time of the viva will be confirmed formally via email with attachments containing the details for the conduct of the remote viva. This will be sent to the examiners; and another version to the student and Director of Studies. The start time for the examiners is always at least 30-60 minutes earlier than the viva start time for the student, to allow for the pre-viva meeting.

In cases where the viva is entirely online, RIS staff will first create a Zoom meeting for the date/time agreed and send the information about joining the online meeting to all participants. Start times for examiners and students differ as above.

Internal examiners will chair/co-ordinate a viva with remote external but student and internal examiner in person. A member of RIS staff will be designated to co-ordinate an entirely remote viva via the online meeting space in order to resolve any problems and to act as the “stand-in chair” where there is no internal examiner. The appropriate viva paperwork will be forwarded to the internal examiner once the date is confirmed so that it can be completed following the viva. This copy will then be returned to RIS and the external examiner’s approval of the form obtained, either by fill-and-sign PDF or by email attachment in the event that the examiner does not have the facility to fill-sign PDFs.

In all cases, the external examiner will be asked to forward a copy of the questions that they will be asking during the viva to the internal examiner in case of audio problems during the viva. These can also be agreed remotely during the pre-viva meeting, but there must also be a document copy held by the internal. In cases where both examiners are remote from each other and the student, both examiners should have a copy of each other’s questions in hard copy.

### Viva conduct

A standard pre-viva meeting of 30 minutes to an hour should be held prior to the student joining the meeting, whether in person or online. This also allows for the

examiners to ensure that the meeting audio/video is working properly and they can navigate the interface. Guidance will be provided.

The viva should otherwise proceed as normal, with questions and answers. Guidance will be provided for those vivas held entirely online for how to ensure that audio/responses are clear and that question-answer format is maintained to allow for the examination to be done properly.

At the close of an entirely online viva, if possible and as agreed in the pre-viva meeting, the student should be informed orally of the outcome and what the likely amendments/revisions will be at the close of the meeting, prior to logging off. The only exception will be in cases where the viva performance was marginal. In such cases, it is possible to defer informing the candidate immediately and passing the decision onto the RIS co-ordinator to relay to the student once made. This avoids having a student stay online if a decision is not forthcoming quickly.

Examiners should indicate clearly in their Preliminary Assessment paperwork whether or not they think the thesis is likely to be passed or whether the viva may be the deciding factor. If the latter, then it may be necessary defer informing the student until appropriate post-viva consultation between the examiners has taken place online.