



## Procedures for the Operation of a Virtual/Remote *Viva Voce* Examination

### Introduction

1. Normally the *viva voce* examination for doctoral candidates and other research degree candidates, where applicable, will take place at a Trinity College Dublin campus with all parties – student, examiners, Chair and, where appropriate, the student's supervisor(s) present. However, under exceptional circumstances, including the current Covid-19 pandemic, a *viva voce* may be conducted virtually.
2. In normal circumstances, this would involve one party (typically the external examiner) not being physically present at the *viva* but on occasion (in particular during the current pandemic) other or all parties might attend remotely.
3. During the current pandemic, **if the *viva voce* is conducted with two members in the same physical location it is necessary that Trinity College/HSE guidelines be followed to ensure the health and safety of all parties.**
4. All *viva voce* exams, whether virtual or otherwise, must be conducted in accordance with University regulations, policies and procedures.

### Permission to Conduct a Virtual *Viva Voce*

5. In all circumstances permission to conduct a virtual *viva voce* should be sought and obtained from the Dean of Graduate Studies.
6. Permission will not be granted unless all relevant parties – the student, the Chair and the two examiners – agree, in writing, to support the decision to conduct the *viva* on a virtual basis. If all parties do not agree, the *viva voce* must be delayed. The record of written permission from all parties should be held at School level.
7. The candidate may withdraw her or his consent to have her or his work examined through a virtual *viva* at any stage up to and including the first hour of the *viva voce* exam, nor should examiners draw any negative inferences from her or him having done so. In such circumstances, the *viva voce* must be delayed until it is possible for it to be organised on a fully 'in person' basis.
8. Use of a virtual *viva voce* cannot be used as grounds, by the student, for appealing the result of this examination. In assessing whether the student supports the decision to conduct the *viva* on a virtual basis, this fact must be brought to the student's attention.

### The Operation of a Virtual *Viva Voce*

9. Internal and external examiners must submit their preliminary reports to [gsothese@tcd.ie](mailto:gsothese@tcd.ie) in good time – one week before the *viva voce* exam.

10. Prior to the *viva* commencing, the Chair, internal examiner and external examiner should have a virtual meeting to discuss their approach to the *viva*.
11. It is essential that the virtual *viva voce* is conducted using a reliable online platform. Zoom or Microsoft Teams are the two recommended online platforms to be used. In particular, no *viva* is to be conducted using audio or phone.
12. In each location, measures should be taken such that appropriate conditions are in place ensuring minimal disruption, security and integrity of the examination.
13. All parties should be able to see one another at all times during the *viva voce* examination.
14. A virtual private network (VPN) may be required where the intellectual property of the thesis needs to be protected.
15. If the student is required to make a presentation, this may be facilitated through screen sharing or distributing the presentation to members of the examining committee through the chair.
16. The *viva voce* must not be recorded.
17. In assessing the appropriate time at which to conduct the *viva*, the significance of the different time zones in which parties may be resident must be considered. In particular, it is necessary to have regard (in this context) to the need to ensure that a student is not disadvantaged
18. A test must be conducted prior to the commencement of the *viva voce* to ensure that the relevant technology is working properly
19. Normally, if communication is broken during the *viva voce* and a connection cannot be re-established, the examination must be terminated and re-scheduled. However, where the examiners agree that a truncated *viva voce* provides the basis for a positive recommendation (pass as it stands, or pass subject to minor corrections), this recommendation may be made without the *viva* being rescheduled.
20. Any re-scheduled examination should normally take place within one month of the original *viva voce*. Where it will take longer than this, the delay should be communicated to the candidate and the examiners, and permission for the delayed examination must be sought from the Dean of Graduate Studies.
21. Following the *viva voce*, the candidate must leave the virtual meeting to allow the examiners to discuss a recommendation.

22. Once a recommendation is agreed, the candidate is invited to re-join the meeting to be advised of the outcome of the examination.
23. After the candidate is informed of the outcome and following any further discussion with the examiners, s/he should leave the meeting. The examiners and chair should remain in the meeting in order to agree the list of changes or revisions that might be required from the candidate.
24. The examiners' report must include a statement that the viva voce was conducted virtually.