

# Procedures for the Operation of an Online *Viva voce* Examination of a Research Thesis or Dissertation

## Introduction

1. Through these procedures, Trinity aims to provide a high amount of flexibility to Schools in the operation of *viva voce* examinations for research students.
2. All *viva voce* examinations, whether in-person or online, must be conducted in accordance with University regulations, policies, and procedures.
3. Although in-person *viva voce* examinations with all parties physically co-present remain the standard form of examination, the options of an online combination of in-person and on-line participation can be considered, should one of these formats be deemed desirable by the Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate (DTLP) following consultation with the examiners, the supervisor and the student.
4. 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.

## Permission to Conduct a *Viva voce* Online

5. The Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate manages the process of determining the preferred format for a *viva voce* examination in respect of each student, taking account of the preferences of all those involved, the availability of relevant specialist expertise and the feasibility of travel for external examiners.
6. Responsibility for granting permission to conduct any element of the *viva voce* online rests with the Dean of Graduate Studies.
7. At the invitation of the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Studies Committee may, on an annual basis, approve the delegation of authority with respect to local decisions to the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) within each School.
8. Permission to conduct the *viva voce* online requires the written agreement of all relevant parties (the student, the Chair and the two examiners) . If all parties do not agree, the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) can refer the matter to the Dean of Graduate Studies for a decision. The record of written permission from all parties should be held at School level.
9. For technical reasons or for reasons ill-health, the student or any member of the panel may need to end the examination process rests with the Chair. Examiners should not draw any negative inferences from the candidate having requested permission to pause the *viva voce* on these grounds. In such circumstances, the examination must be delayed until it is possible for it to proceed in-person or online as appropriate.



10. The format of an online *viva voce* cannot be used by a student as grounds for appeal against the result of the examination. In assessing whether the student supports the decision to conduct the attention.

### The Operation of an Online *Viva voce*

11. As with all *viva voce* examinations, internal and external examiners must submit their preliminary reports to **gsothese@tcd.ie** in good time – one week before the *viva voce* exam. Prior to commencing the examination, the Chair, internal examiner and external examiner should have a meeting (online or in person) to discuss their approach to the *viva voce*.
12. It is essential that the online *viva voce* is conducted using a reliable technical platform. Microsoft Teams and Zoom are the two platforms recommended for use within the university. In particular, no *viva voce* is to be conducted using a phone.
13. In each location, measures should be taken such that appropriate conditions are in place ensuring the security and integrity of the examination with minimal risk of disruption.
14. All parties should be able to see one another at all times during the examination.
15. A virtual private network (VPN) may be required where the intellectual property of the thesis needs to be protected.
16. If the student is required to make a presentation as part of the examination process, this element may be facilitated using the screen sharing function within the relevant platform or by distributing the presentation to members of the examining committee through the chair.
17. The *viva voce* must not be recorded.
18. In assessing the appropriate time at which to conduct the *viva voce*, 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) for the need to ensure that a student is not disadvantaged
19. A test must be conducted prior to the commencement of the *viva voce* to ensure that the relevant technology is working properly.
20. Normally, if communication between participants is broken during the 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 without amendment, or pass subject to minor corrections), this recommendation may be made without the examination being rescheduled.
21. Any re-scheduled examination should normally take place within one month of the original *viva voce* date. Where a longer delay is anticipated, the revised timeframe for examination should be communicated to the candidate and the examiners, and permission for the delayed examination must be obtained from the Dean of Graduate Studies.
22. Following the *viva voce* examination, the candidate must leave the online meeting to allow the examiners to discuss a recommendation.
23. Once a recommendation is agreed, the candidate is invited to re-join the meeting to be advised of the outcome of the examination.



24. After the candidate is informed of the outcome and following any further discussion with the examiners, the candidate should once again leave the meeting. The examiners and Chair should remain in the meeting in order to agree the list of corrections or revisions that are required of the candidate.
25. The examiners' report must include a statement that the *viva voce* was conducted online.