

## Guidance for face-to-face vivas from September 2020 onwards

As lockdown restrictions start to ease and staff and Doctoral Researchers return to campus there is an opportunity to resume face-to-face vivas.

For the majority of cases we expect vivas to continue to be held remotely with all parties joining via electronic means, or via a blended model where the internal and candidate meet face to face, with the external examiner joining remotely. In some cases it may be possible for the candidate to meet with both examiners in person.

The following guidance should be considered when vivas are arranged from 1st September 2020 onwards:

1. The Doctoral Researcher should be approached by the supervisors as soon as possible before a formal intention to submit is completed and asked if their preference is for a remote, blended delivery or face-to-face viva. This can then be taken into consideration when the examination team is selected.  
**It should be made clear to all parties that indicating a preference does not guarantee that the University will be able to put the preferred arrangements in place. We will try our best to accommodate them.**
2. Remote vivas will continue to be permitted if this is the student's preference.
3. If a face-to-face viva is preferred, the examiners should be approached and asked if they are able to attend in person. Where this is not possible (for example an examiner is shielding or has COVID-19 related caring responsibilities that mean they cannot travel) then the examiner(s) should attend remotely. Schools should also consider blended delivery where one examiner attends in person and one attends remotely.
4. The guidance on [remote vivas](#) will also apply to blended delivery vivas.
5. Schools should be mindful of the unpredictability of international travel, the potential for last minute disruption to vivas and the potential impact on the viva candidate. Examiners based outside of the UK should be encouraged to attend remotely wherever possible.  
**In light of this, international travel for external examiners will not be supported until January 2021 at the earliest.**
6. The Doctoral College Office will continue to accept electronic thesis submissions **only**. No hard copies will be accepted.
7. Where a face-to-face or blended delivery viva takes place, appropriate social distancing must be adhered to. Vivas held in offices should be avoided where appropriate social distancing cannot take place and alternative venues such as larger meeting rooms should be considered. Local guidance on specific

requirements can be obtained from the School or venue where the viva is to take place. Hard copies of thesis / correction lists should not be exchanged.

8. If a student is not satisfied or is uncomfortable with the arrangements put in place for their viva they should contact their supervisors as soon as possible for further discussion. If the student's concerns cannot be addressed, the DDP should be approached for further guidance.
9. Exceptionally, and so that the viva can proceed in a timely way, the DDP or ADR may recommend a change in examination team after the formal appointment of examiner process has been completed. Such changes should be rare if all parties are consulted with regarding their preference and availability, before the intention to submit process is completed. Please consult with the DCO if this situation arises. If an agreement cannot be reached between all parties the APVC(DC) will be the final arbiter.

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