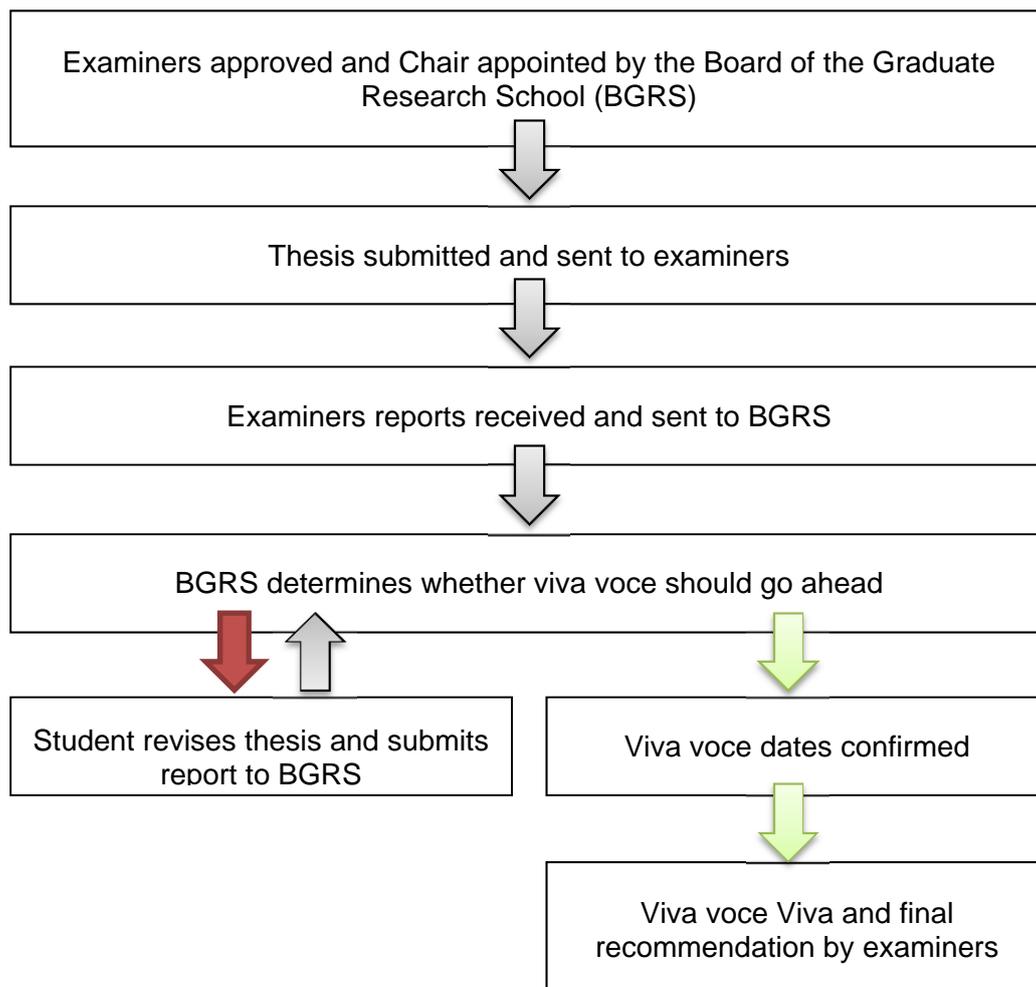


Viva voce advice for examination chairs

Role of the examination chair

A viva voce examination chair is appointed to ensure that the viva voce is conducted rigorously, fairly and respectfully. The chair may also be asked to provide guidance of policy and process. The chair should not be called on to actively participate in the examination of the candidate.

Viva voce process



Before the viva voce

The chair will be provided with a copy of the examiners reports and the thesis abstract and should discuss these with the examiners to set a preliminary agenda for the viva voce, and lines of questioning to be undertaken. If there are major differences of opinion between the two examiners, then a working approach to how these will be dealt with during the oral should be established before the commencement of the examination.

During the viva voce

At the start of the viva voce, the chair should invite the student into the room and make the candidate feel at ease. The chair should introduce the examiners to the candidate, explain their roles, the purpose of the viva voce, and the possible outcomes. The candidate should be offered opportunities to ask any questions relating to the procedures and conduct of the viva voce examination should they wish.

The chair should then invite the candidate to provide a short (~10 minute) overview of the main research question, significance and outcomes of the thesis. The candidate should ideally be allowed to complete their summary without interruption. Questioning by the examiners should then follow in the manner agreed prior to commencement. Naturally, the viva voce examination is a dynamic process, and there will likely be opportunity for the examiners to follow lines of question at their discretion and to explore new avenues for question as the discussion develops.

During the questioning by the examiners, the chair should ensure the student is given time to formulate a response, does not feel rushed and can consult the thesis and any notes they have made. The viva voce should proceed through discussion and considered debate, and not in the manner of question / answer. An ideal viva voce will allow the examiners and the candidate to explore the background to the work, with the candidate displaying knowledge of the prior art consistent with the course being examined. The question style should build a discussion of the research and its significance, allowing the candidate to demonstrate appropriate levels of mastery of the topic, the research methods and wider context. The chair should ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and that discussions are polite and respectful.

If discussions become aggressive, the chair should interrupt and call for a short break. If the student appears not to have understood a question, the chair may rephrase or ask the examiners to do so.

Should the candidate become agitated or unduly distressed, the chair should offer the candidate a short break before continuing.

If the examination goes for more than 90 minutes, the candidate and examiners should be offered a short comfort break.

After the viva voce

At the end of the examination, ask if the candidate has further information to provide to the examiners, or any comments to make on the process of the examination. They should then be asked to leave the room while the examiners discuss the outcome. During this period the chair should make complete the examination report, indicating the examiners consideration of how the candidate performed during the viva voce. The recommendation should be clear and unambiguously specify any corrections that must be made to the thesis and who will need to endorse them, such as the supervisor, graduate research coordinator (GRC) or Board of the Graduate Research School (BGRS). This task will be aided greatly if the chair has made suitable notes regarding the conduct of the examination, the line of questions explored and the quality and confidence of the candidate's answers during the examination.

After the examiners have completed their deliberation and reached a recommendation, the chair should invite the candidate to return to the room and inform them of the recommendation that will be provided to the University.

Possible outcomes include:

- » Pass without corrections or with minor typographical corrections
- » Pass with minor revisions
- » Refer back to the BGRS with a recommendation for substantive revisions, resubmission, award of a Master or Fail.

The candidate may then be dismissed and allowed to leave the examination.

The final duty of the chair is to ensure that the examination report template is completed and signed by the examiners before submitting to the GRS. In the event that a consensus on the outcome cannot be reached, the matter will be escalated to the BGRS.

Video conference procedure

UWA uses the ZOOM software for videoconferencing and a link will be sent to examiners beforehand which they will use to connect. If problems occur with connectivity, the chair should halt the viva voce and, if the candidate agrees, continue with teleconferencing. The GRS should be notified of any issues that occur.

Further information

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|  | Viva voce process at UWA | www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/oral-examination |
|  | Commonly asked viva voce questions and answers | www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/oral-examination/#viva_ffaq |
|  | Thesis examination at UWA | www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/thesis |
|  | Viva voce advice for students | www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/3369270/VivaVoce_Student_230818.pdf |
|  | Viva voce advice for supervisors and schools | www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/3369271/VivaVoce_Supervisors_230818.pdf |
|  | Viva voce advice for examiners | www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3369272/VivaVoce_Examiners_230818.pdf |
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