



**UNIVERSITI
MALAYA**

**GUIDELINES ON ORAL EXAMINATION (VIVA VOCE)
MANAGEMENT FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME
OF UNIVERSITI MALAYA**

1. PURPOSE

These guidelines are prepared as a guide for Responsibility Centres (RC) to manage oral examination or viva voce for postgraduate candidates of Universiti Malaya.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) and Director of Academic Administration and Service Centre (AASC) are responsible to ensure these guidelines are implemented by the Head of the Responsibility Centres (RC) when managing oral examination or viva voce for postgraduate candidates.

3. GUARANTEED INFORMATION ACCESS FOR DISABLED CANDIDATES

(1) All forms of communication with candidates with disability and any member of the Committee of Examiners (CoE) which requires information shall be provided in an alternative accessible method or in an alternative format throughout the oral or viva voce examination process.

(2) For the purposes of these guidelines:

- (a) communication includes reference documents related to the conduct of oral examination, letters, forms, and presentation sessions (for example in braille and its kind).
- (b) Accessible method or alternative format including electronic copy such as .doc, .docx or .pdf format; online presentation using certain conference software; or any method or other formats based on the negotiation between CoE and candidates. CoE can seek advice from the Disabled Student Management Unit regarding these matters.
- (c) CoE must consider the provision of access service providers for disabled candidates who will be involved in the oral or viva voce examinations.

4. INCLUSIVE SUPPORT GUARANTEE

- (1) Any candidates that require special needs, including disabled candidates shall be receiving support based on their needs throughout the process of engagement by CoE so that they can undergo the oral examination process effectively.
- (2) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) and Director of Academic Administration and Service Centre (AASC) and the Responsibility Centre (RC) shall ensure that this information is known to the candidates by using any reasonable channels of dissemination of information.
- (3) Candidates shall also be entitled to take proactive action to obtain such support without waiting for the CoE to hold an engagement session with the candidates concerned.
- (4) Provide suitable examination places especially for physically disabled persons using wheelchairs or crutches.
- (5) CoE must consider the allocation of rest time and space time to calm down candidates with learning disabilities as they cannot focus for a long time in a presentation.

5. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- (1) Supervision Policy of Postgraduate Candidates University of Malaya (latest version);
- (2) University of Malaya (Doctoral Degree) Rules and Regulations (latest version);
- (3) University of Malaya (Master's degree) Rules and Regulations (latest version);
- (4) Working Instruction for Conduct of Examination Thesis or Dissertation for Candidates for Doctoral and Master's Programmes (latest version); and
- (5) Standard Operating Procedure of Teaching and Learning of Students with Disabilities (PWDs) At The University of Malaya.

6. DEFINITION

- (1) Viva voce is a component of the Postgraduate program in oral examination form for candidates to defend their thesis or dissertation. This component is held at the last stage of the study programme after candidates have completed research work and submitted their thesis or dissertation for examination purposes.
- (2) An access service provider is a person who assists an OKU candidate in an oral examination or viva voce consisting of:
 - (a) A signal interpreter

A signal interpreter is an individual who translates sign language into spoken language and vice versa for hearing or speech disabled candidates. Signal

interpreters are a very important communication requirement for hearing or speech disabled candidates in assisting to translate sign language into spoken language to be understood by CoE throughout the implementation of oral examination session or viva voce.

(b) Support partners

Support partners are individuals who are the reinforces and supporters of candidates with learning disabilities. Supporting partners who are allowed to be together with the candidates with learning disabilities throughout the oral examination session or viva voce will act to encourage the candidates with learning disabilities in terms of rationalization, stress, and emotional management, as well as the behaviour control of the candidates with learning disabilities throughout the oral examination session or viva voce. Supporters will also inform CoE about the appropriateness of the time space to calm down considering the condition of the candidates with learning disabilities during the presentation by the candidates. Apart from that, the supporting partners will also inform CoE whether the candidates with learning disabilities are able to continue with the oral examination sessions or viva voce or otherwise subject to the level of rationalization and emotion as well as the control of the behaviour of the candidates with learning disabilities.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE OF EXAMINERS

CoE membership for Doctoral and Master's programme are as specified in the following documents:

- (1) University of Malaya (Doctoral Degree) Rules and Regulations (latest version); or
- (2) University of Malaya (Master's Degree) Rules and Regulations (latest version).

8. FUNCTIONS OF COMMITTEE OF THE EXAMINERS

(1) The roles and responsibilities of CoE member are as stated in Attachment 1.

(2) CoE shall:

- (a) evaluate examiners' reports of the thesis or dissertation of a candidate;
- (b) hold and evaluate oral examination or viva voce of a candidate;
- (c) make decisions on the level of achievement of a thesis or dissertation and oral examination or viva voce in accordance with the provisions of the University of Malaya (Doctoral Degree) Rules and Regulations of the (latest version) and University of Malaya (Master's Degree) Rules and Regulations (latest version) to be recommended by the Senate;

- (d) report to the Senate on any matter relating to the quality or conduct of thesis or dissertation examinations or dissertations and oral or viva voce examination;
- (e) maintain the confidentiality of all matters relating to the examination; and,
- (f) ensure candidates with specific needs receive appropriate support to ensure the smooth process of oral examination or viva voce.

9. ORAL EXAMINATION HANDLING PROCESS (VIVA VOCE)

(1) Before oral examination (viva voce)

- (a) The Dean and Deputy Dean review and refine the examination reports from the examiners as well as make decisions on the dates and methods of conducting oral examinations or viva voce. An additional examination report is required in case of doubts of the previous examination reports; and
- (b) Make decision to postpone the viva voce if:
 - (i) the thesis or dissertation concern has an element of plagiarism; or
 - (ii) the thesis or dissertation examination reports that are incomplete or do not help assist candidates in making improvements/correction.
- (c) Distribute personal details of candidates, copies of thesis, examination reports from examiners and supervisor reports to member of CoE, together with notice of CoE meetings. Certification of examiners will not be informed to members of CoE prior to the CoE meeting.
- (d) Distribute examination reports from examiners to candidate's supervisor during the viva voce session. Examination reports that are submitted to supervisors before and after viva voce session are without the certification of examiners.
- (e) Identify whether candidates have special requirements to take oral examination effectively. The Secretariat can seek advice from the Disabled Students Management Unit for this purpose.

(2) During oral examination (viva voce)

- (a) Chairperson initiates the session by informing the details of the candidate's candidature and the title of thesis or dissertation in relation to the viva voce carried out;
- (b) Introduces member of CoE; and
- (c) call the candidate for a presentation session. For the Doctoral programme, candidates are required to present their thesis or dissertation for a period of 20 to 25 minutes, or the duration is determined by CoE according to context requirements. As for master's programmes, if necessary, candidates are required to present a dissertation for a period of 15 to 20 minutes, or the duration is determined by CoE according to context requirements.

- (d) For hearing or speech impaired candidates that require communication support service, CoE secretariat must ensure a signal interpreter or assistant has been identified and obtained a written permission from the RC's Academic present during the presentation and question-and-answer sessions.
- (e) When a candidate makes a presentation, CoE must evaluate the candidate that makes the presentation, not the signal interpreter. In this context, a signal interpreter should have no impact on candidate's scoring.
- (f) The selection of a signal interpreter must be made by getting a signal interpreter who at least has knowledge in the research field which will be presented by the candidate.
- (g) For visually impaired candidates: the secretariat must ensure a special assistant from the RC's Academic, to assist the candidate in controlling the presentation slides.
- (h) After the candidate's presentation, CoE will hold a question-and-answer session about the candidate's thesis or dissertation. Examiners will give feedback for improvement/correction purpose.
- (i) For candidates with learning disabilities who require a break between the presentation and a question-and-answer session, the Chairperson must allow the candidate to rest within the agreed period during the negotiation session before the oral examination.
- (j) For candidates with learning disabilities who require facilitation services during question-and-answer session, the secretariat must ensure the support partners have been identified and obtained a written permission from RC's Academic, present to support candidates.
- (k) Candidates, supervisor, access service providers (if any) are requested to leave for a while for CoE to make decision of viva voce that has been carried out.
- (l) Chairperson presents and discusses the overall examiners' reports with members of CoE.
- (m) Chairperson will inform examination certification of the examiners to the members of CoE. CoE will discuss examiners' reports as a whole and make certification.
- (n) The Chairman will inform the certification of the CoE, the period for improvement/correction on the viva voce results to the candidates. For disabled candidates, the Chairman shall ensure that the access service provider is present at the time of the announcement and insists that the CE's certification is subject to the approval of the Senate. The recommendation for re-examination and the graduation of candidates are subject to the decisions of the Senate.

(3) After oral examination (*viva voce*)

CoE Certification: Graduation and Re-Examination

- (a) Submit CoE certification for consideration at Faculty Meeting. CoE certification can be submitted for Senate's consideration without going through Faculty Meeting, in case of time constraints.
- (b) Submit CoE/Faculty Meeting recommendation for Senate's consideration.
- (c) A letter of notification to the candidate will be submitted by the Examination and Graduation Section, AASC.

CoE Certification: Minor Amendments and Major Amendments

- (a) Officially inform CoE certification to the candidates. RC notification letter must be attached together with examination reports from examiners (without certification).
- (b) Submit CoE certification for consideration of Faculty Meeting after the candidates submitted their thesis or dissertation after amendments and the candidates have fulfilled all graduation requirements.

10. CONCLUSION

Preparation of these guidelines is as a guide for RC to manage oral examination or viva voce for candidates for the Postgraduate programme at University of Malaya. These guidelines also aim to ensure the quality and consistency and effectiveness of viva voce management processes in each RC. These guidelines should be read in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the University of Malaya (Doctoral Degree) (latest version) and (Masters' Degrees) Rules and Regulations (latest version).

These Guidelines are subject to amendments from time to time.

Approved by Senate on 25.02.2021.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMITTEE OF EXAMINERS (CoE) ORAL EXAMINATION
(VIVA VOCE) UNIVERSITI MALAYA**

MEMBER OF CE	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY
Chairperson	<p><u>General</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out duties with impartiality without any personal interest. • There is no close relation with the candidate, examiners, or supervisor. • Conduct viva voce sessions in compliance with the rules and regulations specified by the University. <p><u>Before oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform member of CoE about the requirements and documents that are related to viva voce as well as other latest graduation conditions have been fulfilled or not. • Identify whether candidates require specific needs during presentation and question-and-answer sessions. If any, the Chairman must arrange for such requirements to be met, either the Chairman takes such responsibility or appoints any other staff to deal with the matter. (Can ask for advice and support from the Disabled Students Management Unit). • Ensure adequate quorum for attendance of CoE members. • Remind CoE members of their responsibilities. • Ensure examiners' recommendation is not informed to the CoE members so that it will not influence the discussion and CoE recommendation. • To determine a recorder to record additional feedback among the Deputy Dean (Postgraduate)/ Head of Department / Internal Examiners. <p><u>During oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure viva voce is conducted in a professional and controlled manner. • Ensure candidates who have specific needs can present their research and involved in the question-and-answer session effectively, including ensuring the present of service providers.

- Inform examiners recommendation by the examiners to members of CoE and discuss the examination reports as a whole to make a recommendation.
- Ensure supervisors functions only as observers unless asked to give feedback.
- Chairperson can ask the Supervisors to leave viva voce session.

After oral examination (viva voce)

- If necessary, allow supervisors to give feedback to members of CoE after question-and-answer session with the candidate before making a decision.
- Summarize improvements/corrections that need to be done by the candidate according to the examiners' written reports and feedbacks from members of CoE (if applicable) during viva voce examination session.
- Finalise the CoE decision without the involvement of supervisors.
- Inform candidates about CoE certification, period of improvement/correction and insist CoE recommendation is subject to Senate approval.
- Inform candidates about all reports/notes of improvements/corrections to be made based on reports by the examiners and supervisors.
- Complete and tick (✓) results of viva voce examination in the following forms:
 - ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree by (by prior publication) (latest version); or
 - ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree (by Mixed Mode/by research) (latest version); or
 - ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree (by Mixed Mode/by research) – Re-Examination (latest version); or
 - ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree (by Coursework) (latest version); or
 - ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree by (by Coursework) – Re-Examination (latest version); or
 - ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree by Clinical (latest version); or
 - ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree (by Clinical) – Re-Examination (latest version); or

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree by Research (For Fast Track Candidates) (latest version); or ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Doctoral Degree by Research (For Fast Track Candidates) (latest version) – Re-Examination; or ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Master’s Degree (by Research/Mixed Mode) (latest version); or ❖ CoE Recommendation Form for Master’s Degree (by Research/Mixed Mode) – Re-Examination (latest version). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign and submit the CoE recommendation form to the RC Administrative Officer. • Evaluate the External Examiners.
<p>Examiners</p>	<p><u>Before oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate thesis or dissertation whether it has achieved the quality required for the award of a degree. • Evaluate feedback in general and identify matters to be questioned in viva voce session. • Decide to continue with the viva voce session. • Assist Chairperson in summarizing different opinions/decisions of the examiners. <p><u>During oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine/evaluate candidate’s knowledge about the subject related to the topics that are available in the thesis or dissertation and all written matters in the thesis or dissertation text. • Ask questions to confirm that the thesis or dissertation is the original result of the study, and the writing was done by the candidate. • Evaluate candidate’s performance by asking academic questions and scientific facts related to the candidate’s research field. • Provide insights into a candidate's ability to answer questions during viva voce. • Give additional feedback during viva voce session for matters that are not stated in any examiners’ reports. The comments must be recorded in the Additional Comment from CoE for thesis or dissertation examination for Postgraduate candidates and must be confirmed by the Chairperson at the end of viva voce session.

	<p><u>After oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the recommendation process. • Make a decision together amongst CoE after considering the quality of the thesis or dissertation and candidate's explanation.
<p>Senate Representative/ Appointed University Professor/ Deputy Dean Postgraduate/ Head of Department/ Coordinator</p>	<p><u>Throughout the oral examination process (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure viva voce session is conducted in accordance with the specified procedures. <p><u>During Oral Examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain explanation about the thesis or dissertation from the candidates and other CoE members. <p><u>After oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide insights into a candidate's ability to answer questions during viva voce. • Agree on making decision of viva voce.
<p>Supervisors</p>	<p><u>Throughout the oral examination process (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend a candidate's viva voce session as invited members. • Not allowed to participate in viva voce decision-making of candidates. <p><u>Before Oral Examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not inform candidates about the contents of the examiners' reports before viva voce examination. • Examiners' reports are only given to the Supervisors during viva voce examination • Provide written feedback on the overall candidate's commitment and the progress of the candidate throughout the nomination period to the CoE members. <p><u>During Oral Examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as an observer and not allowed to participate in defending the quality of thesis or dissertation or assisting candidates during viva voce session. • If necessary, provide explanation on any matters raised by the Chairperson or Examiners during viva voce session. • Take notes or records every feedback on improvements/corrections from CoE members to assist candidates in making improvements/corrections.

	<p><u>After oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take note of viva voce results and the improvements/corrections that candidates need to make. • Not allowed to participate and influence members of CoE in making certification of the viva voce. • Supervisors are asked to leave examination room. • Ensure the candidates do every improvements/ correction of thesis/dissertation as stated by CoE.
<p>Registrar or his/her representative (Administrative Officer who are in charge)</p>	<p><u>Throughout the oral examination process (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a Secretary and Secretariat in CoE meetings. • Monitor viva voce process so that it runs smoothly within the appropriate period. • Act as an Advisor about any examination and graduation related matters according to the latest Rules and Regulations and other applicable regulations. • Take attendance of all CoE members. • As a liaison officer of external examiners. • Ensure viva voce process is recorded. <p><u>Before Oral Examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on appropriate dates for all members of CoE . • Prepare chronology of a candidate. • Ensure all requirements and documents related to viva voce as well as candidates' details are complete. • Notify CE members and candidates about the details of viva voce that will be held, in written. • Submit examiners' reports (excluding examiners' certification) to CoE members within three (3) days before viva voce. • Ensure adequate quorum of viva voce examination in accordance with University of Malaya (Doctoral Degree) Rules and Regulations (latest version); and University of Malaya (Master's degree) Rules and Regulations (latest version); • Ensure RC Civil Technicians prepare all-in and sufficient equipment and facilities to ensure the smooth running of the viva voce process. • Inform candidates and members of CoE if viva voce needs to be postponed. <p><u>After oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure certification form of CoE results contains complete information and signed by all members.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure External Examiner Evaluation Form is complete and signed by the Chairperson. • Ensure all graduation requirements are fulfilled by the candidates for the purpose of graduation. • Prepare CoE reports that is verified and signed by the Chairperson to be brought to Senate for approval. • If necessary, arrange the establishment of Special Investigation Committee if there is plagiarism element in candidate's thesis or dissertation. • Prepare notification letters of viva voce results as well as complete examiners' reports and thesis or dissertation that has been examined to the candidates within the period of one (1) working day. • Issue reminders the candidates and Supervisors about the deadline of submission improvement/correction of thesis or dissertation.
<p>Candidates</p>	<p><u>Before Oral Examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure date, time and location of viva voce as determined by the Administrative Officer. • Make preparation to be at the location of viva voce examination 15 minutes earlier from the scheduled time. • Prepare presentation slides, related documents including thesis or dissertation and proofs of publication. <p><u>During Oral Examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be present in the viva voce session either face to face or online (special case). If the candidate is present virtually, RC must ensure viva voce is conducted according to the procedures and runs smoothly (including the preparation of equipment and facilities). • Appropriate attire. • Make a brief presentation and submit the results of the research as written in the thesis or dissertation text in 15 to 25 minutes or within any duration decided by CoE (according to the context). • Answer all questions from Examiners and CoE members as best as possible. • Not allowed to leave examination unless asked to. <p><u>After oral examination (viva voce)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree with CoE decisions. • Do improvements/corrections based on the examiners' and CoE members' feedbacks.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get confirmation from supervisors and/or examiners regarding the improvements/corrections made.• Submit improved/corrected thesis or dissertation according University procedures through the RC Postgraduate Office of Postgraduate within the duration specified by CoE and/or Senate.
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