Before the viva the internal examiner should ensure logistic arrangements are in place to make all parties comfortable and to minimise distractions to the examination. Examiners may find the following good-practice guidance helpful in conducting the viva.

The Examiners should:

- consider the layout of the room (table, chairs, availability of a whiteboard/pens, refreshments etc) and practicalities such as ensuring all mobile phones are switched off and placing a do not disturb sign on the door. There should be a room where the candidate (and supervisor if attending) can wait during the examiners' discussions. Unless required for the purposes of a presentation/demonstration by the candidate, the use of electronic equipment/devices during the viva by candidates or examiners (or the supervisor if in attendance) is not permitted.

- invite the candidate into the room and introduce those present and their roles in the viva (the Supervisor, if present, is not involved in the decision making process). Aim to put the candidate at ease as far as possible;

- explain the purpose of the viva and go through the format for the examination and how things will work;

- explain the possible recommendations the Examiners can make;

- explain to the candidate that after the viva s/he will be asked to withdraw from the room (along with the supervisor, if present as an observer) whilst the examiners confer on their decision before asking them to return;

- ask the candidate if they have any questions and advise him/her to seek clarification should any part of the process or the questioning be unclear;

- allow the candidate time to collect their thoughts and develop responses to the questions posed by the examiners. Allow the candidate to consult their copy of the thesis (which may be annotated with notes/post-it notes) during the viva if it helps them;
• although the viva will normally run continuously, respect any request a candidate may make for a short break and may wish to suggest a break in the case of longer vivas (for example should a viva reach two hours). In the event of a candidate becoming distressed, Examiners are advised to offer the candidate a break in order to compose him/herself before continuing with the viva. If a candidate is unable to continue, Examiners must contact RSA (Examinations section: 34003);

• at the close of the examination ask the candidate if they feel the examination has covered all points they were expecting and give them the opportunity to raise any points in relation to the thesis which they feel were not covered;

• on completing the viva, instruct the candidate (and Supervisor if attending) to leave the room in order for the Examiners to discuss the final recommendation on the basis of the thesis and the viva. Only the examiners must be present for this part of the process;

• invite the candidate (and supervisor if attending) back into the room and inform them of the recommendation. A single recommendation must be made (as set out in the “Instructions to Examiners”):

• inform the candidate & Supervisor of the outcome of the viva and that it is subject to confirmation by the Graduate Board. If you are unable to reach a decision at the viva you must do this within 24 hours of the examination and inform the candidate and supervisor;

• outline the next stages in the process to the candidate, depending on the outcome of the viva, including communication of any corrections to the thesis.

RSA/July 2013