



Use of Video Streaming for research degree transfer and final examinations

Hints, Tips and Good Practice

The video-streamed viva policy was introduced in March 2020 in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, to enable the University to continue to support PGRs through the transfer and thesis examination process. The following hints, tips and good practice have been collated from feedback from internal examiners, independent chairs and PGRs who have completed an all-video-streaming final viva since March 2020. They are not intended as a prescriptive set of instructions – or an exhaustive list of things to consider – but it is hoped that they will provide helpful insight for staff and PGRs when considering the final viva arrangements.

This document has been put together by Doctoral College Operations with thanks to the Examiners, Independent Chairs and PGRs who have fed back on their experiences so far. All feedback would be very much appreciated to allow us to respond to issues and review and improve our guidance. This can be sent to Doctoral College Operations (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk).

A Software

A video streamed viva may be carried out via any platform which is supported by IT. Microsoft Teams or Zoom are the recommended platforms

Microsoft Teams

- Teams has the advantage of familiarity for Leeds participants. There are a number of remote working support pages and information covering Teams available on the [IT website](#).
- Please see [Annex 1](#) of this document for a step-by-step walkthrough to set up the external examiner on the video call. IT also have an article on their [website](#) about how you can host a meeting with externals.
- There are a number of support pages and information available on the [IT website](#).

Zoom

- Zoom has been added to the list of acceptable tools for vivas (as of June 2021).
- Please see the [IT website](#) for further technical information, including important guidance on securing the meeting. A summary is provided in Annex 2, but please consult the IT pages in all cases.

B General hints, tips and feedback

Before the viva

- Confidence with the software is important, so consider if any parties need additional support. ODPL are running sessions for internal examiners and Independent Chairs and a '*Preparing for Your Video Streamed Viva* for PGRs – see Section D of this document for further information. A separate ODPL session is available to PGRs. PGRs can also request a mock viva via their Supervisor.
- Testing/trial run of the software in the day(s) before the viva is important.
- The assessor/examiners must be able to discuss in private during the pre and post-viva meetings.
- There may be challenges where you may – in a face-to-face viva – ask the PGR to draw something for the examiners. Think about how you might manage this beforehand, if this is something that might be needed. (E.g. share screen function).
- Check that pastoral support arrangements are in place. The policy requires that arrangements are in place for pastoral support (normally via the supervisor¹ or other appropriate member of staff) to be available to the PGR immediately after the viva, should this be necessary. It is also important to consider the important role this can play in the PGR experience at the end of a successful viva.
- An independent chair can be appointed for an online viva, on request by the examining team².
- **Under the video-streaming policy, recording of the viva by any party is not permitted.**

At the start of the viva

- It is sensible to allow a period of time (20 minutes or so) at the start of the viva for all parties to become familiar with the environment. Please do spend time at the start of the viva to put all parties at ease and ensure they are comfortable with the technology and set-up before commencing the viva.

¹ If not already attending the viva as an observer

² From January 2021, the requirement for an Independent Chair for an online viva has been withdrawn, where the examining team is otherwise experienced, but a Chair can be appointed on the request. An Independent Chair is only be required by the University under the established (pre- Covid-19) position where it will be the internal examiner's first PGR examination or a second viva on resubmission.

- Agree at the start what will happen if someone's connection drops out and you need to pause the viva until connection has been resumed (e.g. alternative means of contact (email, telephone) in the event this is needed to discuss arrangements).
- If audio and/or visual communication is lost with one or more of the parties during the viva, the viva should be paused until communication is re-established. If such communication problems continue and are severely disruptive, the examiners and chair should discuss with the PGR whether to postpone the viva. The PGR should be informed of this at the start of the viva.
- Inform the PGR at the start that they must stop the examiners – or ask for a question to be repeated – if they find any issues with sound/video quality.
- All parties should have access to a copy of the thesis. This may be a pdf version of the thesis open on the computer so that each party can show their respective screens, or access to a printed copy of the thesis (if this has been arranged). This may be helpful in conversations about which equation, diagram, etc is being referred to.
- Careful consideration should be given to the use of breaks. Online meetings may take longer and can be more tiring than face-to-face meetings. It might be helpful to agree at the start some pre-arranged break times for the benefit of all parties (without interrupting the flow of the viva). Reassure all parties at the start that they can request a break as and when needed.
- It is understood that staff and PGRs may have young/school-age children at home, plus pets, doorbells or other unexpected things that would not be a factor in a traditional viva. Recognise this, and reassure everyone from the start that they should not worry if such events do occur. Remember breaks are fine. The role of the Independent Chair (if appointed) can be helpful here to reassure all parties, should unexpected interruptions occur. The tone of the meeting should not be over-formal, as this could make the candidate feel that interruptions and breaks are not possible.
- The camera must be on (telephone vivas are not permitted). **No recording is permitted.**

During the viva

- It is important to pay attention to the way the tech is working, as well as the academic content of the examination. Check at regular intervals that sound/video quality etc remains satisfactory. If an Independent Chair has been appointed, they can play an important role in supporting the examiners and the PGR by taking some of the responsibilities for technology off the examiners and can take a broader overview of the viva. You can mute the video (and microphone) of the Independent

Chair – unmuting when it is necessary for the Chair to intervene – and the Supervisor (if attending) if that helps with audio / connectivity.

- Asking questions of the PGR may present new challenges not found in a face-to-face viva. For example, coordinating questions between the examiners (in the absence of the usual eye contact) and not being able to point to an equation/figure that in front of everyone on the table. Accept that there may be, at times, a more ‘you go’, ‘no, you go’ type of discussion as a result. The Chair (if appointed) can usefully play a role here, making sure that examiners take turns to speak.
- Some examiners have found it helpful to agree a firmer order of questions/questioners at the pre-meeting than might have done in a face-to-face viva.

At the end of the viva

- The Internal Examiner (or Independent Chair if appointed) should check with the PGR at the end of the viva whether they were happy with how it was conducted from a practical point of view and if there is anything they would like noted.

C Useful links

- [Reasonable adjustments for PGR assessments](#)
- [Policy on video streaming for a research degree final oral examination](#)

| Document Version History | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|------------|----------------|
| Author | Update | Date | Version Number |
| Doctoral College Operations | | March 2020 | 1.0 |
| Doctoral College Operations | Added IT article on Teams with externals | April 2020 | 2.0 |
| Doctoral College Operations | Added training for staff | April 2020 | 3.0 |
| Doctoral College Operations | Changes to Independent Chair requirements | Jan 2021 | 4.0 |
| Doctoral College Operations | Added Zoom to acceptable platforms | June 2021 | 5.0 |

D ODPL Workshops for Staff and PGRs

For Internal Examiners and Independent Chairs

Organisational Development and Professional Learning are now offering staff support in preparation for video-streamed Vivas. An approximate half hour meeting will:

1. Highlight key points from [the University's revised video streaming policy](#)
2. Run through the 'top tips' now being collated after a number of recent video vivas
3. Allow you to try out features and see how your personal computing 'set-up' is going to work for you

Simply get in touch with Dr Tony Bromley by email t.p.bromley@adm.leeds.ac.uk and we will arrange a meeting as appropriate. (Note: We are also offering this session to postgraduate researcher candidates)

For PGRs - Preparing for Your Video Streamed Viva.

It can, understandably, be an anxious time as you approach your final doctoral viva.. Guidance on the Viva generally and for videos streaming more specifically, is now available in a new 'Your Viva' section of the Leeds Doctoral College organisation in Minerva*(Near the top of the left hand menu). A number of video-streamed Vivas have now successfully taken place and we are also offering additional support.

We are now **offering mock video streamed Vivas**** for those with upcoming Vivas. As we get requests, we will look to put together a meeting with up to three postgraduate researchers and a facilitator. We can tailor the session dependent upon the particular needs of participants but we would look to cover:

1. Exploring the video streaming environment and capabilities
2. Trialling how the experience works for you, with your set up, in a safe environment.
3. Try out some general Viva questions in this 'mock' Viva set up, so that you can experience answering questions and explaining your research in a video streaming environment.

Sessions would last for around 30 minutes but up to a maximum of an hour as needed.

If you are interested in a mock Viva please contact Dr Tony Bromley by email t.p.bromley@adm.leeds.ac.uk

***LOGIN to Minerva:** Go to: <https://minerva.leeds.ac.uk/> Log in with your usual University IT account (username@leeds.ac.uk).

On the home page click on the 'Discover tab' top right.

Type 'Leeds Doctoral College' in the 'What are you looking for?' search box.

Click on 'Leeds Doctoral College (Organisation)'.

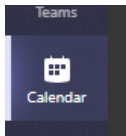
If you are not enrolled you will see 'enrol' bottom left. Click on enrol and you are in!

****Note that you can ask you supervisor to do a mock viva with you. Our support here is offered in addition to any support from your supervisor**

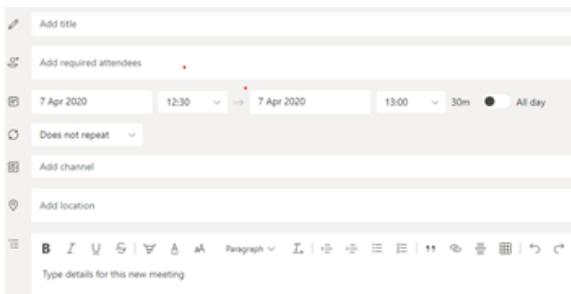
Setting up a PGR viva using Teams

You can do this using the calendar function and invite the external examiner to join the meeting, as follows. IT also have an article on their [website](#) about how you can host a meeting with externals.

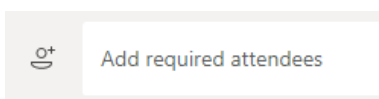
1. Open Teams and select the Calendar option from the left hand side menu



2. Go to the date and start time of your meeting and create a new meeting event. Give your meeting a title



3. In the "Add required optional attendees" box you can search for internal Leeds attendees by name and include them in the invite (Independent Chair, Supervisor (if attending as an observer) and the PGR). You should also include here the email address for the external examiner. (You can either add manually or look up the email address for the external examiner in GRAD and copy and paste this into the meeting request (this should normally be their Institutional email address)).

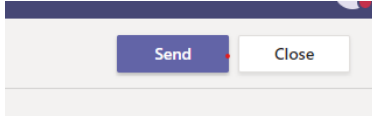


4. Set the start and end time for your meeting. Leave the "Does not repeat" option. You do not need to include a Channel or a location so leave these blank. You can add further details in the text box at the end.

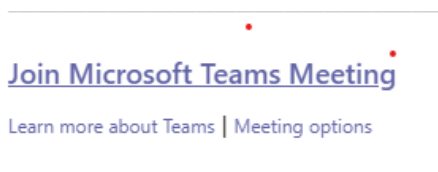
You will need to consider setting up a separate meeting for the pre and post-viva meetings with just the examiners and Independent chair, as well as a meeting for the viva which also includes the PGR and the Supervisor. The examiners will need to be able to discuss privately after the viva, and then call the PGR and Supervisor into that meeting when they are ready to discuss the result.

You should also consider setting up a test meeting in the days before the viva to allow a trial run of the connection and allow for familiarisation with the software.

5. When you are finished, select the Send option at the top right hand of the screen.



6. All parties will receive the meeting invite (which they can accept in the usual way) which will include the "Join Microsoft Teams Meeting" option at the bottom. This is what the external examiner will need to use to join the meeting on the day of the viva.



7. On the day of the viva, the Leeds participants can join the meeting at the appropriate time by accessing the event in the Teams Calendar and selecting join or by following the link in the email notification. The External Examiner will need to join the meeting selecting the Joint Microsoft Teams Meeting option in the email notification.
8. When the external examiner clicks on the link, it will ask them if they want to open the meeting in the Web Browser or in the desktop application, depending on what they are using. They will then be given a text box and asked to type their name.
9. From here, the external examiner will be admitted to a lobby. All Leeds participants will receive a notification that the external examiner is in the lobby and will have an option to admit them to the meeting. The meeting can commence once all parties have joined the meeting and the external examiner has been admitted to the meeting from the lobby.
10. If the external is in the lobby for 15 minutes without being admitted into the meeting they will be automatically removed from the lobby which means they will need to re-join using the link in the email if they want to come back in. When someone joins as a "Guest" they don't have all the same functionality as Leeds participants (e.g. they don't have the chat function during the meeting).
11. Different devices work slightly differently. The key advice is to test the equipment and software before the day of the viva to allow all parties to be confident before the viva.

Using Zoom for a transfer or final viva

Please see the [IT website](#) and Digital Practice Website for further technical information. A summary is provided but please consult the IT pages in all cases. The main points are under the section "Securing your meeting" which states the following (including useful links):

- Do not share the meeting URL via publicly accessible social media platforms
- Use Security and Options/Advanced Options to manage access and participants
- Use a [secure password](#) for access to meetings. (This should be on by default)
- Enable the [Waiting Room](#) option for meetings. (This should be on by default)
- Share the meeting via email (which can be generated in Zoom) to intended meeting participants only
- Avoid using your [Personal Meeting ID](#) (PMI) to host public events
- If you know your meeting participants have a Zoom account you can choose to select the option Require authentication to join. This means only participants using a Zoom account will be able to join the meeting
- Consider [locking the meeting](#) after it has started so no one else can join. This is via the security icon
- Follow the advice from the Zoom blog: [How to Keep Uninvited Guests Out of Your Zoom Event](#)
- If someone does join who shouldn't be there you can [remove them from the meeting](#) via the security icon or participant panel

The IT knowledge base article Using [Zoom - Guidance for Staff & Students](#) advises people how to sign into their Zoom account (staff and students). We would advise people to use their Leeds Zoom account and not a personal one. There are also some links in this article to Zoom guides for common activities.

For external attendees they can be sent a Zoom meeting invite via email and they don't currently have to have a Zoom account. When they click the link to join the meeting, they, along with other attendees, will be put in a waiting room and the meeting organiser can admit them into the meeting when they are ready.

The meeting organiser can lock the meeting when all attendees have joined, adding more security. Please also note there is a mandatory question when scheduling a meeting which says, "Is this teaching content?" It is fine to tick no to this question for Vivas. It is only in place to enable recordings to be imported to Mediasite. **Under the video-streaming policy, recording of the viva by any party is not permitted.**