



Preparation for the viva voce Examination

Tips for Supervisors of Research Students Approaching the Viva

Key Tip: Choose examiners carefully

1. Has the student read their thesis?– are they familiar with the content, can they answer the following;
 - i) What has been the significant contribution of your research to knowledge in the area or What have you done that warrants a PhD?
 - ii) What would you do differently if you started your PhD today?
 - iii) Where do you see this kind of research moving to/ developing in the future/ if you received a large grant, what would you do next?
 - iv) Can you justify your choice of methodology?
 - v) How do you justify your conclusions?
2. Advise the student to publish prior to examination if possible (supports originality and peer review)
3. Is the student familiar with the literature?
 - i) recent reviews/ survey papers/ recent publications in area/ developments in field
 - ii) examiners publications (what topics/areas do they consider relevant)
4. Is the student (and the supervisor) familiar with UCD's policy surrounding Viva's including; the assessment panel structure, viva format, possible outcomes of the examination
5. Has a practice *viva(s)* (*with peers, with supervisor*) been arranged (*strongly recommended*)
6. Has the student spoken with post *viva* peers
7. Can the student orally summarise the thesis in two minutes (and to lay audience)
8. Suggest that the student summarises thesis chapters (eg one line per paragraph)
9. Advise student to prepare a list of anticipated questions
 - i) General Qs - Specific Qs - Open Qs - Blue Skies Qs

In the Viva.....

- 10) Highlight that the candidate in a *viva* normally knows more about the topic than the examiners

11) Advise student to take their time while answering. If a question takes them by surprise, preface answer with 'that's a good question' or 'the answer to that is not simple and straightforward'. This indicates that they are giving the answer consideration and also buys them some time. Use of phraseology and creating thinking space.

12) Questions may be simpler than expected

13) Prepare students for the 'free kick' question – an invitation for the student to briefly tell them about aspects of the thesis (eg. what they found most interesting, challenging, surprising *etc* about the research)

14) If the student does not understand a question, recommend that they seek clarification rather than attempt any answer

15) Candidates should bring a copy of the thesis to the exam and 'mark-up' key areas with labels beforehand that can assist with answering

Thesis Questions

