**Standing Committee of Academic Council approved (AC STD 21 A5 9.1) amendment of QA245 to:**

**6.3.2 Approval of Examiners**

Except in exceptional circumstances, the viva should be held on campus with all participants physically present. Where it is not practical for all participants to attend in person, an application for participation by video conference must be made two months in advance of the proposed date of the viva. The student must agree to the viva being held by video conference and the approval of a GRC member, Head of School, Dean of College and Dean of Graduate Studies obtained through the Online Research Thesis Exam System.

**Recommendations for conducting a postgraduate research degree viva virtually**

March 2020, updated November 2021 and February 2022

**Preparation**

• Permission to be sought using the online research thesis examination system <https://graduate.nuigalway.ie/users/login/>

• The candidate, all examiners and the chair must agree to the arrangements.

• The chair is responsible for ensuring the arrangements for conducting the viva are in place.

• Time differences must be considered to ensure that the candidate is not disadvantaged.

• CELT recommends that Microsoft Teams be used as the virtual platform. Zoom may also be used.

• In each location measures should be taken such that appropriate conditions are in place ensuring minimal disruption, security and integrity of the examination.

• The student should have a copy of the thesis but not have access to material that would not be available in an in-person viva.

• All parties should be able to see one another at all times during the viva voce examination.

• No viva voce is to be conducted by audio or phone.

• The viva voce must not be recorded.

• A virtual private network (VPN) may be required where the intellectual property of the thesis needs to be protected.

• A test must be conducted prior to the commencement of the viva.

**During the viva**

• If a presentation is required this may be facilitated through screen sharing or distributing the presentation to the examiners through the Chair.

• If communication is broken during the viva voce and a connection cannot be re-established, the examination must be terminated and re-scheduled. However, where the examiners agree that a truncated viva provides the basis for a positive recommendation, this recommendation may be taken. No recommendation to fail a candidate can be taken where a viva is interrupted. Any rescheduled examination should normally take place within one month of the original viva.

**After the viva**

• Following the viva the candidate must leave the virtual meeting to allow the examiners to discuss a recommendation.

• Once a recommendation is agreed the candidate is invited to re-join the meeting to be advised of the examiners’ recommendation.

• The examiners’ report is submitted to the online research thesis examination system, or using the interim process in place subsequent to the cyber-attack. The examiners’ report must include a statement that the viva voce was conducted virtually. These recommendations should be used in conjunction with the University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/graduatestudies/files/university_guidelines_for_research_degree_programmes.pdf>