

School of Graduate Studies

Procedure for conducting oral examination during the movement control order during Covid-19 pandemic

PhD and Master by Research
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia



**PROCEDURE TO IMPLEMENT
ORAL EXAMINATION (VIVA VOCE) FOR DOCTORAL/MASTERS CANDIDATES DURING THE
MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER PERIOD**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This guideline describes the procedure for conducting oral examination (viva voce) session for doctoral/ master candidates during the movement control order (MCO).

2.0 General Guideline for conducting an online viva voce session during the MCO

1. Video conferencing/Online platforms may be used in viva voce examinations where the candidate/examiners face travel restrictions during Covid-19. Candidate here refers to local and international students.
2. Faculties/School must ensure that videoconferencing/online platform is the most appropriate course of action, and that the interests of all parties are fully considered.
3. Parties here refer to Chairman, assistant chairperson, examiners and students both for PhD and Master by research candidate. However, during the MCO period, it is not compulsory for external examiners to attend the full session. The external examiner may share his/her questions to the chairman during the discussion prior the commencement of the viva session.
4. If any of the parties involved disagree with the use of video conferencing/online platforms for their viva voce arrangement, the examination shall be postponed.
5. A consent form must be filled up as evidence of agreement.
6. Due to MCO, the session may take place with all **parties** in different locations.
7. The decision to conduct online viva voce should be considered as the last resort. It should therefore be carefully and selectively implemented.
8. The decision to conduct online viva should take into account these aspects:
 - a. Only to be conducted for students receiving grade B2, B1 and A based on thesis examination report.
 - b. The availability of complete viva related documents for the online session.
 - c. The availability of infrastructure and Internet facilities among all parties. Telephone conference maybe permitted in the event where Internet connection fails during the session or for discussion with examiners.
 - d. Priority should be given to students who have submitted their thesis prior MCO, sponsored students and international students who need to return to their home countries.
9. It is important that appropriate arrangements should be made to maintain the integrity, confidentiality and credibility of the examination process.

2. Preparation before the viva

- a) The faculty/school should contact all parties and to obtain agreement on a propose date and time for the session.
- b) The faculty/school should issue the video link to all parties at least 2 days before the session.
- c) The faculty/school should check the video link to the remote person within an hour before the start of the viva voce session. If any problems are experienced, contact with the appropriate technical support should be made to enable the viva to start on time.
- d) The faculty/school should ask for a telephone number and the e-mail address where the remote person could be contacted in the case of a problem with the video link.
- e) Any time differences between the locations involved must be taken into account to ensure that the candidate is not at disadvantaged by an examination taking place at an inappropriate time, and bearing in mind the availability of the videoconferencing facilities at each end.
- f) A thorough testing of the connection for sound and vision must be conducted at least 3 days prior to the viva. If there are any doubts about the connection and whether it will last the duration of the viva the viva should not proceed.
- g) It is the responsibility of the candidate, where they have been given permission for an online oral examination to secure appropriate premises with proper videoconferencing facilities.
- h) All related documents which include candidate's CV, examiners' guidelines, examiners' reports, and result's form will be emailed to all panel members three days prior to the session. Candidate must submit via email the presentation slides ONE week before the viva voce session.

3. During the viva

- a) All parties must be visible during the examination.
- b) Where the candidate is the remote party, the candidate should be alone during the examination.
- c) Candidate needs to show their matric card/identity card/passport as evidence of their true identity prior starting the session.
- d) It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure that, at the start of the viva, all are comfortable with the arrangements and that the student and the examiners can see and hear each other.
- e) The candidate should be warned that, should the Examiners have reason to suspect that they are in breach of any of the rules as agreed in the agreement, they would be subject to disciplinary action for examination misconduct, and the viva voce session shall be terminated.
- f) It is expected that all parties would have with them, their own copy of the submitted thesis or proposal.

- g) The session begins with the chairman and panel of examiners to discuss critical issues regarding the thesis, the chairman can change the audio mode of the candidate and supervisor/s into "mute" status.
- h) The session starts with a brief presentation about the dissertation from the candidate. The time allocated is strictly 20 minutes and the chairman is responsible for monitoring the presentation time. The candidate should only focus on major aspects of his or her thesis that should be highlighted. Candidate must submit via email the presentation slides ONE week before the viva voce session.
- i) Examinations will be recorded by the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia only for the purpose of **quality assurance purposes**.
- j) In the event of any failure with the technology before or during the viva, or other concerns regarding the conduct of the viva by videoconference, it is the responsibility of the Chairman to suspend the examination and to decide whether it is possible for the examination to continue or whether the viva should be rescheduled.
- k) The Examiners should normally have the opportunity to convene for an appropriate period prior to the student being invited to the examination. Similarly, when the viva examination has been completed, the candidate should be removed/silenced from the videoconference whilst the Examiners deliberate on their decisions. The candidate should be re-admitted to the session to be informed of the outcome of the examination.
- l) If communication is broken during the examination and a connection cannot be re-established, examination must be terminated and rescheduled.
- m) If communication is broken during the examination and a connection cannot be re-established, the Chairman with consultation with the examiners must decide how much of the viva voce examination was completed at the point the connection was lost and what, therefore, should be covered in the re-scheduled viva examination.
- n) If communication is broken towards the end of an examination, and examiners can jointly agree that further examination would not change their decision, the viva may be concluded and the candidate notified of the examiners' joint recommendation. This should be detailed in the Chairman's report and account should be made of any content that was potentially missed after the break in communication.

4. After the viva

- a) All participants should be asked to confirm at the conclusion of the viva that the holding of the examination by videoconference has had no substantive bearing on the examination process. This confirmation should be stated in the Chairman's report.
- b) Examiners will be invited to comment on the conduct of the viva voce examination using the standard Chairman Final Report form and should refer explicitly to the use of videoconferencing.
- c) A post-viva report should be made by the Chairman at the end of the examination, and should comment on the technical performance of the facilities used in both locations.
- d) Having agreed to a viva voce examination involving videoconferencing the candidate will not be permitted to use this as grounds for appeal, unless the circumstances of technical failure or other

unforeseen eventualities beyond the control of the examiners were deemed to have adversely affected the candidate's performance.

Declaration by the Candidate

I confirm that I have read and understood the Procedures for Conducting Remote Online Examinations, and agree to abide by these Terms and Conditions. I also agree that I will not use the remote online examination involving video conferencing as grounds for appeal.

*** Signature of candidate (ID)**

Name:

Matric No.

Date:

* By signing this declaration, candidates confirm that they have read the Policy and understood the terms contained within it, and accept the responsibilities placed on them in relation to the conduct of a remote *online examination*.