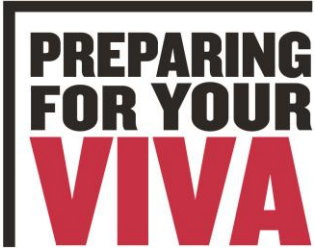




# Preparing for your Viva resources

As part of the QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project (CEP), and to run alongside the video resources, this comprehensive guidance will help you shape and develop your preparations. This includes links to other useful websites, a 30 day countdown calendar and a short checklist that you can run through on the day of your viva.

Try to think of your Viva as “a professional discussion with experts in your field of research and not an exam”  
Sarah Boodt



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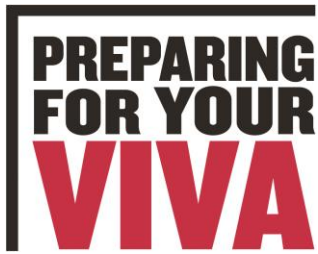
# PREPARING FOR YOUR VIVA

## 30-day countdown

Day	Action	Resources	Done?
30	Re-Read your thesis, write summaries of each chapter that you can refer to easily		
29	Look up your institution's viva preparation resources	Your institutional webpages or VLE, ie. Blackboard, Moodle, Brightspace, Canva, Sharepoint etc.	
28	Watch the video resources from the Supervisors experiences	<a href="#">How to Prepare for the PhD Viva   University of South Wales</a>	
27	Ask your supervisors to conduct a mock viva with you		
26	Go through your thesis bookmarking sections in your thesis which came up in your mock viva		
25	Go for a walk/run/gym session/mindfulness session and relax	<a href="http://www.calm.com">www.calm.com</a>	
24	Speak to your Doctoral College/Doctoral School/Graduate School for a set of Viva cards		
23	Make arrangements for immediately after your viva, to meet your supervisors for a de-brief		
22	Speak to fellow PGRs from your cohort, meet up, discuss your "fears"		
21	Sign up to your institution viva prep session		
20	Find a friend. Colleague outside of your research group, or family member and discuss your research, findings and contribution to knowledge. Ask them to ask you questions		
19	Take a look at a podcast from Viva Survivor	<a href="http://viva-survivors.com/archive/">http://viva-survivors.com/archive/</a>	
18	Read the latest PGR reflective blog	<a href="#">How to Prepare for the PhD Viva   University of South Wales</a>	
17	Go for a walk/run/gym session/mindfulness session and relax	<a href="http://www.calm.com">www.calm.com</a>	
16	Search through your examiners recent publications and research projects to try to gain an understanding of how they may approach questioning you		

# PREPARING FOR YOUR VIVA

15	Arrange a meeting with your supervisory team to discuss any anxieties you may have and confirm which supervisor will be attending your viva (if you have decided you want them to attend)		
14	Read through the summaries you wrote about each chapter of your thesis		
13	Look at your references, select your “top ten” and search for other citations within the last 6 months	<a href="https://scholar.google.com/">https://scholar.google.com/</a>	
12	Arrange to meet up with friends/family/PGR following your viva		
11	Overcoming Imposter Syndrome, read a blog	<a href="https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/impostor-syndrome-tips">https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/impostor-syndrome-tips</a>	
10	Watch the PGR experience videos	<a href="#">How to Prepare for the PhD Viva   University of South Wales</a>	
9	Get advice from researchers all over the world	<a href="#">How to prepare for PhD viva and succeed in 2022? (motivatedacademic.com)</a>	
8	Go for a walk/run/gym session/mindfulness session and relax	<a href="http://www.calm.com">www.calm.com</a>	
7	Make yourself aware of where your viva is being held: if online request a test of the platform, if in person visit the building and room to check how it’s set up		
6	Read the 5 tips for passing your PhD Viva	<a href="#">5 tips for passing your PhD viva   Prospects.ac.uk</a>	
5	Have a day off!		
4	Using your institutional ID log into Vitae and read through their web-pages	<a href="#">Defending your doctoral thesis: the PhD viva — Vitae Website</a>	
3	Check you have the exact same copy of your thesis that your examination team have		
2	Read through the summaries you wrote about each chapter of your thesis		
1	Exercise, eat well, try to get a good night’s sleep		
0	Viva day		



## What is the purpose of a Viva Voce?

### **Purpose from your perspective**

- Chance to 'defend' your work to an expert panel, rationale, objectives, analysis
- To illustrate your understanding of the research topic as well as demonstrating your ability to talk about your work in the wider context
- To discuss the future of the research

### **Purpose from examiners perspective**

- To clarify any ambiguities in the thesis
- To satisfy themselves that the thesis is the candidate's own work
- To ensure that the candidate is familiar with the relation of his/her work to the field of study
- That his/her knowledge and appreciation of adjoining fields in the subject are up to the standard expected for the award of the appropriate degree



## Viva Survivors

Nathan Ryder's website, daily blog, podcast and training workshops provides PGR students with essential support and advice when preparing for their viva examination: <http://viva-survivors.com/>

You can receive daily Viva Survivors blog posts in your inbox by subscribing via <http://viva-survivors.com/subscribe/>



## How to fail your viva

1. Be lazy in your research and writing up
2. Don't follow rules and regulations
3. Don't think about the purpose of the viva
4. One you have submitted wait until your viva date
5. Don't ask or think about the format of the viva
6. Don't re-read you thesis
7. Don't seek help from other people
8. Improvise your thesis defence
9. Be ignorant of your examiners and their research
10. Feel the fear and let it take you over
11. Be stubborn about the undoubted perfection of your thesis
12. Embrace the truth that all vivas are unique

*From 'Fail Your Viva – Twelve Steps to Failing Your PhD (And Fifty-Eight Tips for Passing). The Doctoral Examination Process, A handbook for students, examiners and supervisors' by Nathan Ryder*

## Question prediction

Question type	Purpose	Starts with:
Clarification	<i>Checking that you understand how you did something</i>	"How many ...?" "How did ...?" "When ...?" "What ...?" "What do you mean by ...?"
Check understanding	<i>Checking you understand the theory</i>	"Explain how ..." "Explain the meaning of ..."
Prompt justification/ Defence	<i>What was your rationale, have confidence and defend</i>	"Why" types of question: "Why did you ...?" "Can you explain why ...?" "Can you account for ...?"
Link to broader context	<i>Checking that you have been doing wider reading and can appreciate other work</i>	Questions about application, relevance, contribution to field, originality.  Also comparative questions - "How does your approach compare with ...?"

*Adapted from 'The Doctoral Examination Process, A handbook for students, examiners and supervisors'  
by Penny Tinkler, and Carolyn Jackson*





## Useful Websites

### Vitae

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/>

Most institutions have Vitae membership meaning you can create an account for free using your institutional email address.

The Vitae website is packed full of resources for researchers of all stages and they have devoted sections to preparing for your viva:

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/completing-your-doctorate/your-viva>

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/completing-your-doctorate/your-viva/viva-checklist>

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/supervising-a-doctorate/supporting-candidates-during-the-final-stages-of-a-doctorate/submission-and-viva>

### UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)

During the Covid-19 pandemic, UKCGE provided a range of resources for universities, students, supervisors and examinations to support online supervision, preparation for and delivery of online viva examinations. These resources can be accessed via their website:

<http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/article/supporting-members-during-covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-454.aspx>



## Other websites offering advice

**5 tips for passing your PhD viva:** <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/phd-study/5-tips-for-passing-your-phd-viva>

**How to survive a PhD viva: 17 top tips:** <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2015/jan/08/how-to-survive-a-phd-viva-17-top-tips>

**PhD Surgery: how do I prepare for a PhD oral examination (viva)?:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=votVgyFO8cA>

**Top 10 tips for viva success:** <https://bitesizebio.com/10109/top-10-tips-for-viva-success/>

**How to prepare for your viva:** <https://www.thinkwrite.co.uk/pages/blogs?p=how-to-prepare-for-your-viva>

**Online Viva - Reflections and advice from the front line:** <https://www.researchretold.com/online-viva-reflections-and-advice-from-the-front-line/>

**How to prepare for your PhD viva – Get advice from researchers around the world:**

<https://motivatedacademic.com/prepare-for-phd-viva/>

**Your PhD viva and how to prepare:** <https://career-advice.jobs.ac.uk/studentship-advice/preparing-for-a-phd-viva/>



## Books

The following books may be of interest as part of your preparations:

[Stepping Stones to Achieving your Doctorate: By Focusing on Your Viva From the Start](#), By Vernon Trafford and Shosh Leshem

[The PhD viva: how to prepare for your oral examination](#), By Peter Smith

[How to survive your viva defending a thesis in an oral examination](#), By Rowena Murray

[The Final Hurdle: A guide to a successful viva Paperback](#), By Natalie Mansfield