

# SURVIVING Viva-voce



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# Research Student Examination





- Handing in your PhD thesis is a massive achievement
- BUT it's not the end of the journey for doctoral students.
- Once you've submitted, you'll need to prepare for the next intellectually-gruelling hurdle: a viva.



- The term 'viva' comes from the Latin phrase *viva voce*, which literally means 'by word of mouth' or 'with living voice'.
- Verbal defence which has pretty much the same connotation as the word *viva*.

# Expectation..

- The main task of a candidate when placed in such a context is to justify the propositions made in written work (e.g. dissertation, thesis...).
- The candidate is also required to exhibit extensive knowledge of the written thesis through verbal defence
- demonstrating sound presentation skills, as well as the ability to communicate clearly and convincingly.

# Purpose...

- This oral examination is a chance for students to discuss their work with experts.
- To ensure that there's no plagiarism involved,
- The student understands and can explain their thesis.
- It involves lots of penetrating questions, conceptually complex debates and is infamously terrifying.

# OUR RESULTS..

VIVA	2013		2014		2015	
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%
(a)	1	0.3	1	0.2	7	1.1
(b1)	84	22.8	103	18.5	144	23.3
(b2)	253	68.8	404	72.4	406	65.8
<b>( c ) No Reviva</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>6.0</b>
<b>(c) reviva</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3.6</b>
(d)	0	0.0	3	0.5	1	0.2
(e)	1	0.3	1	0.2	0	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>100</b>

# COMMON MISTAKES THE VIVA





# UNDERSTANDING on institution's policies and practices Related to Viva

- Institutional policies and practices vary.
- Understand the setting of the viva
- Aware of the outcome of the examination
- Find out who will attend your viva (eg will a supervisor attend, will there be an independent chair?)
- What their roles in the session?

# Failed to Re-read your thesis – and keep up-to-date with research

- Don't underestimate the amount of time the examiners will have spent reading and thinking about your thesis –
- you should remember that you are still likely to be the “expert in the room” on this particular topic.
- Check to see if any relevant recent papers have emerged since submitting the thesis

# Presentation Preparation

- Not in proper order – should highlight aim, objectives, methodology, findings and conclusion
- Hence failed to show contribution/achievement
- Cut and paste from the thesis
- Too many slides for 30 minutes presentation
- Not well prepared
- Not practice for presentation

# Underestimate examiners' expertise

- Viva panel will consist of experts in the subject area and in a subject field associated or directly related to candidates
- The examiner is the one who mainly calls and fires all the shots and so it's pretty important to have a knowledge of their published contributions, especially those that are related to your thesis in any way.

# Failed to identify what to defend and what not..

- Failure to carefully considered what they will defend to the hilt in the viva, and what they are prepared to concede.
- Fail to defend claims about the originality of the thesis and its contribution to knowledge.
- No research is perfect, and showing work have been done differently, or even better, is not a bad thing.

# Failed to exhibit knowledge

- Expected to know ‘inside and out’ of your research -
- Core content – normally content of the examination is determined by the content in your thesis.
- To win in battleground for the thesis defence, the best strategy is to stick to the material you know best in your writing! – which most failed to realised

# Talk like a politician

- Danger of not knowing your stuff
- Fabricate knowledge to impress examiners
- There's a danger of over-prepare.
- pre-prepared answers they become a bit like politicians, answering questions they weren't asked rather than the ones they were.
- Don't learn answers off by heart – it removes the spontaneity and is obvious to examiners.

# Respond Negatively

- Negative respond to a weakness in your research:
  - give a general, resigned declaration that "this happens in every study"
  - blame supervisor
  - blame data
  - say "that was beyond the scope of my study" without giving a cogent argument to support the statement
  - dismiss as unimportant what has been identified as a weakness
- **Emotional**
- **Get in dispute with panel**



- No interaction with panel.
- Badly prepared slides.
- Presentation not focused.
- Talking too softly or too fast. • Presentation too long.
- No flow.
- Language problem. • Monotonous.

## So..

- Be nice during whole session.
- DO NOT SAY “... I do not know. My supervisor only ask me to ...”.
- DO NOT ARGUE OR BE TOO DEFENSIVE.  
Accept criticism.
- YES and NO answers !
- Being evasive.
- You are free to express your point of view but don't indulge yourself into prolong discussion to prove your point

# Remember..

- ◆ Don't ARGUE!  
Accept errors, omissions, examiners personal views and criticism (don't be too defensive). •
- ◆ Address examiners properly: Find out who they are (Prof /Assoc Prof / Dr)
- ◆ Reply INTELLIGENTLY
- ◆ DEFEND your work. Be AGREEABLE with them, although they DON'T AGREE with you.
- ◆ Remember, AGREE  AGREEABLE

# Outcomes of the Viva

DECISION	DURATION OF CORRECTION	THE CORRECTED THESIS WILL BE VERIFIED AND CERTIFIED BY;
a	2 weeks/3 weeks	supervisor
b1	Max 1 month	Supervisor
b2	Up to 6 month	Internal
	(2- 6 months)	External
		Both
c	6- 12 months	Thesis Re-examination by both examiners
c	6 – 12 months	Thesis Reexamination and re-viva
d	3 months	Supervisor
e	-	-

# **Analysis from Viva Session**

# How to get 'a'

- Novel and significant contribution
- State of Art
- Recognised local and international
- Thesis Well written – free from grammatical errors
- Research presented well to the panel
- Critical review of literature
- Presentation with attitude

# Analysis 'C' : Thesis examination

- Introduction – problem not well formulated –not clear, scope unjustifiable, failure to highlight the specific issue, failure to explain the framework of the study, objective (s) is/are not clear
- No identification on research gaps that candidate to conduct the research.
- Rewrite the chapter 1 on problem statement, objectives and scopes.
- There is no Problem Statement. Need to be included.
- Some of Research Objective is not suitable. Should highlight the development that has been done.

## Literature review-

- not justified, not done in organized manner, failure to highlight the theoretical background, failure to produce conceptual framework, no critical review, discussion poorly presented, lack of actual review
- Not many references are recent. Only 15 out of 70 references are from 2005 onwards. Only 2 out of 15 are from 2010 onwards.
- The newer and recent citations are missing from bibliography.
- Add more critical analysis.



# Comments on Methodology

- Methodology – superfluous, minimal justification, unclear and disorganized flow of methodology,
- no specific sampling and justification for method selection,
- no clarity on how questions are developed,
- failure to relate the questionnaire to aim and objectives of research
- Revised the framework.
- The research methodology is not tally with the problem in this study.

# Analysis

- No desired findings been produced
- No investigation/analysis was carried out in real practice
- Not rigorous, poorly written and not structured
- Incapable of linking the literature
- No sufficient justification for method of analysis selection
- Poorly supported
- Analysis not clear and doubtful
- Element of fabrication

# More..

- The content of the analysis must be revised to answer the objective(s) in this study.
- Revise according to improved methodology.
- Content analysis must be revised.
- Add the structural model for the analyses.
- The entire write up needs to be re-written later based on the objectives stated in Chapter 1.
- The current scope of your work is not sufficient for a PhD level study.
- Need more justification and discussion in the statistical approach used in the study.

# Results and Discussion

- Explanation of result contradict with the theory
- Data presented was not critically examined
- Calculation/modeling are not clearly explained
- No visible framework
- The discussion was very superficial. The candidate did not relate the discussions to the research questions.

Thank You..