


Chapter 7

Mastering Your Viva: A Guide to Success

Alan Swiercz

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9894-6075>

Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

Melissa Mesek

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9707-6727>

Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the purpose of a Viva, with a particular emphasis on providing guidance to Ph.D. candidates on how to successfully complete it within the United States (U.S.) academic context. Using secondary literature sources, the chapter informs Ph.D. candidates about the Viva examination. It explains what a Viva is and why it is necessary, outlines the examination process and outcomes, provides practice and preparation strategies, presents frequently asked Viva questions, and delivers tips and encouragement to support candidates in successfully passing their Viva. The literature findings highlight that practice and preparation are key for success. Ph.D. candidates can enhance their readiness by managing their time effectively, having an in-depth knowledge of their doctoral thesis and their examiners' publications, practicing common Viva questions through Mock Viva sessions, and understanding how to manage anxiety before, during and after the examination. Knowing how to navigate the Viva process is essential, as it marks the final stage of the Ph.D. journey.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-5676-1.ch007

INTRODUCTION

The Viva is regarded as the final stage of the Ph.D. journey (Watts, 2012). However, numerous myths and misconceptions surround the Viva process, which may hinder doctoral candidates' chances of success (Tan, 2022). This book chapter seeks to demystify the Viva by providing a clear and evidence-based overview of what doctoral candidates in the United States can expect before, during, and after their Viva examination. This Introduction provides an overview of the Viva examination and is organized into four sections. *Introduction to the Viva Examination*, introduces the concept and the purpose of the Viva examination. *Why is this Chapter Useful?* explains how this chapter serves not only doctoral candidates but also prospective Ph.D. students and doctoral supervisors. It outlines the structure of the chapter, guiding the reader through the content of each section.

Introduction to the Viva Examination

The term Viva, formally known as *Viva voce*, translates to 'a living voice' in Latin (Cortazzi & Jin, 2021). *Viva voce* is referred to by various names, including Viva, oral examination, oral interview, oral test, and Ph.D. defence (Pearce & Lee, 2009; Cortazzi & Jin, 2021). During the Viva, the Ph.D. candidate engages in a formal discussion with senior academics (examiners) recognized as experts in the field of study addressed in the thesis (Bedwell & Butcher, 2022). The examiners will question the Ph.D. candidate on the content of each chapter, and it is the candidate's responsibility to verbally defend their doctoral work. Upon successfully passing the examination, the candidate is awarded the doctoral title. The Viva, therefore, assesses the candidate's "doctoralness" which refers to their readiness and ability to meet the standards required for a doctorate (Powell & Green, 2007).

The purpose of the Viva varies across cultural contexts. Some institutions view it solely as an assessment tool, others emphasize its developmental role, while some regard it as a ritualistic component (Nir & Bogler, 2021). Generally, however, the Viva serves four key purposes. Firstly, the examiners need to verify the authorship of the Ph.D. thesis which means that they must understand whether this is the candidate's own work. Secondly, the examiners come onboard with an open mind to learn further about aspects of the candidate's written thesis which they can expand upon in the oral format of the Viva. Thirdly, the Viva's purpose is to confirm that the candidate can defend their own work adequately. Fourthly and lastly, the Viva's purpose is to demonstrate how well the doctoral candidate is able to teach others about their doctoral topic. Therefore, the Viva is a vital component of the Ph.D. journey, even though it can cause anxiety for some candidates (Wallace, 2003; Sikes, 2017). The Viva gives Ph.D. candidates the chance to engage in discussions with

28 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/mastering-your-viva/384275

Related Content

An Extended Case of Reciprocity-in-Kind: The Western Metaphysics on Indigenous Science

(2022). *Reciprocity and Its Practice in Social Research* (pp. 167-197).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-extended-case-of-reciprocity-in-kind/310627

How Continuous Improvement Can Support Logistics: A Reflection of Best Practices

Brian J. Galli (2018). *International Journal of Strategic Engineering* (pp. 1-23).

www.irma-international.org/article/how-continuous-improvement-can-support-logistics/196601

How Can Human Resource Management Help the Theory of Constraints

Brian J. Galli (2019). *International Journal of Strategic Engineering* (pp. 1-13).

www.irma-international.org/article/how-can-human-resource-management-help-the-theory-of-constraints/219320

Contemporary Issues in the Ethics of Data Analytics in Ride-Hailing Service

Victor Chang, Yujie Shiand Xuemin Li (2019). *International Journal of Strategic Engineering* (pp. 44-57).

www.irma-international.org/article/contemporary-issues-in-the-ethics-of-data-analytics-in-ride-hailing-service/230937

Introduction to Qualitative Research

(2024). *Foundational Theories and Practical Applications of Qualitative Research Methodology* (pp. 1-17).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/introduction-to-qualitative-research/348389