

Viva Voce Policy and Procedure for Long Essays, and Dissertations.

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Version History

VERSION	DESCRIPTION	AUTHORS	APPROVAL	EFFECTIVE DATE
1	Initial version			

Related Policies

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External References

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Definitions

ARPB	A formally appointed board responsible for overseeing research and publications within the ITS.
Viva Voce Board	The panel which assesses student's long essay, dissertation, or thesis through oral assessment.
Student	The author of the long essay, dissertation, or thesis being assessed by the Viva Voce Board.
Chair of ARPB	The chairperson of the Academic Research and Publications Board.
Course Programme Coordinator	The person responsible for the overall coordination of the course programme.

Abbreviations

ARPB	Academic Research and Publications Board
HND TG	Higher National Diploma in Tour Guiding
COO - Academia	Chief Operating Officer - Academia
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies

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Purpose, Scope, and Eligibility

1. Purpose

This policy establishes the procedure for the conduct of Viva Voce assessments for long essay, and dissertations at the ITS.

A Viva Voce is an oral assessment before a formally appointed panel. It provides students with the opportunity to present, explain, and defend their research work. It also allows the Viva Voce Panel to verify the student's understanding of their research, assess the authenticity of the work, and ensure consistency and transparency in the assessment process.

The Viva Voce is also intended to inform the student whether their research may proceed to be printed as submitted for examination or whether amendments are required before final submission to the ITS library.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Students undertaking long essays, and dissertations at Level 5 and above where a Viva Voce is required by the programme or requested by a relevant academic authority at ITS.
- Students whose research output requires further verification due to concerns relating to authorship, academic integrity, similarity, plagiarism, the declared or apparent use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), ethics approval, or borderline performance. Where concerns relating to GenAI use or the authenticity of the student's work arise, the student may be referred to a Viva Voce for the purpose of establishing the student's authorship, understanding of the submitted work, use of GenAI tools, and compliance with relevant institutional academic integrity requirements.
- Research outputs where the supervisor/tutor, second reader/examiner, Course Programme Coordinator, Chair of the ARPB, E-Learning Coordinator, E-Learning Board, or another relevant academic authority identifies concerns that warrant further verification through a Viva Voce. Cases where a research output has obtained a borderline mark, i.e., within three marks of the pass mark (both higher and lower) or where further clarification of the student's understanding and research decisions is required.
- Research outputs where concerns arise regarding the research methodology, analysis, conclusions, referencing, ethics, or overall academic quality.

3. Objectives of the Viva Voce

The objectives of the Viva Voce are to:

- Verify that the student is the author of the submitted long essay, or dissertation.
- Allow the student to present a summary of the research, including the aims, methodology, findings, conclusions, and contribution of the study.
- Assess the student's understanding of the theoretical and practical decisions made throughout the research process.
- Allow the student to defend the methodology, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations presented in the dissertation.
- Provide the Viva Voce Panel with the opportunity to clarify inconsistencies, weaknesses, or areas of concern within the long essay, or dissertation.
- Assess the student's ability to critically evaluate the research and relate it to existing literature, current practice, and relevant industry or academic contexts.
- Provide formative feedback to the student on the quality of the research and any required amendments before printing and final submission.
- Determine the academic integrity and authenticity of the submitted work, including, where relevant, the student's declared or apparent use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), and whether such use complies with applicable institutional policies, assessment requirements and declarations.

The Procedure

4. Composition of the Viva Voce Panel

The Viva Voce Panel shall consist of three members:

- The chair of the Viva Voce Panel, appointed by the chair of the ARPB.
- The student's dissertation supervisor/tutor.
- The student's second reader appointed jointly by the coordinator of the course programme and the chair of the ARPB.

Where a Viva Voce has been convened wholly or partly because of concerns relating to GenAI use or associated academic integrity matters, the E-Learning Coordinator shall determine whether specialist representation from the E-Learning Board is required at the Viva Voce. Where the E-Learning Coordinator determines that such representation is appropriate, an E-Learning Board member may attend the Viva Voce in an advisory capacity.

The E-Learning Board representative shall not constitute an additional member of the Viva Voce Panel and shall not have voting rights in relation to the assessment outcome or mark. The representative may provide specialist advice relating to GenAI use, authorship and academic integrity and, where invited by the Chair of the Viva Voce Panel, may participate in the questioning of the student.

The chair and second reader of the Viva Voce Panel shall declare any conflict of interest before the Viva Voce is conducted. Appointments are confirmed in writing by email to the Course Programme Coordinator, two to three weeks before the Viva Voce meeting date.

The appointments of the Viva Voce Panel shall be conducted as follows:

- The number of students attending the master's programmes shall determine the number of Viva Voce meetings. In cases of high AI% for other programmes, the e-learning coordinator shall inform the chair of the ARPB of any Viva Voce meeting required.
- The chair of the ARPB draws a Viva Voce schedule and appoints the chairs of the Viva in an ARPB meeting. The course programme coordinator is informed of the chairs of the Viva Voce.
- The students and supervisors are listed in the Viva Voce schedule.
- The course programme coordinator appoints the second readers who are approved by the Chair of the ARPB.

5. Responsibilities of the Viva Voce Panel

Members of the Viva Voce Panel shall:

- Maintain confidentiality throughout the process.
- to review relevant documentation before the Viva Voce, including plagiarism and AI reports
- Where the Viva Voce has been convened wholly or partly because of concerns relating to GenAI use or academic integrity, consider any relevant evidence, reports, declarations, questions or areas for investigation submitted by the E-Learning Coordinator or E-Learning Board.
- Where specialist advice concerning GenAI use is required, the Viva Voce Panel may receive guidance from the E-Learning Coordinator or a nominated E-Learning Board representative. Responsibility for the conduct of the Viva Voce, the assessment decision and any mark awarded shall remain with the formally appointed Viva Voce Panel.
- Ask appropriate, fair, and academically relevant questions.
- Complete and sign the Viva Voce assessment documentation.
- Indicate clearly whether the research output may be printed as submitted or whether amendments are required before it is submitted to the ITS library.
- Ensure that the student is treated professionally and respectfully throughout.

6. Responsibilities of the Student

The student shall:

- Attend the Viva Voce at the scheduled date, time, and venue.
- Prepare adequately for the Viva Voce with the support of the supervisor/tutor.
- Present and defend their research to the best of their ability.
- Respond to the Viva Voce Panel's questions clearly and professionally.
- Complete any required amendments before printing and final submission.

- Submit final hardbound and soft copies in line with stipulated requirements for each course programme.
- Request any special access arrangements, where applicable, when the Viva Voce date is set, and send such requests by email to the course programme coordinator within 1 week of confirmation date.

7. Responsibilities of the Supervisor/Tutor

The supervisor/tutor shall:

- Support the student in the preparation of the Viva Voce.
- Attend the Viva Voce as a member of the Viva Voce Panel.
- Contribute to the questioning and feedback process.
- Support the panel in determining if amendments are required before printing.
- Follow up with the student where amendments are required.
- Confirm whether the required amendments have been completed satisfactorily.
- Approve the long essay, dissertation, or thesis for printing only once the required amendments have been completed.

8. Pre-Viva Voce Procedure

The Course Programme Coordinator shall prepare a schedule of timeslots for students, indicating the student's name, supervisor/tutor, second reader, date, time, venue, and appointed Chair of the Viva Voce Panel.

The Chair of the Viva Voce shall inform the student, supervisor/tutor, and second reader of the date, time, and venue of the Viva Voce in writing.

The course coordinator shall inform the student whether he/she would like the Viva Voce to be conducted in English or Maltese. The student must confirm the desired chosen language within 5 days to the course coordinator by email.

The Chair of the Viva Voce Board should receive the supervisor's report and second reader's report in advance to allow for adequate preparation. These reports shall not be divulged to the other party before the meeting.

Where concerns relating to GenAI use or associated academic integrity matters have been identified, the E-Learning Coordinator or E-Learning Board may provide the Chair of the Viva Voce Panel with a set of questions, areas for investigation, or other relevant information relating to the student's use of GenAI and the resulting academic integrity and authenticity of the submitted work.

Such material should, where practicable, be provided to the Chair sufficiently in advance of the Viva Voce to allow it to be considered alongside the supervisor's and second reader's reports. The Chair of the Viva Voce Board shall determine how these questions or areas for investigation are incorporated into the Viva Voce, ensuring that questioning remains fair, academically relevant and proportionate to the concerns identified.

The E-Learning Coordinator shall determine whether the nature or extent of the identified GenAI concerns additionally warrants the attendance of an E-Learning Board representative at the Viva Voce.

Any specialist questions, reports, evidence or other documentation supplied for this purpose shall form part of the confidential Viva Voce record and shall be retained in accordance with the institution's applicable record-retention requirements.

The room shall be equipped with appropriate presentation facilities, including a screen, monitor, or television where required.

Students shall be informed of the Viva Voce requirements and expectations at least ten working days in advance.

9. Structure of the Viva Voce

The Viva Voce shall normally follow this sequence:

- Viva Voce Panel meets 15 minutes before the student enters the room to discuss the dissertation and agree on key areas for questioning.
- The Viva Voce meeting is conducted face to face, or where approved, online using ITS platforms.
- The Viva Voce meeting is not to be recorded.
- Student enters room to deliver a presentation (maximum of 20 minutes).
- The Viva Voce Panel asks questions and engages the student in discussion for a maximum of 40 minutes.
- The chair of the viva voce can ask the student if there is a need to clarify a point in English or Maltese. There needs to be mutual agreement to switch in Maltese or English during the Viva.
- Student temporarily leaves the room.
- Viva Voce Panel deliberates and prepares structured feedback.
- Student re-enters the room.
- Viva Voce Panel provides structured feedback and explains the next steps, including whether the dissertation may be printed as submitted or whether amendments are required.
- A maximum of two hours should be allowed for each Viva Voce to ensure that all components can be completed without undue haste.

Students are encouraged to prepare thoroughly, speak naturally, and engage professionally with the panel. Cue cards may be used.

Viva Voce Outcomes and Communication of Marks

10. Viva Voce Outcomes

No marks shall be communicated to the student during the Masters Viva Voce. Nonetheless, the Viva Voce Panel shall complete the Viva Voce assessment sheet, including feedback and the mark

allocated out of 30%. The assessment sheet shall be signed by all three members of the Viva Voce Panel and forwarded to the Course Programme Coordinator and the Chair of the ARPB. With regards to HND long essays and UG dissertations, no marks shall be allocated to the Viva Voce meeting as the outcome will be approved or not approved.

During the Viva Voce feedback session, the Panel shall inform the student whether the dissertation may be printed as submitted or whether amendments are required before printing. Where amendments are required, the tutor/supervisor shall be responsible for following up with the student and confirming that the required changes have been completed satisfactorily. Required amendments shall not result in a change to the mark awarded by the Viva Voce Panel. The mark shall remain final, subject only to the institution's formal appeals procedures.

A student shall not be permitted to print or submit the final dissertation until all required amendments have been completed and approved by the tutor/supervisor. Where the required amendments are not completed, the student's mark shall be withheld until the amendments are finalised and approval to print is granted.

If a student fails to attend the Viva Voce, they must submit their justified reasons to the Chair of the ARPB. The ARPB shall determine the outcome based on the justification provided. In cases of illness, a valid medical certificate must be submitted. If the reason for non-attendance is not accepted, the student shall be deemed to have failed the dissertation. If a student fails the Viva Voce, the student shall be deemed to have failed the dissertation and shall be informed of the next steps, including one resit opportunity. No third opportunity shall be granted.

11. Communication of Feedback and Marks

Students shall receive their official feedback and marks in writing from Registrar's Office only after the final hardbound and soft copies have been submitted to the ITS Library, in accordance with the dissertation submission timeline issued by the Chair of the ARPB.

Where amendments are required, the dissertation may not be printed or submitted until the tutor/supervisor confirms that the required changes have been completed. The official final mark shall be issued through the Registrar's Office in line with institutional procedures.

Ethical Principles, Governance and Accountability

12. Review Quality Control

- The chair of the ARPB will assess all assessment reports for thoroughness and impartiality. Reports failing to meet quality standards will be highlighted.

13. Complaint Handling

- All complaints must be referred to the complaints and appeals policy and procedure.

14. Appeals Process

- All appeals are referred to the complaints and appeals policy and procedure.

15. Record Keeping

- All complaints, appeals, resolutions, reports, and relevant correspondence shall will be recorded and archived securely according to ITS policies.

Document Retention

Category	Retention Period
Viva Voce Assessment Sheet	3 years

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if necessitated by regulatory or institutional changes.

Document Control

Version	Purpose of Review/ Changes	Date Published	Date of Next Review
1	Initial version		