

## **Interim Video Conference Policy for Oral Examinations**

Oral examination in person is the preferred mode for research degree candidates as it provides the best opportunity for a consistent student experience and the examination to be conducted fairly and objectively. On occasions, there may be significant considerations which limit a candidate or external examiner's ability to be able to travel to Manchester Metropolitan University. A request for the examination to be carried out by video-conferencing may be made.

### **1 Reasons for an Oral Examination by Video Conferencing**

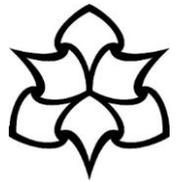
- 1.1 Valid reasons for a request to hold an oral examination by video conferencing are listed below. The list is indicative and non-exhaustive. Other circumstances may be considered.
- Disability, illness, or restricted mobility which prevents travel to the University or would cause unnecessary hardship.
  - Travel restrictions which are outside of the control of the candidate or external examine and can be externally verified, e.g. due to Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) or equivalent travel advice.
  - Limited availability of an external examiner and no appropriate alternative is available within a reasonable timeframe and the student agrees. A distance learning student will be offered the option of an oral examination by video conferencing or a face to face oral examination.
- 1.2 The decision to refuse a request to conduct an oral examination via video conferencing is final.

### **2. Consent**

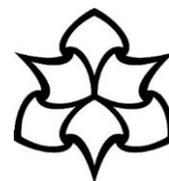
- 2.1 All parties must confirm their consent in writing to conduct an oral examination by video conferencing, and the presence of any observers at either location, before the oral examination date is arranged.
- 2.2 The student, Independent Chair, Examiners, and Director of Studies (all parties) must be made aware of the potential difficulties of using video link technology to conduct the oral examination.
- 2.3 Candidates must agree that the use of video conferencing for the oral examination is not in itself a ground for appealing the outcome.

### **3. Oral Examination Conditions**

- 3.1 The remote participant(s) will be in an appropriate location such as a Higher Education Institution or University building or library, in a closed room without additional occupants or observers, unless otherwise previously agreed by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.
- 3.2 All parties must be visible throughout the examination. The video of the candidates must allow the examiners to confirm that the students is alone.



- 3.3 Participants attending the oral examination in a Manchester Metropolitan University building must be accommodated in a suitable video conferencing enabled room.
- 3.4 The equipment and conferencing software should be tested in advance.
- 3.5 Sufficient time must be allowed for confirming the equipment is working and the remote connection has been made immediately prior to the start of the oral examination.
- 3.6 Use software supported by Manchester Met which is currently Skype for Business
- 3.7 The examining team must be provided time to confer privately before and after the oral examination itself.
- 3.8 Upon commencement of the oral examination, the remote party will satisfy the other participants that their location meets examination conditions as stipulated in 3.1.



## **Examination by Video Conference Procedure**

### **1. Request for Approval**

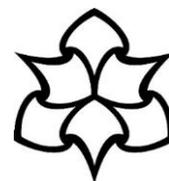
- 1.1 The Director of Study notifies the Research Degrees Team of the intention to conduct the oral examination by video conferencing by completion of the appropriate form. For students enrolled on a Distance Learning Programme the intention to conduct the oral exam by video conference would have been recorded in the Progress Review (RD2)
- 1.2 The formal request is submitted 3 months prior to thesis submission and requests details of:
  - The student's supervisory team
  - Reasons for request
  - Any reasonable adjustments required by a Personal Learning Plan (PLP)
  - Proposed location of all participants in the oral examination
  - Proposed software, if university supported software is not proposed, there should be justification of this proposal including who will provide support in the event of any technical difficulty
  - Consent of student and the proposed examination team
- 1.3 The form is submitted to the Research Degrees Team, and considered and approved by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee or their delegate **before** the oral examination date is arranged.

### **2. General Video Conferencing Arrangements**

- 2.1 Reasonable adjustments will be made for the oral examination in accordance with a PLP. Adjustments must be agreed prior to the oral examination and in consultation with Disability Services.
- 2.2 The Director of Studies is responsible for booking a suitable video conferencing enabled room. At least a week prior to the oral examination the Director of Studies is responsible for testing the video conference link. A contingency plan in the event of technical failure must be agreed beforehand. The technician will leave when the oral examination commences.
- 2.3 The oral examination date, time (allowing additional time before and after) and the location is to be agreed with all parties
- 2.4 Any local time difference must be taken into account and the student must not be disadvantaged by an examination taking place at an inappropriate time. Normally such examinations will take place within working hours for all participants. Where this is not feasible, e.g. due to time differences, no participant should feel under pressure to agree to arrangements that may disadvantage them or compromise the examination. Examiners would not normally be expected to examine outside normal working hours, unless agreed in advance.
- 2.5 It is not possible to conduct the oral examination using video conference to more than one location.

### **3. Video Conferencing arrangements before examination**

- 3.1 Provision must be made to allow examiners to confer privately before and after the oral examination itself.



- 3.2 All remote oral examinations must be conducted using visual as well as audio interaction. It is not possible for an oral examination to be conducted with audio only or by phone.
- 4. Video Conferencing arrangements during examination**
- 4.1 The content and conduct of the video conference examination should be the same as a normal oral examination i.e. closed room, no additional occupants unless consent given.
- 4.2 The student's identity must be verified at the start of the oral examination by a staff member of the student's Faculty
- 4.3 The examination must not be recorded.
- 4.4 If communication is broken during the examination and a connection cannot be reestablished, the examination must be terminated and rescheduled, normally within one month. The examiners must decide how much of the oral examination was completed at the point the connection was lost and what, therefore, should be covered in the re-scheduled oral examination.
- 4.5 If communication is broken towards the end of an examination, and examiners can jointly agree that further examination would not change their decision, the oral examination may be concluded and the candidate notified of the examiners' joint recommendation. This should be detailed in the outcome report and account should be made of any content that was potentially missed after the break in communication.
- 5. Video Conferencing arrangements after examination**
- 5.1 It is important to bear in mind that the student will require support in the event of an undesirable outcome, and therefore sufficient support should be offered by the examination team and the Director Studies. It would be advisable for candidates to have someone available locally to support them after the oral examination.
- 5.2 Examiners should close or mute the audio and visual connection whilst they discuss the examination outcomes and reach their joint decision. It is advised that the candidate should be informed of the approximate time that this discussion will take and when to be on hand to discuss the examiners' decision.
- 5.3 Where the external examiner is the remote party, the student should be asked to leave the room.
- 5.4 The student should be informed of the outcome of their oral examination as soon as possible and the procedures for outcomes and corrections should be explained to the candidate.
- 5.5 Outcomes are the same as normal face to face oral examinations and the Independent Chair is required to complete the RD Outcome form on SkillsForge.
- 5.6 The use of a video conference examination is not in itself sufficient grounds for an appeal.