Guidance on the Audio Recording of Vivas

It is a regulatory requirement that their viva is either recorded (audio) or is conducted in the presence of an Independent Chair.

Audio Recording Equipment

- The audio equipment for vivas taking place on Campus has been provided centrally. If there are any queries, please contact Ben Credland (Faculty Manager for Management and Economics): ben.credland@rhul.ac.uk / x.4627.
- The audio equipment should be stored with a member of the departmental administrative staff (normally the PG administrator), who will be responsible for its general upkeep, for preparing it for the viva and for ensuring that the recording is stored securely and dealt with appropriately (see below).
- For vivas taking place at Bedford Square, there are 5 audio recorders available. The equipment should be reserved in advance through the administrator at Bedford Square, when the room is booked for the viva. Contact details: bedfordsquare@rhul.ac.uk / tel: 020 7307 8604. Please indicate when booking a room at Bedford Square that the room is for a viva.
- Please note that for vivas held at Senate House it is the academic department’s responsibility to either provide the audio recording equipment or to arrange to book and collect it from Bedford Square.

Prior to the Viva

Candidate
The candidates are informed in section A of the MPhil/PhD Exam Entry form whether their Department has opted for the audio recording method. They are informed that:

- the recording will only be made during the viva between them and the examiners. No recording will be made of any discussion held before or after the viva when they are not present
- the recording will only be listened to in the event of an appeal made against the viva outcome, and only by a small number of staff who are involved in the investigation into the appeal
- the recording will be kept securely for 2 months after they have been informed of the outcome, after which time it will be destroyed

Examiners
The examiners are informed by Student Administration in their invitation letter whether the viva they will be conducting will be recorded. They will also be sent an ‘Examiners’ Guide to the Recording of Vivas’ to explain the purpose of the recording and how the recording should be administered. A reminder about this aspect of the viva will be sent when their copy of the thesis is dispatched to them.

Supervisor
If the candidate’s viva is to be recorded, Student Administration will remind the supervisor of this when they are asked to organise the viva.

PG Administrator (or other designated departmental administrative staff member)
As well as being copied in to all correspondence between the supervisor and Student Administration regarding the date of the viva, PG administrators should check that they are aware of the dates of all the vivas in their Department by running the Infoview report:

‘Postgraduate_Research_Student_Viva_Dates_by_Department’.

Prior to the viva, the PG administrator should:

- check that the battery life and volume settings of the recorder and that it is otherwise functioning satisfactorily.
- check that it has been wiped clean since the previous viva
- help with the set up of the equipment on the day (if required)

If the viva is to be held at Bedford Square, the PG administrator should ensure that the audio equipment has been booked (bedfordsquare@rhul.ac.uk / tel: 020 7307 8604).

On the Day of the Viva

Supervisor
It is requested that the supervisor ensures that the audio equipment is set up for the viva and that the examiners know...
where to return the equipment and recording to at the end of the viva. Viva recordings must be returned to PG Administrators. Supervisors are not permitted to keep personal copies of viva recordings.

If viva is being held at Bedford Square or Senate House, please see instructions below.

Examiners
The internal University of London examiner should take responsibility for ensuring that the viva is recorded. Student Administration will have provided them with the following guidelines:

• The recording device should only be on when the candidate is present i.e. the discussion of the panel should not be recorded
• The internal examiner is responsible for starting and stopping the recording
• It should be announced at the start of the viva recording who is present.
• At the end of the viva, the audio equipment and recording should be returned directly to the PG administrator
• If the viva is held at Bedford Square or Senate House, please see instructions below.

After the Viva

PG Administrator
The PG administrator should:

• extract the electronic copy and store it securely on a network drive or USB stick to be kept on the student’s file
• ensure that the recording is wiped from the recorder once the electronic copy has been extracted
• delete the electronic file 2 months after the candidate has been informed of the outcome
• Please find guidance on how to compress and uncompress files at the link below:
  http://windows.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows/compress-uncompress-files-zip-files#1TC=windows-7

Bedford Square Vivas
For vivas held at Bedford Square:

• Please note it is the responsibility of the academic department to check that the recording device is working before the viva commences. If it is not working, an alternative machine will be supplied by Bedford Square Reception.
• It is the responsibility of the academic department to wipe the memory of the recording device before they commence the viva, of any data recorded during a previous viva.
• After the viva, it is the responsibility of the academic department to transfer the viva recording from the recording device onto one of the computers in the PC Lab at Bedford Square. The viva recording can then be transferred onto a memory stick (supplied within the Dictaphone kit) and/or emailed to a secure location/member of staff etc.
• It is the responsibility of the academic department to ensure that the data has been successfully received by the intended recipient and/or successfully transferred to a memory stick. Bedford Square kindly asks that memory sticks supplied by them are returned with the Dictaphone kit. Please note they will be wiped the next time they are used. They suggest that academic departments bring their own memory sticks with them, since the supply of memory sticks at Bedford Square is limited.
• Please note that whilst it is the responsibility of the Bedford Square Receptionist to provide the academic department with adequate equipment to record the viva, responsibility for ensuring the viva is recorded properly and then transferred/emailed to a separate location is that of the academic department. It is also the responsibility of the academic department to ensure that the data can be successfully played back from its secure and safe location, not the responsibility of the Bedford Square Receptionist.

1) The following options are available:
   If the supervisor attends the viva, they ensure it is successfully audio-recorded, transferred to a memory stick/emailed to a separate secure location and that the audio recording of the viva is delivered to the PG administrator for storage after the viva.

2) If the supervisor is unable to attend, that they liaise with the examiners and check that one of them is comfortable with setting up the audio-recording equipment and recording the viva and that they post the audio recording back to the PG administrator after the viva. Please note the supervisor must provide the examiners with a USB stick to save the recording on.

3) If neither of the above options are viable, that another member of staff from the academic department ensures the viva is audio recorded as above.

Senate House Vivas

• It is the responsibility of the academic department to either provide audio recording equipment or to arrange for audio recording equipment to be booked, collected from and returned to Bedford Square. The audio recording of the viva must be returned to the PG Administrator.