



Guidance for PhD students on arranging reasonable adjustments for a Viva assessment

It is the legal duty of any education provider to ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities and/or specific learning difficulties are in place so that the performance of students during their examination/assessment period is not disadvantaged.

Reasonable Adjustments

In order to be considered for reasonable adjustments, you will need to be registered with the [Disability & Neurodiversity Service](#) (DNS). A support agreement outlining any reasonable adjustments being recommended by our service will be forwarded to the Doctoral School Network Member. Support agreements can be updated if additional requirements are identified at a later date but any agreed reasonable adjustments must be in place at least one month before your viva so that all parties can be informed. Details of your support agreement will be shared with your supervisor, independent chair, and any examiners.

To ease the process and reduce any pressure and anxiety, the following guidelines are recommended for candidates:

- Be open about your needs, disability and/or learning difficulties. Discuss any concerns that have not been addressed in your Support Agreement with your supervisor and DNS in advance;
- If you are unsure about the type of adjustments available, please contact us for further information;
- If your supervisor is unaware of your needs you can advise them to refer to the Doctoral School Network Member for further information. You can also discuss your support agreement with your supervisor and make them aware of the reasonable adjustments.

Examples of reasonable adjustments that can be considered on a case by case basis and where applicable to the mode of assessment:

- Pre-arranged rest breaks (5-10 minutes);
- Presence of a supporter/support worker/note taker at a viva;

- Presence of a specialist mentor to assist communication at a viva;
- Particular room requirements e.g. accessible room, lighting, seating and furniture arrangements (where viva is in person);
- Providing materials in alternative formats;
- Time to write down questions posed by the panel/examiners or to ask for questions to be repeated or rephrased;
- Additional time to respond to questions;
- Use of a white board, mind maps, diagrams, and prompt cards/notes to help the student to present their ideas visually (where Viva is in person);
- The use of a British Sign Language interpreter;
- A mock viva, this would need to be agreed with your supervisor;
- An opportunity to meet with the examiners before your viva via MS Teams/online.

Online Viva

- **If your viva is online;** you should be informed well in advance of the software platform that will be used for the viva (normally Microsoft Teams). This will provide you with the opportunity to test the platform, navigate its features and familiarise yourself with the technology ahead of the viva, and to identify and resolve any issues in advance. Any difficulties should be discussed with DNS, your Supervisor and/or IT service to explore solutions and adjustments.

Face to Face Viva

- **If your viva is face-to-face,** ensure that you have prior knowledge of the location. If possible, visit the place and familiarise yourself with the environment and set up beforehand.

Your supervisor is there to support you in your preparation for the viva examination. Please let them know if you would find it useful to have a mock viva in advance. Your Independent Chair will ensure any specific agreements are followed during the examination itself.

For further support or guidance, please contact Disability and Neurodiversity Services at disability@rhul.ac.uk