

## PGR Tips on preparing for your viva

The culmination of your doctorate is your examination by 'viva voce' (Latin for 'by live voice'). This may be a daunting prospect but you may well enjoy the experience; after all, it is a chance to discuss your work in depth with people who have expertise in your research area, who are likely to be genuinely interested and have read your thesis. The examiners' task is to confirm the quality of your work and explore the decisions made, not to catch you out.

Make sure you are fully prepared, the Vitae website hosts information on what happens during (and after) the viva and [a preparation checklist](#).

### You are the expert on your thesis

It is probably worth re-reading your thesis to remind yourself, especially if some time has elapsed between writing it and your viva. But remember that no-one knows your work as well as you do.

### Prepare for likely questions

The opening question(s) are likely to be broad, such as 'why did you choose to pursue this research' or 'what has your research contributed to the field?'. These questions are designed to put you at ease. Preparing for them will allow your viva to get off to a flying start. In general, be aware of both the strengths and weaknesses of your work and be prepared to respond to both. Other likely questions will be around anything controversial you may have found.

### Have a mock viva

Having a mock viva with your supervisor(s) will allow you to practice answering those predictable questions. It will get you some practice at thinking about aspects of your research on the spot and allow you to get a feel for the situation. Often the mock viva is worse than the real thing as supervisors enact a worst case scenario, so don't allow it to put you off!

### Seek as much support for preparation as you can

As well as support from your supervisor, see whether your institution runs any courses on preparing for your viva. Ask friends to ask about your research, this will help you practice.

### The logistics

Know where the viva will be held and arrive in good time. Bring your thesis and [choose from this list of other things](#) to bring. Don't worry too much about dress code. Be aware of the different [possible outcomes](#) of your viva.

### Do some research on your examiners' background

The examiners may be more or less aligned with your research. Their expertise may be on just one aspect of your doctorate or vice versa. It is worth reading some of their recent publications to get to know the context they will be placing your thesis in.

### Make sure you are rested

Yes, there is a lot of preparation you can do but the most important thing might well be that you are relaxed and rested. Remember you are the expert and the examiners are not setting out to give you a hard time or try and fail you.

### Be prepared to enjoy it

What could be more satisfying than discussing the research you have devoted the last few years of your life to with interested experts? That is after all what a viva is about.