

RG55 Procedure for a viva voce examination in cases of suspected academic misconduct		Effective date: 03/2024
Authorised owner: Graham Lewis	Department(s) / Project team(s): PEDaL	Last revision: 03/2024
Classification: Public	Issue: 01	Next review: 03/2025



# Procedure for a Viva Voce Examination in Cases of Suspected Academic Misconduct

## 1. When is a viva voce used during a case of suspected academic misconduct.

A viva voce will be conducted when there is reason to believe that a student’s submitted work is not entirely their own. A viva voce is not part of the academic examination of the work, but is designed to give the student the opportunity to demonstrate that the work submitted is entirely their own and that they undertook their own reading and research. It is not designed to reach a final conclusion on whether a piece of work is original but rather its purpose is to gather information to inform a decision on whether or not a referral to an Academic Misconduct Panel is appropriate.

## 2. Process for holding a viva voce for suspected academic misconduct.

- A. During the marking of a student’s submitted work a marker may strongly suspect that the work hasn’t been produced solely by the student, but on investigation cannot find textual evidence to substantiate their suspicions. In such cases these should be referred for consideration in the same manner as any other suspected case of academic misconduct.
- B. During the initial review of the case submitted by the marker it may be recommended to investigate the claim further via the use of a viva voce. This recommendation will need approval from the relevant Academic Lead for the programme.

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- C. Once the use of a viva voce has been approved to investigate the suspected case of academic misconduct, the student must be informed of this within 7 days and provided all the guidance needed to allow them to understand and prepare for the viva voce. This notification should make it clear that the viva voce will occur online and will be video recorded, with all people present expected to keep their cameras on for the entire duration. The student must also be advised that if they do not attend, the work in question will be referred to an Academic Misconduct Panel for investigation.
- D. The viva voce should occur within 28 days of the date the student is notified of the decision, but no earlier than 7 days after the notification is sent. Real Group will work with the student to find the most suitable time to hold the viva voce.
- E. Only the piece(s) of work referred for suspected academic misconduct will be the focus of the viva voce.
- F. The viva voce will be conducted by a panel of two members of academic staff (at least one of whom must be a subject specialist). This would normally be the module leader and the original marker of the work in question, but alternate staff members may be approved by the relevant Academic Lead for the programme. One panel member will be nominated as the chair and will be responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the viva voce. A member of quality assurance staff may also be present to aid the panel administratively, but must not participate in the viva voce beyond the initial introductions from those present.
- G. The student may be accompanied by a person of their choice. Any individual accompanying a student must not participate in the viva voce beyond the initial introductions from those present.
- H. Reasonable adjustments must be made, in line with the Reasonable Adjustments Policy, to ensure students with additional support needs are not disadvantaged and are able to participate fully.
- I. The viva voce must be recorded by one of the staff present, in-line with Real Group's procedure for the recording of meetings. The recording must be shared with everyone present at the meeting within 1 working day of the viva voce occurring. Ownership of the recording file must also be transferred to the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager.
- J. All parties involved in the viva voce must use a private quiet space free from interruptions.
- K. The viva voce will start with:
  - a. The student being made to feel at ease.

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- b. Everyone present being informed that the meeting will be recorded and that this recording will be shared with those present within 1 working day.
  - c. The recording of the meeting being started.
  - d. Introductions from everyone in attendance.
  - e. The format of the viva voce being explained. The explanation of the viva voce format must include details of the suspicions raised about the authorship of the work and that this process offers them an opportunity to demonstrate that they were the author of the work. The potential outcomes of the viva voce should also be clearly outlined at this stage.
- L. The questions asked during the viva voce should test a student's knowledge and understanding of the subject of the work(s) they submitted. These questions should allow the student ample opportunity to demonstrate the work(s) they submitted was produced by them. The questioning may need to be quite intense at times, but it must always remain non-aggressive.
- M. After the questioning has concluded the panel may ask the student, and any individual accompanying them to leave the meeting for a short period of time while they deliberate. The recording will continue during this portion of the meeting.
- N. At the end of the Viva Voce there will be one of three outcomes:
- i. The panel confirms that they accept that the student authored the work(s) in question and no further action will be taken and the work will be marked on its own merit.
  - ii. The panel remains doubtful of the authorship of the work(s) in question and the student will be referred to an Academic Misconduct Panel for investigation.
  - iii. The student accepts that the work(s) in question are not entirely their own. This admission of Academic Misconduct will be referred to an Academic Misconduct Panel for the appropriate penalty to be applied.
- O. Should anyone present at the viva voce experience technical difficulties and either lose their video connection or disconnect completely, then all reasonable attempts will be made to re-establish a stable connection. Should it not be possible to re-establish a stable connection for all participants within a reasonable timeframe the viva voce must be abandoned and rescheduled if necessary (if sufficient discussion has already occurred the panel may be able to confidently agree an outcome without the need for rescheduling). The chair of the panel will be responsible for making any decisions about reasonable periods of time to spend attempting

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to re-establish the connection, whether a viva voce should be abandoned, and if it is necessary to reschedule an abandoned viva voce.

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## Related Documents

RG06 Recording of Meetings via Google Meet

RG46 Academic Misconduct Policy

RG51 Reasonable Adjustments Policy

## Document history

### Issue 1

Initial release after approval by the Postgraduate Programmes Team on 05/03/2024.