



Vivas

Vivas, short for viva voce, are oral assessments involving interaction between you and your lecturer(s). Your viva may be a stand-alone piece of assessment, or it may relate to a previous activity or assessment. Some vivas may also be scenario based which will require you to take on a professional role similar to one you may encounter in the workplace environment.

Skills required

Vivas assess more than your ability to verbally communicate key concepts, theories and ideas covered in your course. They are also an opportunity for your lecturer to assess your:

- knowledge, understanding and application of course content
- skills in critical reasoning
- ability in applied problem solving
- ability to synthesize information
- interpersonal skills
- judgement and
- ethics

Preparing for a viva

As with any piece of assessment it's important to be clear about what will be assessed so that you can adequately prepare. Be aware of:

- which of the course's aims and objectives will be assessed in the viva. Your Course Outline and site should clarify this.
- how you will be assessed. This may be found in the assessment criteria, marking guides, rubrics or feedback forms.
- the length, format and structure of the viva. For example, will it:
 - relate to a previous activity or piece of assessment,
 - be practically oriented
 - be scenario based where you take on a role in a workplace environment or
 - be a stand-alone piece of assessment?
- what mode it will take. Your viva may be in person or virtual/online (e.g. zoom). For online vivas:
 - download any apps you will need well before your viva.
 - practise speaking using the required software and equipment. If possible, do this with a friend to get feedback on sound and visual quality.
 - test your equipment and IT connection *before* the day of the viva. You may also want to log in early on the day of your viva to check that all technology and devices are working well and your device is fully charged.
 - ensure you will be alone and not be interrupted by people, devices or alerts.
- any other resources which have been posted on your course site to help you prepare or clarify this form of assessment.



As vivas are oral assessments which require you to interact, also consider the verbal and interpersonal skills that you would need to use during the assessment. You may find it useful to:

- revise and practise aloud using the vocabulary and language around the topics
- carry out a trial viva with friends to give you practice answering questions and discussing ideas. This will help you feel more comfortable and confident in how you communicate.
- become aware of how you show you are actively listening. This skill involves you showing you are paying attention to the speaker, understanding and absorbing the details of their message, and reacting thoughtfully. It includes verbal and non-verbal cues such as asking for clarification, making eye contact or nodding.
- consider what types of questions you may be asked and possible answers. For example, some questions may require you to show applied problem solving while others may require you to show your understanding of processes and critical reasoning.

During the viva

- Make eye contact with your lecturer(s) and smile, even if you are nervous.
- Listen carefully to your lecturer's questions or comments so that you can respond appropriately.
- When asked a question, take time to think of your response, pause and then answer calmly. Taking the time before answering allows you to breathe, reflect and plan a more considered response.
- If you are asked to expand on a question, don't panic or think you have not answered correctly. The lecturer may just be asking for more detail.
- If you do not understand a question or comment, don't be afraid to ask for it to be repeated or reworded.
- If you forget terminology used in the course, try to explain what you want to say in your own way to show you understand the topic or concepts you are talking about.
- Try to answer comprehensively but don't waffle.
- Alert your examiners if you experience difficulties during the viva. Don't wait until you have finished.

After the viva

Use time after your viva to reflect on how it went and what you can learn from the experience. This will not only help with other similar assessments but will also develop your professional practice skills and enhance your employability. When reflecting, consider what went well and what improvements can be made.