Submission of Thesis and the *Viva Voce* (Oral) Examination
A Guide for University of Limerick Doctoral Students

This guide is available online at Doctoral College

Doctoral College

University of Limerick

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to assist UL doctoral research students in their preparation for the Viva Voce (oral) examination. The Doctoral College developed the guide in consultation with the faculties and in line with the UL Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures which includes Research Postgraduate Regulations. Doctoral Students and their Supervisor(s) should also consult with their Department/School, to identify discipline-specific practices and procedure.

This guide covers the following topics:

1: The Submission and Examination of a Research Thesis

2 : Examining a PhD

3 : Post Viva Voce Examination

Appendix 1 : Sample Viva Voce Questions

While every effort has been made to ensure information is correct at the time of publication, the guide is intended as an information resource only. UL Academic Regulations and Procedures take precedence over the information contained in this guide.

The Submission and Examination of a Research Thesis

- The University (Doctoral College) should be given at least three months' notice of the intention to submit, to allow time for examiners to be formally appointed.

- Notice is given by submitting a completed and signed PGR-1 form to the Doctoral College the PGR-1 form is submitted by your supervisor(s). The form includes the nomination of your Examiners. The candidate is not involved in the appointment of Examiners.

- The appointment of the Examiners is valid for the duration of the examination process once they have been formally invited and accepted the invitation.

1.1 Submission of Soft-bound Thesis for Examination

- The thesis **should not be** sent directly to examiners, either by a supervisor(s) or the student.

- Once the examiners have been appointed, you should submit a PDF copy (signed and dated) copies of the thesis to the Doctoral College doctoralCollege@ul.ie and along with a PGR-4 Form (Submission of Thesis for a Higher Degree by Research). This should be undertaken in consultation with your supervisor(s).

- In cases where material in a thesis is confidential, it may be necessary to place an embargo on access to the thesis for a specified time, not exceeding 5 years. On submission of the PDF copies, you are requested to indicate on the submission of thesis for higher degree by Research PGR-4 form whether you intend to request an embargo or not? If it is decided to place an embargo you must submit the postgraduate research thesis embargo declaration form (PGR-4a Form) to the Doctoral College when you submit the hard bound copies and electronic copy.

- If you have a particular University Examination Board and Conferring ceremony that you are aiming for, you should be aware of the various postgraduate research submission deadlines.

1.2 The Appointment of the Examination Panel

A chairperson will be appointed by your department/school for your examination, in accordance with the PGR-1 form, and his/her or a nominee will consult with you, the examiners and your supervisor regarding the logistical arrangements and procedures surrounding your viva voce examination. Please refer to section 2 in this guide for further viva voce preparation guidance.

- The examination panel will consist of one internal examiner, at least one external examiner and an independent chairperson. In the case of a candidate who is a member of the staff of the University, it is a requirement to have the examination conducted by two External Examiners, with no internal examiner.

- The supervisor is normally present in the room as an observer unless you request otherwise (to be indicated to the Chairperson at least 10 days in advance of the *viva voce*).

- The independent chairperson oversees the examination process through to completion and submits the examination report (PGR-6 form) to the Doctoral College.

- There are a range of outcomes which are detailed in section 3.2.

- Full details of *Viva Voce* Examination Code of Practice are available from the doctoral college website under codes of practice, policies and regulations:

1.3 The Criteria for awarding a PhD.

The examiners will be assessing your thesis using the following criteria, which are laid out in Chapter 5, Handbook of Academic of Academic Regulations and Procedures. You, and your supervisor, should consider these questions prior to submission of your thesis as the Examiners report must comment on the following areas:

- The overall standard and quality of research in the thesis
- The original contribution the thesis makes to knowledge and scholarship.
- The writing style and overall presentation of the thesis
- The ability of the student to defend the research in the oral examination
- The nature of the amendments and/or corrections required.
- Conclusion and award recommendation

During the *viva voce*, you must demonstrate that the thesis presented is **your own** work, and that you have an adequate understanding of the research topic and of the broader field of knowledge to which the research belongs? This will enable you to defend your approach and findings.

1.4 What is the *Viva Voce Examination*?

The *Viva Voce* (often simply referred to as the *viva*) is a formal oral examination (defence), which forms part of the examination of your thesis.

- The length of the *viva voce* examination may vary in accordance with different disciplinary practices and will depend on the Examiners requirements.

- In some academic disciplines the student is allowed to make a 10–20-minute presentation at the beginning, whereas, in others the examination commences directly with questioning from the examiners. As a guideline, it should normally be in the range of a minimum one hour and a maximum of three hours.

- The *viva voce* should take place at the University of Limerick and is conducted face-to-face. Only in exceptional circumstances, video conferencing or its equivalent may be used for the examination.

- The examiners will have reviewed your thesis before the oral examination. During the examination process the examiners will explore the quality of the written thesis, as well as your ability to articulate and defend your research. You should remember that the thesis is a product of **your** work. Remember the *Viva Voce* as an opportunity for you to engage in a

scholarly discourse and to disseminate your research to leading academics in your field.

- As the *viva voce* is conducted in private there is an element of the unknown for candidates, however, being well prepared is the key to performing in the Examination.

1.5 After the *Viva Voce*

- What emerges after *viva voce* depends on the outcome of the examination? If corrections are required, or if the outcome is unfavourable, the independent chairperson or his/her nominee will consult with you as to what is expected.

- At the conclusion of the *viva voce* examination, you and in some instances your supervisor will be asked to leave the room. This allows the examiners to deliberate in private and decide which recommendation you will receive (see section 3.2).

- While an informal indication of the examiners' recommendation may be given to you at the conclusion of the *viva voce* examination, this recommendation is subject to ratification by the Academic Council.

- When you are called back into the room and advised of the examiners' recommendation. You be informed about the corrections and/or amendments that need to be made to attain the relevant degree. You must undertake these corrections and/or amendments in conjunction with his/her supervisor(s) in the time periods recommended by the examiners.

- Failure to undertake the corrections and/or amendments or seek an extension to the time period will result in the examination process being deemed to have concluded.

- In terms of correction and/or amendments any liaison with the examiners should be conducted through your supervisor(s)

- Once the final version of the thesis has been approved by either or both examiners, and the PGR-6 form is signed-off, Candidates must submit two 'hard bound' copies (burgundy hard bound cover for PhD) and one electronic copy of the final version of the thesis to the Doctoral College. Where relevant, the thesis embargo form should be completed.

- In order to meet the submission deadlines, you should familiarise yourself with dates of the Examination Boards. Information on the relevant forms, and submission dates are available from the relevant section on Doctoral College website,

Examining a PhD

2.1 The *Viva Voce* Examination

As outlined in 1.2, the *Viva Voce* Panel consists of the internal and/or external examiner(s) and an independent chairperson. The Chairperson will manage the examination process, in consultation with your supervisor. Most candidates find it beneficial to have a supervisor present for moral support, and to take notes, but they are not part of the viva panel. A supervisor makes no contribution during the viva, and is only allowed to provide clarification if, and when, requested by the examiners or independent chairperson.

In most cases the supervisor will leave the room with you while deliberations take place, unless asked by the chairperson to remain. In some cases, a candidate may decide not to have their supervisor present. If this is the case, you should discuss this with the Chairperson prior to the *viva voce*. Each member of the examination panel, along with your supervisor and Head of School has a specific role in planning and conducting your *viva voce* as is detailed in the next section.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The main points of interest to you as the candidate are outlined below:

2.2.1 Head of Department/School (or nominee)

- Must ensure the University's academic regulations and practices are implemented in respect of your examination.
- Consult with your supervisor(s) and sign off on nominations for internal and external examiners.
- Can mediate in cases of disagreement between a student and supervisor as to the appropriateness of submitting the thesis for examination.

2.2.2 Primary Supervisor(s)

- Consult with the Head of Department/School on the nomination of the examiners.
- Advise you of the composition of the board for the *Viva Voce* examination.
- Will advise you in relevant aspects of the academic regulations and protocol specific to your discipline.
- May attend the examination with you unless you request otherwise.
- Will advise you on the corrections and revisions following the *viva voce*.

2.2.3 Examiners

- Assess the thesis in line with the criteria outlined in the aforementioned section 1.3.
- Complete a written report on the outcome of the candidate's oral examination, normally, on the day of the *Viva Voce.*
- The written report should include as an attachment, an annotated copy of the thesis, a typed list or both; of the corrections and/or amendments that need to be made to attain the relevant degree. These will be provided on the day or shortly after (one week maximum).
- If the Examiners decide the candidate should be awarded a Research Master's Degree, instead of a PhD, you will be informed via, a typed list or both, of the amendments that need to be made to attain the master's degree and the reasons explaining why the PhD Degree was not awarded

- Where the examiners recommend that no degree is awarded, the Examiners report should provide a detailed review of the areas in which the thesis is deficient and a clear explanation of the reasons the degree was not awarded.
- If a disagreement arises between the examiners, the examiners should submit separate reports to the Doctoral College, and the matter will be referred to the Vice President Research.

2.2.4 Independent Chairperson

- Will engage with the examiners, agreeing arrangements and facilitating the exchange of reports beforehand.
- Prior to the *viva voce* examination and in consultation with the examiners, will discuss the order of questions and the overall format of the examination.
- May be consulted, before the *viva*, should you prefer your supervisor not be present at the examination.
- Will manage the *viva voce* examination. You can expect that he/she will invite you into the room and introduce the examiners.
- Must ensure that you are treated fairly during the examination.
- In line with academic discipline norms, will start proceedings by asking you to introduce your research briefly and summarise the main findings.
- Communicate to you, or invite the external examiner to communicate, the outcome of the examination.
- Ensure the outcome is captured correctly on the PGR6 form.
- Outline the time period for corrections and sign off of same are clear to you and to the examiners.
- In cases where an award is recommended subject to corrections, the Chairperson must ensure that a corrected or revised thesis is sent to the appropriate examiner(s) for review and final sign-off, and that the completed form is subsequently returned to the Doctoral College.
- The Independent Chairperson guides the examination process through to a conclusion.
- In exceptional cases, where the outcome is not satisfactory, the chairperson is required to clarify and, where possible, reconcile differing viewpoints.

2.3 Pre-*viva voce* preparations

- Having a plan prior to the *viva voce* will help you gain a feeling of control, and ensure you are prepared for the day. The following is a suggested plan. You should discuss your plan with your supervisor(s), and alert them to any concerns you have around the time of submitting for examination.
- Once your soft-bound thesis has been submitted remember to stay in close contact with your supervisor and the Chairperson.
- Have a plan of action for the weeks leading up the viva and discuss this with your supervisor.
- Find out who your examiners are, and the date and schedule for your *viva voce*.
- Have a soft-bound copy of the thesis printed for yourself, which you can bring into the *viva voce* with you.
- Speak to your supervisor(s) about the possibility of organising a mock viva voce. This will give you the opportunity to run through the key areas of your thesis, to measure how well you

can manage any difficult questions, and to get constructive feedback on areas you need to work on.

- Research your examiners, in particular, the external examiner(s). Review their research publications – what is their current interest, what methodology do they follow, how does their research differ from yours? Getting a feel for your examiner's work at this stage will help you view the thesis through their eyes.
- Find out if your Dept/School has a policy document on the viva voce process. Speak to your supervisor about protocol and etiquette in the Dept/School.
- Review the sample questions in the appendix 1.
- Familiarise yourself with the emerging areas of research in your discipline in advance of your examination.

2.3.1 The weeks prior to the *Viva Voce* examination

- At this stage, your focus should return to your soft-bound thesis.
- Re-read the thesis from an overall perspective to understand how it reads as a comprehensive piece of work.
- Re-read chapter by chapter, making notes and highlighting important pages or sections.
- Think about the potential questions the Examiners may ask and areas on which they may focus.
- Think about both the main strengths and limitations of your research.
- Compile a list of questions and answers. Refer to the appendix in this booklet for some advice on questions.
- Keep a record of any errors or 'typos' as you go through the document. Bring this list with you, this will also enable you to save time if you are requested to undertake corrections.
- Remember to use the original soft bound version of the thesis that was submitted to the Examiners. Do not use a version that may have been amended or revised.
- Re-visit who the key scholars are in your area, and how their work relates to yours. Identify if any new research has been published by them since submission.
- At this stage you may find it useful to have a mock *viva voce*, (if you have not already done so), speak to your supervisor.
- Practice as much as you can. Prepare answers in a clear, structured way. Make bullet notes for yourself.
- Prepare a presentation or demonstration if they are to form part of the viva voce. Ensure it is not too long, as the examiners will not appreciate if their time to ask questions is curtailed.
- Manage expectations of peers, family, and friends. There is a range of outcomes.

2.3.2 Preparation for your *Viva Voce* Examination

2.3.2.1 One week before your examination

- Visit the venue where the *viva voce* will take place. Becoming familiar with the location and layout of the room will remove one element of stress on the day.
- Plan to meet with your supervisor on the day. The Chairperson should tell you where to wait to be called to the room.
- Do not try and read anything new at this stage. Focus on what you already know.

- Write the main points of your thesis on one page. Having a summary sheet at the Viva Voce will prompt you if you get stuck.
- What do you need to bring? A copy of the original PDF thesis submitted for examination, list of errors, summary sheet, some pens, notepad, and water.
- Practice summarising the key components of your thesis:
    - What are the major strengths?
    - What would you modify/where are the limitations?
    - What is the original contribution of your work?
    - What are the possible future research areas which could come out of this work?

2.3.3 The day of the *Viva Voce.*

The following are some tips on how to reduce the nerves, while remaining calm and focused on the day:

- Arrive at venue on campus within plenty of time to spare.
- Try and relax, focus on the strengths of your work.
- Drink water and eat something light if you can.
- Inform colleagues/friends if you do not want any company beforehand.

2.3.4 The *Viva Voce* Examination:

- Remember that the Examination will focus on the original soft bound version of the thesis that was submitted to the Examiners.
- Remember to breathe to help you to relax, speak slowly and seek clarification if any question is unclear.
- Do not be alarmed if the examiners copies of the thesis are full of notes – this is normal, as it indicates that they have been preparing the examination.
- Use diagrams to explain your points if that is useful.
- Take notes if this helps or ask your supervisor to take notes for you.
- Refer to your copy of the thesis and summary sheet if this helps.
- Normal practice is that the candidate, (along with their supervisor), is called to the room once the panel have had an initial discussion and have agreed the direction of questioning for the examination.
- You are permitted to ask for a break, if needed, during the examination
- At the end of the questioning, you and your supervisor will be asked to leave the room, and wait in a location nearby, while the panel deliberates.
- Once a decision has been made you will be called back to the room. At this stage either the Chairperson or external examiner will announce the outcome, and you should be given some feedback.

2.3.5 Dealing with Questions

It is normal to feel nervous going into the *Viva Voce* examination. Remember this is your opportunity to disseminate your work with experts in your field. Different examiners have different styles, and most will look for both strengths and limitations in your thesis. Be prepared for this and avoid becoming defensive or apportioning the blame for mistakes to others.

- Take a moment to think about the question before answering, and answer in a structured and concise way.
- Ask for clarity if the question is unclear.
- If required, you should refer to notes when answering questions.
- Be prepared to answer questions in the context of other work in your discipline.
- Ask for a break if you need it.
- Prepare for criticism, it is not personal. This is an academic discussion around your work and as with many academic discussions there will a divergence of opinion.
- Use the *Viva Voce* to demonstrate what you know.

Post *Viva Voce* Examination

3.1 Potential Outcomes

The examiners can make a variety of recommendations, which are clearly outlined in the PGR-6 (examination report form). If you are unclear of the outcome of your *viva voce* you should speak with the Independent Chairperson who is responsible for overseeing the examination process.

3.2 Recommendations:

3.2.1 The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is recommended without a requirement for corrections.

- The PGR-6 is signed off and a final report is submitted to Doctoral College by the Independent Chairperson.
- You can arrange to print and bind the two hardbound copies of your thesis and submit them to the Doctoral College.
- Where relevant a completed embargo form may also be submitted at this stage
- If the thesis is not placed on embargo, a PDF of your thesis will be uploaded to the UL Institutional Repository.

3.2.2 The award is recommended subject to corrections and amendments.

- The corrections and/or amendments should be clearly detailed in the Examiners report and will be given to you either on the day, or shortly after (one week maximum).
- If you do not receive details of the corrections and/or amendments contact the Independent Chairperson or your supervisor.
- Remember, the thesis must be revised in line with the corrections and/or amendments that were recommended by the Examiners.
- Depending on what was agreed, these corrections may be validated by the internal or external examiner, or both.
- Corrections must be sent to the examiners via the Supervisors/Independent Chairperson
- Corrections must be signed off as having been completed before you can submit your hardbound copies to the Doctoral College.
- If you have any queries, you should direct these to your supervisor or the Chairperson. You should not contact examiners directly.

3.2.3 No degree is awarded, and the candidate continues on the PhD register.

- Where the candidate continues on the relevant register, **the examination process will be deemed to be concluded.**
- Should this be the outcome, you will need to collaborate closely with your supervisor.
- Subject to the supervisor's agreement, the candidate will be required to commence a new examination process.
- As far as is possible, the same examination panel will be used, unless there are exceptional circumstances pertaining to their availability.
- In this case a second examination and *viva voce* examination are required.
- You will be liable for the relevant fees.

3.2.4 Other recommendations.

- **Submit for a Research Masters award**:
    - The candidate is awarded the degree of Master of X subject to the completion of any prescribed amendments within a period of six months for reconsideration by the internal examiner.
- **No degree award is recommended:**
    - The Examiners report, submitted to the Doctoral College should provide a detailed review of the areas in which the thesis is deficient and a clear explanation as to why no degree shall be awarded.
    - The examination process will be deemed to be concluded.
    - The candidate's enrolment will continue on the relevant register and the candidate will need to be reviewed by a Research Confirmation Panel as set out Ch.5, Academic Regulations and Procedures

3.3 non-submission of corrections and/or revisions within the prescribed time period

- In exceptional circumstances (certified medical or personal reasons), you may, prior to the expiration of the prescribed time periods specified in Ch.5 Academic Regulations and Procedures apply in writing to the Dean of Doctoral College for an extension to the time periods.
- An extension may be granted for a maximum of three months. If you do not submit within the extended time period, **the examination process will be deemed to be concluded.**
- Your enrolment will continue on the relevant register.
- Subject to the supervisor's agreement, the candidate will be required to commence a new examination process.
- As far as is possible, the same examination panel will be used, unless there are exceptional circumstances pertaining to their availability.
- In this case a second examination and *viva voce* examination are required.
- You will be liable for the relevant fees.

Please note you cannot submit a research thesis for examination on more than two occasions.

3.4 Appeals Process

A student can submit an appeal in respect of the process regarding their examination. The appeal may not be based on disagreement with the academic judgement of the examiners or supervisory panel. For full details of the grounds for appeal and the procedures to be followed please refer Chapter 5, Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures.

3.5 Post *Viva Voce* work

- Most successful candidates will have some corrections or revisions to undertake subsequent to the *viva voce* examination.

- You should receive a written report from the examiners outlining corrections to be done. The level of work required, if any, should be clear from the Examiners report. If clarity is needed, discuss this with your supervisor.
- Do not leave it too long to undertake any corrections. The longer you delay the harder it is to complete the final corrections or revisions.
- Following approval by the examiners you must print, bind, and submit two hardbound copies of the thesis to the Doctoral College.
- Where relevant a completed embargo form may also be submitted at this stage
- If the thesis is not placed on embargo, a PDF of your thesis will be uploaded to the UL Institutional Repository.

As you finalise and write up your thesis you should review Chapter 5 Academic Regulations and Procedures for additional information on thesis formats and guidance on thesis design and layout.

Different Schools and disciplines have preferences regarding referencing styles so you should discuss same with your supervisor.

UL Library hosts a detailed guide on the Harvard style of citing and referencing which can be viewed here: http://libguides.ul.ie/citeitright

As well as following this guide you may find it useful to consult other resources.

• Rowena Murray, How to Survive a Viva, Defending a thesis in an oral examination [Book] available in UL library:

• The Guardian, How to Survive a Viva: Top 17 Tips: www.theguardian.com/highereducationnetwork/2015/jan/08/how-to-survive-a-phd-viva-17-top-tips

You may also be starting to plan for life after the viva. The following page on the Vitae website gives some good advice and resources on planning your next career move.

• Vitae, Completing your Doctorate:

www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/completing-your-doctorate

If you feel things are getting out of control, seek support and help. You should remain in close contact with your supervisor during this time and discuss any concerns with them. You can also talk to a colleague in your Department/ School, Faculty or Research Centre. Let family and friends know how you are feeling, and what they can do to support you during this time.

Further Contact Details:

Doctoral College, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland Tel Phone: +353 61 234377
Email: DoctoralCollege@ul.e Website: https://www.ul.ie/research/doctoral-college

Appendix 1: Sample *Viva Voce* Questions

When thinking about the possible questions, you should revisit your thesis. After you have re-read each chapter and taken notes. Rehearse your answers, and focus on the areas you want to highlight, as well as any weaknesses in your thesis.

Examples of the types of questions that may arise are listed in this appendix. Depending on your topic and discipline there are many other possibilities, and this is where you rely on your own expertise. This is your opportunity to demonstrate that you are developing into an expert in your academic discipline.

Note: The following list of indicative questions is quite general; you may be asked specific questions relating to your own research study, and your understanding of it.

1 Overview

Note: Consider preparing a three-minute summary of your thesis, this will enable you to deal with the initial questions. Think about what you did, why you choose this area, why you choose your approach, what did you find and what are the implications. Initial questions are often used to ease the candidate into the viva, and to give them time to settle in advance of the more topic specific questions. These questions are still important, and you should be prepared for them.

1.1 Introductory-Sample Questions:

What led you to choose this topic, tell us about your thesis, and why you are interested in this area?

- Discuss the originality of your research?
- Why did you focus on this particular area or problem?
- What is the strongest aspect of your research? What are your major contributions?
- What are the questions underpinning your research?
- Looking back, what would you do differently/what would you change?
- What is the most interesting aspect of your research?
- How did you know that it had not been studied previously?
- Did your knowledge of the area allow you to anticipate your results?

1.2 Contextual/Literature-Sample Questions:

- You refer to X as a key ‘driver ‘for your research - can you summarise the specific relevance of their work?
- What are the main issues in this area, and how did your thesis address these?
- What developments have there been in this field since you began your doctorate?
- How have these changed the research context in which you are working?
- How is your thesis placed in terms of the existing theory?
- You do not say much about the XXX theory in your thesis - can you explain why you have not focused more on that?
- What theories inform your work? Why did you choose this theoretical framework?
- Did you consider any other theoretical approach?
- Who are the main contributors in this field?

- What did you learn from your review of the literature?
- Which studies most closely match yours? Where does yours differ?
- How do you relate your research to other findings in the field?
- Have you heard about XXX theory, and how could you have used it?
- What is the current state of the art in XXX?

1.3 Methodological-Sample Questions:

Note: The examiners ask you to justify your choice of a particular methodology, and your knowledge of other methodologies. They will expect you to be able to discuss reliability, validity and how applicable your findings are. Make sure you demonstrate a philosophical understanding of your approach.

- How does the methodology and method enable you to ask and consider the questions and deal with ideas?
- Why did you choose this particular method?
- What would you have gained by taking a different approach? What alternatives did you consider?
- What are the limitations of your method?
- How generalisable are your findings? Would you have different results had you had conducted your study in a different context?
- Can you identify the key aspects of your sample? are you satisfied with the sample achieved?
- How well did the study design work in practice? Were there any issues in the data collection process?
- How did you establish the parameters around the scope of your data collection?
- How did you decide on the variables to include in the conceptual framework?

1.4 Analysis, Discussion and Findings- Sample Questions:

- How do your findings fit with existing literature?
- What do you think this study has shown? Can you briefly describe your main findings?
- Can you justify your chosen method of analysis? What were the alternatives?
- Did you encounter any problems with applying the method of analysis?
- Can you clarify how your conclusions are supported by your findings?
- On reflection, what would you do differently?
- Implications, reflections, Conclusions

1.5 Some additional sample questions:

Note: Take cognisance of the contribution to knowledge, possibility for future development, uniqueness of your research, replication, limitations, and further opportunities for dissemination.

- What relevance does this work have for future research in the area?
- Were there any revelations or frustrations in conducting this research?
- What do you see as the next steps in this research?
- You said in your thesis that XXX - can you expand on that point?

- What are the empirical, practice, and theoretical implications of your findings?
- What have you done that merits the award of a PhD?
- Can you summarise your key findings?
- What are the contributions of your thesis?
- To whom, and in what context is this knowledge valuable?
- What are the implications of your findings to theory/practice?
- Will you publish your work?
- Discuss how the recommendations follow from your findings.
- How feasible do you think your recommendations for future work are?
- Why have you picked [these] as the priority for future work?

1.6 Typical Pitfalls in Responding to Viva Questions

- Lacking Clarification- If a question is unclear; it is advisable for you to clarify what is meant.
- Missing Knowledge- If you do not have an answer for a question; it is advisable to be honest by saying 'I don't know.'
- Becoming Defensive- If asked a question that is a veiled attack, respond with composure rather than counterattacking or becoming emotional.
- Making Excuses-If an error, flaw, or serious problem is pointed out - listen, acknowledge the merits of the observation, and be appreciative of the assistance.
- Blaming Others- It may be that the chair or the supervisor(s) have given poor advice. However, the viva is not the forum to make it known.
- Overstating Contribution-Even if the contribution to the field is distinguished; let others indicate it, as modesty is appreciated.

The aforementioned questions (and suggested responses) have been adapted from a variety of sources listed below:

Further Reading

Bolker, J. (1998) Writing your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis, Markham, Ontario, Canada: Henry Holt and Company.

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