

# PREPARING FOR YOUR THESIS ORAL EXAMINATION

*Information Security Group. Preparing for your PhD oral examination. Chris Mitchell. Information Security Group carriagehouseautoresto.com~cjm.*

Some form of mini viva is essential, but there are various ways of conducting this: from the formal to the informal, from public to private, depending on what you would find most useful. It can be considered part of a rite of passage in your academic apprenticeship, a trial to be addressed confidently, and the gateway to joining the academic community as an independent teacher or researcher. In other words, do not give superficial answers, but at the same time, do not go all over the map. Have you got hold of some of their published work to get a feel for how they work and how they discuss research? Handing in your finished thesis is a massive achievement, and is the first step in the concluding stage of the PhD process. Typically, they should include An overview or outline of your presentation, Introduction including research question, rationale and hypothesis, if any, and definition of key constructs , Method including design, methodology, sample, instruments or questionnaires, and procedure, Results including tables or figures summarizing your findings , and Discussion including reasons for new or unexpected findings, contributions and limitations, and practical implications. Stage 2: Stepping back from the detail Examiners are likely to ask you to comment on the wider implications of your work, so take time to think more broadly about your research. What will you wear? Stage 5: Within the viva How will my examiners behave? This provides the Candidate with an opportunity to become familiar with the room, the audiovisual equipment, and to sort out any technological issues before the date of the Oral Defence. The defense is a public presentation and discussion of the findings of the research program are conducted before a committee of selected faculty. How did it work out? A good defense means that you can provide strong logical arguments as well as empirical support o defend your position or conclusion. You may now be: anticipating a potentially interesting discussion; ready to engage in debate; confident in your preparation; eager to get on with it; relieved at being there at last; excited at the challenge ahead; looking forward to completing the process. The Examination Reminder email is not sent until the External Examiner's Report has been received by Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the Candidate's exam has been approved to proceed to Oral Defence. This can be done in a formal setting with an audience of your supervisor or colleagues, but can also be done in private while walking round a garden or park, or in your room. You may now have time to catch up with people you have neglected, and with activities you have neglected, preferably enjoyable ones, not just the housework! Think positively. And why? Be prepared to clarify or elaborate on your assumptions, theoretical positions, methods, and conclusions. This may be due to the relative inexperience of the chosen examiners, or because your area is interdisciplinary and more than two examiners are required to form an academic judgement. Here are some common questions: If you were to do it all over again, what changes would you make? Recording the Examination Any candidate wishing to make a recording, either video or audio, must have the request approved by the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. What will you take into the room with you? Remember that most students who reach this stage do succeed in gaining their PhD. Make sure that you space yourself well. How are you going to celebrate? The viva has its own ceremony and tradition. Your adviser or committee may have some final changes or corrections for you to make before you print out the final copy that is going to be bound and preserved. A list of typical questions is provided towards the end of this guide, and you can add to this yourself. Rather than having your professors sign one approval sheet and photocopying it, you will want to create a sheet of original signatures for each copy of the thesis you need. Be confident without being cocky. Could you think of an alternative interpretation of your findings? Then, discuss with your advisor how to best address these concerns. This checklist is designed to be a helpful guide as you plan for your defense. What is the most important contribution of your thesis? Murray suggests how not to respond to a challenge of a weakness in your research. Stage 4: The last few days This is the time to address practical details. Attending the Defence of a Candidate in a field close to one's own is an excellent way for Candidates to learn what to expect. Can you say it in one or two sentences? In preparation for the oral thesis examination, the candidate must submit one copy of the thesis, to each member of the Thesis Examining Committee including the Chairperson. What is a viva? You are not expected to memorise your thesis. Announcement of the public presentation to the

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university community is required and should precede the presentation by at least two weeks. You may want to use some of the time to work on articles or conference papers from your research.