



O.P. JINDAL GLOBAL
Institution of Eminence Deemed to be
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OFFICE OF DOCTORAL STUDIES (ODS), JGU

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCHOLARS

What is PhD Viva?

A PhD viva is an academic discussion between research scholar and his external examiner/s, who is a senior researcher from the same field of specialization.

How to defend in PhD Viva?

It provides an opportunity to researcher scholar to defend his/her argument, methodology, approach, but there will also be times when researcher need to concede that his/her project is partial, that there are other ways of doing things, and that no thesis, however meticulously conceived, researched and written, is ever 'perfect'.

How Important a PhD viva is?

Please do not underestimate the viva as a mere formality. Submission of the thesis is in partial fulfilment of the criteria for the award of PhD; the viva voce oral assessment of the candidate who wrote the thing is what makes up the rest of the examination.

Is it possible to fail a PhD Viva?

The viva needs to be taken seriously, and there are ways to fail – by sticking to one-word answers; by displaying flippancy, a lack of interest, intransigence, etc. – but by and large it is a process that most PhD students survive.



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Points to remember during a PhD Viva:

- During the process of Viva scholars are being examined on a piece of work that is PhD worthy – an original contribution to knowledge in their specific areas of research.
- **DO know when to be quiet, as well as when to defend your case.** There will be times in the viva when you need to defend your case. Scholar should listen and take the useful criticisms on board. It is not a game where you will either lose or win, it is a journey for learn and excel.
- **DO read through the thesis again before the viva exam.** It will help to set your mind at rest. Stick post-it notes at key points, too, so you can find them easily during the viva.
- It is also a good idea to make a list of corrections you have spotted to hand to your examiners. A thesis is a massive piece of work, so there will be errors; but it looks good if you have spotted some in re-reading the thing post-submission.
- **DON'T fall into the trap of thinking criticism, especially of the sparring kind, is personal or unkind.** Genuine criticism is engagement. If the examiners are asking you testing and difficult questions, it shows that
 - a) they have read your thesis with real interest and are keen to fully discuss its merits and
 - b) that they want to give you a chance to show how good a researcher you are.
- **Do not give too general answers.** Be specific and to the point because that will show us that you are not feigning but you know what you are talking about.
- **Do not talk jargon.** It is not very likely that we were born in the same place or from the same background so we may not understand what you are saying.



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- **Do not pretend that you know things that you don't.** If you do not know something, admit it. That is better than to give a weak answer signaling that you don't know what you are talking about.
- **Don't undermine the importance of 'soft' general questions** like “Where do you see yourself in future?” or “What is motivating you to do the PhD?”
- **Don't talk incoherently and formulate answers without giving them any structure.** Speak clearly and slowly to make sure that the examiners can follow you specially when answering more complex questions.
- Make eye contact and don't be too stiff try to show that you are enjoying the discussion. Don't disagree in your answer or talk about things you don't have been asked.
- if you don't understand the question asked for it to be repeated or clarified instead of answering something you have not been asked. Don't start answering before your examiners have finished the question.

After the Viva has ended, your examiner / panel will ask you to leave the room (virtually in case of online), so they could make the final decision by discussing with other members present in the board. Sometimes, it may take them around 10 minutes to read the decisions and sometimes it may take more than that however it is important to know that the amount of time does not indicate whether your performance was poor or excellent.

When you leave the room after those exhausting, interesting, and head-spinning hours, and your examiners discuss the agreed outcome before you are invited back in, remember that come straight pass, minor or even major mods, your long and testing PhD journey has led to this moment, and will be (almost) over.