

BOOK BONUS 6

Viva Prep Checklist



The uncertainty surrounding the viva process can often leave students confused over how to prepare. Although it's impossible to predict how things will go on the day or what the examiners' assessment of your thesis will be, there are a number of things you can do to put yourself in the best position possible. Below is a checklist of steps to take as your viva date approaches.

The Build-Up | The Weeks Before...

- Reconnect to what inspires you about your topic
- Visit the examination room in advance
- Arrange for a mock viva with your supervisor or another colleague
- Do some background research on your examiners – who are they and how are they likely to view your work given their particular perspective/background?
- Brainstorm some possible questions you may be asked and practice answering them
- Read through your thesis to refresh your memory – noting down the contribution of your work, your main argument and explanation of methodology, as well as avenues for further research
- Select an outfit for the viva that makes you feel confident

The Eve of the Viva | The Day Before...

- Clear your schedule of any commitments; focus on self-care and getting into the right mindset

- Exercise to get nervous energy out of you and to give your mind a break
- Distract yourself with a film, book or another leisure activity
- Imagine yourself feeling comfortable and confident during the viva

On the Day...

- Have a nourishing breakfast in the morning
- Listen to inspiring/upbeat music
- Arrive at the examination room early, leaving yourself plenty of time for unexpected delays
- Find a quiet space beforehand to ground yourself
- Do some deep breathing exercises
- Recall your excitement about your research and what first inspired you to pursue your specific topic; take some time to connect to that feeling

During Your Viva...

- Sit tall, paying attention to your posture and body language
- Take sips of water whenever you need to
- Feel free to take notes during the viva – this technique can also give you a bit of space to gather your thoughts before responding to questions
- Slow down and take deep breaths before responding to questions
- Ask for clarity when a question is unclear (see my book bonuses section on tips for handling an Academic Q&A session, as the same advice applies during your viva)
- Don't hesitate to recount parts of your thesis when responding to questions – although the examiners will have read your thesis in advance, they may not immediately recall particular sections in as much detail

REMEMBER – As you go forward in preparing for your viva, try and let go of the fear of failure. Although it's normal to hold onto this fear, it is extremely rare for a student to fail their viva. The truth is that you wouldn't have made it this far in the process if failure was a likely outcome. So, trust that it will go smoothly. You are probably much more prepared than you think.