AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA
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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

SGS 051

GUIDANCE NOTE ON DOCTORAL VIVA VOCE

The purpose of the viva voce examination is to provide the candidate with an opportunity to defend the content of their dissertation and publicly demonstrate their understanding of the broader aspects of their field.

The viva voce is an essential and very important part of the doctoral examination process. To pass the viva, a candidate for the viva examination must deliver a performance that is satisfactory to the examiners and the AUN Doctoral Dissertation Board.

The candidate must be able to discuss their work extensively, confidently, and with clarity. The viva voce will typically assess the following:

- The extent to which the submitted work meets the criteria for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy.
- The candidate's authorship of the submitted work.
- The candidate's command of the subject of their submitted work and of the broad field(s) to which the subject belongs.
- The candidate's ability to successfully revise submitted work to meet the criteria for the award of the degree.
- Whether the submitted work was conducted and/or completed ethically and with integrity.

All in all, the candidate must demonstrate to the examiners that their work is robust enough for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy and that they fully understand the implications of their research findings. The candidate must therefore demonstrate to the examiners that the core assumptions underpinning their research are sound and that they have not overlooked any major component.

Outcomes

The viva will be examined by three external experts. If there is a disagreement between the three experts about the outcome, the AUN's Doctoral Dissertation Board, led by the Provost will weigh in and make a determination.

Note carefully that this is an examination. However, candidates are encouraged to think of the viva voce not just as an examination, but as an opportunity to discuss their work with experts in their field and receive constructive feedback.

What Happens After the Viva?

On completion of the viva examination, the examiners' independent *and* joint reports and recommendations will be transmitted in confidence to the chair of the DDB. The report will be considered by the DDB within two weeks of receipt of the reports. The chair of the DDB may seek the clarification of the examiners if there are questions or disparities on their recommendations.

The examiners may recommend any necessary revisions to the dissertation. This will be contained in the joint report of the examiners, which will be submitted to the DDB.

The recommendation of the examiners for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy is subject to consideration by the DDB. After due consideration, the Chair of the DDB will inform the candidate of the outcome of the examination. The examiners' report will be transmitted to the candidate by the Graduate School after DDB approval. The DDB will then make a recommendation to the AUN Senate for ratification and award of the degree.

The Graduate School will inform the candidate in writing, on behalf of the DDB, of the decision of the Senate. It will also communicate any advice and instructions in cases of referral for corrections or re-examination.

Note carefully that the examiners are not permitted to have any direct communication with the candidate during the above process and candidates are not permitted to have any communication with the examiners. The Chair of the DDB may inform the candidate *informally* of the outcome of the viva after the event, ahead of the formal notification.

Final submission of Hard Bound Dissertation Copy

The candidate will make their final hard bound submission only when they have been directed to do so by the Graduate School. This will be after they have satisfactorily completed any required corrections or revisions to their dissertation, if relevant.

Appeals

If the candidate has any reasons to appeal the outcome of the doctoral examination, they must follow the procedures outlined in the AUN Graduate Catalog. Prior to submitting an appeal the candidate may seek advice from their School or the Graduate Support Coordinator on the process involved and the procedures to be followed.

The Dean of Graduate School and Research or someone appointed by the Dean will consider the appeal and may seek further information or evidence regarding the appeal. The Dean will then make a report and recommendation to the Provost for consideration along with the DDB.

Below is a summary of the viva voce examination and doctoral award process.

Outline of the Viva Voce Examination and Doctoral Award Process

1. Candidate is notified (in writing) at least a month in advance of the viva voce date.
2. At the viva, the Chief Examiner welcomes the candidate, explains the process and invites the candidate to present a summary of their work, including the problem, research questions, research method, main findings and their implications.
3. Under the direction of the Chief Examiner, examiners take turns to respond and ask questions.
4. The process should last for two hours.
5. On completion, the candidate leaves the room for the examiners to deliberate and complete their independent and joint reports.
6. The Chief Examiner endorses the examination report and recommendation on behalf of the examiners, once satisfied with the content.
7. Examiners' report/recommendation submitted to the Chair of the Doctoral Dissertation Board.
8. Candidate informed of outcome by the Chair of the Doctoral Dissertation Board after conferring with the DDB.
9. The Senate ratifies the results and the award of the degree after receiving the DDB's report.
10. The Candidate is formally awarded the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy.