

Document Title	VIVA PROCEDURE (Master Programmes)				Page 1 of 5
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Document Title	VIVA PROCEDURE (Master Programmes)				Page 2 of 5
Document Number	479	Document Revision	A	Date Issued	25.04.2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document aims to describe the process and the roles of the key stakeholders of the Viva Committee session.

2 Scope of Document

- 2.1 This procedure applies to the Viva Committee Session for MCAST Master's Degree Programmes (EQF/MQF 7) (with the exception of Master by Research and MVEAR)

3 Definitions

- 3.1 Convenor: In charge of the coordination of the Viva process.
- 3.2 Degree Ratification Board (DRB): The board responsible for students' degree awards based on MCAST regulations.
- 3.3 Institute Research Committee (IRC): The IRC is an existing structure that operates within each of MCAST's Institutes, chaired by the Institute Director and supported by Institute Deputy Directors, Senior Lecturers and an SRO.
- 3.4 Internal Examiners: Academics at MCAST who are experts in the area of study/methodology being examined. The internal examiners should be independent of the supervisory team and, thus, should not have been recently a supervisor or adviser to the student.
- 3.5 Programme Coordinator: The person officially appointed through MCAST to coordinate the specific programme.
- 3.6 Supervisor: Dissertation supervisor tutoring the candidate throughout the programme.
- 3.7 Viva Committee: Two internal examiners and a Chairperson.

4 The Pre-Viva Session Process

- 4.1 The Supervisor is to inform the Programme Coordinator of the candidate's readiness to sit for a viva at least eight (8) weeks in advance of a possible viva date.
- 4.2 It shall be the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that two hard copies, one electronic copy of the dissertation and the plagiarism report are submitted to the IRC on or before the dissertation submission deadline.
- 4.3 The IRC is to appoint a Viva Committee that includes two internal examiners and a Chairperson. The Chairperson will be responsible for chairing the examination and ensuring the associated administration of the Viva is completed satisfactorily. The Chair will not examine the dissertation.
- 4.3.1 The candidate shall take no part in the appointment of examiners, who in turn shall have no communication with the candidate in relation to the dissertation and viva between the appointment of the examiners and the viva examination.
- 4.3.2 All persons who act as examiners shall be asked to declare any potential conflict of interest. Conflict of interest constitutes one or more of the following:

Document Title	VIVA PROCEDURE (Master Programmes)				Page 3 of 5
Document Number	479	Document Revision	A	Date Issued	25.04.2025

- 4.3.2.1 Personal Relationships such as family members or relatives of the candidate or close friends of the candidate, current or past romantic relationships with the candidate.
 - 4.3.2.2 Commercial relationship with the candidate.
 - 4.3.2.3 Current or recent supervisors or mentors of the candidate.
 - 4.3.2.4 Significant personal connections with the candidate which could lead to possible biases.
 - 4.3.2.5 Known biases or prejudices towards the candidate.
- 4.3.3 Each examiner shall read and examine the dissertation.
- 4.3.4 The Supervisor shall provide provisional grading of the dissertation, which can be used as a reference as required by the Viva Committee.
- 4.4 The Viva Committee shall ensure that the examination is conducted professionally. In any instance where the Chair is made aware of a material failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, they may declare the examination null and void, and new examiners are appointed.
- 4.5 The Convenor, with the support of the Programme Coordinator, shall:
- Request the final dissertation (in two hard copies and electronic format) and the plagiarism report from the candidate, as approved by the Supervisor;
 - Send a copy of the dissertation to each examiner, together with the examiner's rubric sheet (DOC 382 for Academic Research, DOC 383 for Project/Action Research, and DOC 385 for Master in Research Methods, and ensure that the examiners are appropriately briefed as to their duties.
 - Establish a viva date and location;
 - Formally notify the Institute Director, Programme Coordinator, Viva Committee, and the candidate of the arrangements for the Viva in writing, at least three weeks beforehand.

Reference Documents:

- *Document 382: Academic Research Grading Rubric*
- *Document 383: Project/Action Research Grading Rubric*
- *Document 385: Master in Research Dissertation Grading Rubric*

5 The Viva Session

- 5.1 Subject to confirmation by the candidate, the Supervisor is invited to attend the session as a silent observer.
- 5.2 Examiners are to confirm their preliminary mark as per Rubric Form (DOC 382 for Academic Research, DOC 383 for Project/Action Research, and Document 385 for the Master in Research Methods). The examiners may recommend the following:

Grading of Units (EQF/MQF Level 7)	
% Mark	Classification
49% or less	Unclassified
50% to 64%	Pass
65% to 79%	Merit
80% and over	Distinction

Document Title	VIVA PROCEDURE (Master Programmes)				Page 4 of 5
Document Number	479	Document Revision	A	Date Issued	25.04.2025

- 5.3 The Chair shall explain the structure of the Viva to the Viva Committee and the candidate (i.e. presentation followed by questions, immediate discussions or otherwise).
- 5.4 The Chair shall coordinate the entire process of the viva session, keeping timing, set closure etc.

Reference Document

- Document 382: Academic Research Grading Rubric
- Document 383: Project/Action Research Grading Rubric
- Document 385: Master in Research Grading Rubric

6 The Post-Viva Process

- 6.1 Immediately following the viva examination, the Chair shall be responsible for collating all the Examiners' rubric forms and shall seek an agreement amongst examiners regarding the outcome of the Viva. The examiners shall, where they are in agreement, submit a joint mark and report on a common rubric form to the Institute/Centre Director, who will then present the outcome during the next DRB meeting. In the rare occurrence of a lack of agreement, the Chair is to intervene and provide the final decision, considering all feedback. The joint mark should follow the below grading system:

Grading of Units (EQF/MQF Level 7)	
% Mark	Classification
49% or less	Unclassified
50% to 64%	Pass
65% to 79%	Merit
80% and over	Distinction

- 6.2 The overall grading procedure details for the classification of the different Master degree programmes are as per DOC442 "Certification and Classification Rules and Regulations".
- 6.3 Only one re-submission may be permitted by the Institute/Centre, following approval by the DRB (DOC 188), to a candidate who fails the dissertation at the first examination. In such cases, the examiners will have provided the candidate, through the Programme Coordinator, written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission. The candidate shall be required to re-submit for re-examination and approval within three months. This will be considered as a synoptic and the maximum mark that may be obtained is 59% (Pass). Candidates who fail again the dissertation or fail to re-submit their dissertation may be considered as not completing the full programme and may request an Exit Point Certificate by completing the "Exit Point Certificate and Transcript Claim Form" (DOC 252) and "Resignation Letter Form" (DOC 278).
- 6.4 Following the final DRB, the award will be formally conferred by the Registrar. The Programme Coordinator shall be responsible for informing the candidate of the outcome of the Viva via the Programme Coordinator. Additionally, the Convenor shall input the mark on the College's Data Management Software and inform the candidate of the result.
- 6.5 Final Level 7 dissertation submissions shall, unless specified otherwise, submit to MCAST two hard-bound copies and one PDF soft copy of the final dissertation by no later than four weeks after successful completion, including any amendments as recommended by the Viva

Document Title	VIVA PROCEDURE (Master Programmes)				Page 5 of 5
Document Number	479	Document Revision	A	Date Issued	25.04.2025

Committee, as applicable. One hard copy of the dissertation will be retained in one of the MCAST Libraries, while the Institute will retain the other hard copy.

- 6.6 Students, who fail to submit all copies of their dissertations in time shall have their Certificates withheld. Whilst such students will be allowed to take part in the graduation ceremony, however, they will only be provided with a Transcript. The Certificate will only be issued upon the submission of all copies of the final dissertation as required by this procedure.

Reference Documents

- *Document 083: External Peer Review Policy and Procedure*
- *Document 100: Dissertation Guidelines and Grading Rubrics*
- *Document 252: Exit Point Certificate and Transcript Claim form*
- *Document 278: Resignation Letter Form*
- *Document 382: Academic Research Grading Rubric*
- *Document 383: Project/Action Research Grading Rubric*
- *Document 385: Master in Research Dissertation Grading Rubric*
- *Document 442: Certification and Classification Rules and Regulations*