

Preparing for the viva – Undergraduate

What is the viva?

The viva is an oral examination in which internal and/or external examiners will ask you questions about work already completed. You will have the opportunity to talk about your work and present your ideas.

What will I be asked about?

You are likely to be asked to **summarise** your arguments, **explain** your methods, **discuss** your evidence, **justify** your conclusions, and **reflect** on the effectiveness of your work.

The viva often includes questions about:

- **Content:** what is your work about?
- **Methods:** what did you do? What sources did you use?
- **Results:** what did you find out?
- **Evaluation/reflection:** so what? Why does it matter?

How can I prepare?

- Re-read your work. Re-familiarise yourself with the arguments you have made.
- Prepare a summary of your main points. Can you give an elevator pitch – a short summary of your work - introducing your main points and arguments in three minutes?
- Think about potential questions in advance. What will examiners want to discuss? Are there any weak points or things you could have done better?
- Look again at your sources. Are you familiar with the sources you have used and their main arguments? Can you situate your own arguments in the context of your reading?
- Practice giving analytical answers. Never answer questions with yes or no. Always develop and justify your answers, giving examples and evidence.

On the day:

- Listen to questions carefully and don't be afraid to ask for clarification.
- Stay calm: if you think you might feel anxious, prepare some techniques to keep yourself calm.
- Take a hard copy of your work with you.

Remember that your examiners are there to support you and will help you to display your knowledge.