

Viva voce

What's a viva voce?

- Often just called “viva”, it’s an assessment that asks you to speak about a topic, usually a scenario/case study.
- It might be interactive (question-and-answer) or a response to a question (like a presentation).
- Marks usually depend on:
 - how well you show you know the content.
 - how critically you apply/engage with the content.
 - how clearly and professionally you communicate your ideas.
- As with any other assessment, the marking rubric should make it clear how you will be marked; if it doesn't, ask your tutor or course coordinator.



Strategies: Before the day

- The best idea is to treat this like any conversation: a viva is a chance to show what you can do. For most people, though, vivas can feel too stressful for that.
- Find out as much about the viva as you can:
 - whether it's on campus or by Zoom
 - whether it's interactive or a monologue
 - what course content/skills it covers
 - the marking rubric, and how much each criterion is worth
 - how many questions there are, and how long each should be
 - whether you get the questions in advance (for example, 24 hours before your scheduled viva), or whether there's reading time if you get them on the day
- If you don't get the questions in advance, imagine what you'll probably be asked – most viva questions are predictable. Plan your response to each.
- Practise responding to each question (or predicted question). This can be to other people, a mirror, recording yourself on your phone, even a blank wall (or a pet). Get as comfortable as possible talking out loud and explaining what you've learnt.
- If you practice with another person, ask for feedback on what worked and what didn't.
 - did you answer the question directly?
 - did you cover everything you wanted to?
 - did it fit together in a logical order?
 - did you keep reasonably close to the time limit?



- anything else mentioned in the rubric?
- And, of course, revise anything in the lectures/readings/Canvas content that you want to be confident speaking about.

Strategies: On the day

- Consider how you present yourself. This includes what you wear (including hair, makeup, shaving and/or jewellery) and body language (posture, expression and eye contact). Think about how a professional in your field presents and use that for inspiration.
- While you're waiting for your viva, breathe slowly and deeply. Try to picture yourself speaking with confidence.
- Nervousness has a few basic giveaway signs:
 - fidgeting (practice what you'll do with your hands).
 - shuffling (practice what you'll do with your feet).
 - talking too fast (during preparation, focus on speaking slowly and calmly).
- If it's permitted, take notes about the question/your ideas, either as part of your preparation or during reading time.
- The question's key words are good for keeping yourself on the point and ensuring your marker sees you've answered the question. Include the key words in your notes, and use them.
- However worried or frustrated you feel, stay polite. That just means taking the task seriously, listening to the instructions (and keeping to them exactly), and treating your marker like a mature equal.
- Focus on the things you can do. If you don't know something, don't pretend to.
- Speak slowly and clearly – emphasise content, not style, and give yourself time to think of what you want to say next.
 - Be willing to leave a pause if necessary, rather than filling the gap with “ah”/“um”.
 - Use appropriate terminology to get your meaning across clearly, but remember to explain the terminology so the marker knows you understand it.
- Don't get distracted when your marker makes a note. It's usually to show a criterion's been met.



Final tips

- Did you know you can book an appointment with a learning advisor to practice for a viva?
- Even if you don't have the questions, you can meet with a learning advisor online or on campus to practice the types of skills successful students use to communicate their understanding of different course content.
- Click [here](#) or scan this QR code to book an appointment today →

