



UCL Academic Manual 2024-25

Chapter 6: Student Casework Framework

Annex 6.9.6

Guidance on Conducting an Investigatory Viva

1. What is an investigatory viva?

The purpose of an investigatory viva is to establish, through a discussion of a piece of assessed work with the student, whether it is likely, on the balance of probabilities, that the student authored the work in its entirety.

2. When should I use an investigatory viva?

If you suspect that a piece of work that you are reviewing may not have been authored by the student but may instead have been produced by another individual, in collaboration with another individual, or incorporates elements produced by Generative Artificial Intelligence tools that have not been clearly referenced or were not explicitly permitted for use within the assessment, you should seek permission to conduct a viva.

3. What should I do in preparation for the viva?

Before you invite the student to attend the viva, you must have a clear understanding of which pieces of the work you suspect were not authored by the student, and why. It may help to ask yourself the following questions:

- a) Which parts of the work do I suspect were not authored by the student?
- b) What is it about those parts of the work that causes me to think that?
- c) Is there clear evidence in the text that points to authorship by another individual/tool, for example:
 - i Fake or clearly unrelated references.
 - ii Clear and unexplainable false conclusions from the sources referenced.
 - iii A sudden change in writing tone or style part way through the document.
 - iv Unexplained similarities with work submitted by other students for the same assessment.

- v Reference to sources that you suspect the student would not have access to.
 - vi Work that ends abruptly or has an unexplained lack of continuity.
 - vii Large areas of text embedded as pictures.
 - viii Work that is at a level of sophistication or execution that is otherwise out of line with other work the student has submitted.
 - ix In the case of visual or audio artefacts, works that are unlikely to have been executed within the time allocated for the task.
- d) How will you establish whether these suspicions are founded? What line of questioning will you need to follow?
- e) Who might need to be invited to the meeting to ensure you have sufficient objectivity and subject knowledge?

You must clearly detail your concerns around the suspected piece of work within the Academic Misconduct Report Form ([annex 6.9.1 - student academic misconduct report form.docx \(live.com\)](#)). This form, along with a copy of the suspected piece of work, MUST be provided to the student to enable them to prepare for the viva.

4. What should I do at the viva?

Set the tone. It is important to ensure that the student feels as comfortable as possible given the circumstances, and that they are reassured that the interview will be conducted calmly and professionally. Let the student know how the meeting will proceed and invite them to ask any questions. Let them know that they can ask to take a break at any point.

Ask direct questions, this is an investigation mechanism after all, the purpose of which is to test the student's knowledge and understanding of the subject topic area and the contents of the written submission. Do not labour points or make value judgments on the student's behaviour. It may help to ask the student the following questions:

- a) Why did you choose this specific topic/title for your essay? Explain briefly in your own words your general understanding of the subject title?
- b) What was the intended structure for your essay? How did you plan to discuss the topic throughout your essay?
- c) Explain how you went about preparing to write this essay from start to finish?
- d) What research did you conduct to help you write this essay? What sources did you use? What drew your attention to this particular source from this author that made you want to use it in your essay?
- e) Can you explain what this word/phrase you used in your essay means? What is this acronym you used in your essay?

- f) Can you briefly summarise (not just read out) what you were discussing under this particular subheading? Why did you use these subheadings to structure the discussion of your essay?

Do not ask questions around the metadata/properties of the suspected piece of work (which may show a name other than the student's name as the author of the document). This is a matter to be addressed by the relevant adjudicator as part of their investigation, not for the investigatory viva panel.

Also, allow the student to present evidence of any preparatory work undertaken in completing the assessment.

Bring the meeting to a conclusion in a manner that is as humane and supportive as possible. Always give the student a chance to make any final comments before concluding. Be clear about the next steps referring the student to support from the Student Union and Student Support and Wellbeing. Inform the student that they should expect to receive an update on the investigatory viva findings within five working days, unless informed otherwise.

5. What should happen after the viva?

Establish your conclusions as a team and, crucially, the reasons for them (i.e. whether or not there is a prima facie case NOT whether there is a case to answer). Ensure that this is accurately recorded by your secretary to enable them to report the findings of the investigatory viva to the student and the relevant adjudicator, using the Investigatory Viva Report Form ([annex 6.9.2 - investigatory viva report form.docx \(live.com\)](#)). The form MUST detail the questions asked of the student and the responses provided. This will help the relevant adjudicator ascertain the quality of the responses provided by the student in demonstrating authorship of the suspected piece of work.

Once the student has received notification of the investigatory viva findings, the relevant adjudicator will be in touch to either invite the student to a panel hearing or advise them of the investigation outcome following its decision-making on the case.

When referring the case for further consideration by the central Academic Misconduct panel, a copy of previously submitted essays by the student for other assessments (at least two) MUST be included in the evidence paperwork (this is to enable the panel to compare the quality/structure of the suspected piece of work with previous work submitted by the student).