



UCL Academic Manual 2023-24

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 we 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. This information must be provided to the student to enable them to prepare. 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?

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, but do not labour points or make value judgments on the student's behaviour.
- Enable the student to evidence, through discussion, whether they understand the content of the work being discussed and can be judged to have met the learning outcomes.
- 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 and 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 outcome notification within five working days, unless informed otherwise.
- Establish your conclusions as a team and, crucially, the reasons for them. Ensure that this is accurately recorded by your secretary to enable them to report the outcome to the student and the relevant decision-making body, using the report form (Annex 6.9.2).