

1. Viva Voce for Suspected Academic Malpractice

Paragraph 27 of the University's document Academic Malpractice: Procedure for the Handling of Cases states that *'All suspected cases of academic malpractice should be marked up by an academic member of staff or tutor to show the location and extent of relevant passages, and their possible original sources or other indicators of academic malpractice, and referred in the first instance to a designated person (the officer) in the School'*. However, sometimes whilst marking a taught student's assignment, the marker may suspect that the work isn't entirely the student's own, but on further investigation cannot find any textual evidence to substantiate their suspicions. In such cases (i.e. where it is strongly suspected that academic malpractice has been committed but where no direct evidence can be produced), the Vice President Teaching, Learning & Students has confirmed that a viva voce may be held to determine the authorship of the work.

The viva voce is conducted because there is reason to believe that the student's work is not entirely their own work. N.B. the viva voce is not an academic assessment of the student's work: the aim of the viva voce is to give the student the opportunity to demonstrate that the piece of work is entirely their own and is held to confirm that the student:

- undertook the reading and research themselves;
- undertook all the preparatory work themselves;
- understands what they have written;
- wrote the piece of work themselves.

2. Principles

A) A viva voce may, exceptionally, be held where it is suspected that academic malpractice has been committed but where no textual evidence can be produced e.g. in cases where it is suspected that the student has commissioned the work from a third party. The purpose of the viva voce is to provide the student with the opportunity to demonstrate that the work is their own, prior to an academic malpractice panel hearing.

B) Only the piece of work in question will be the focus of the viva voce.

C) The Vice Dean (Teaching, Learning and Students), or nominee, must be consulted and approve the use of the viva voce prior to this being set up and the student informed.

D) Two members of academic staff (at least one of whom must be a subject specialist) must be present at / conduct the viva voce; this will normally be the School Malpractice Officer and the marker of the assessment.

E) The student may be accompanied by a person of their choice (normally a fellow student, member of staff or Students' Union representative). Any individual accompanying the student should under no circumstances participate in the viva voce.

- f) The viva voce must take place in a room occupied by The University of Manchester and must take place in a quiet suitable room and without interruption. In exceptional circumstances the viva voce can be conducted via video link.
- G) The student should be made to feel at ease and the format of the viva voce must be explained to them at the beginning. The person leading the viva voce should begin by informing the student that it is suspected that they may not have written the work and that viva voce represents an opportunity for the student to demonstrate that they did. They should also explain that, if authorship remains in doubt at the end of the viva voce, the matter will be referred to an academic malpractice panel hearing at which the student will have a further opportunity to put their case.
- H) Intensive questioning of the student may be required, however this must be non-aggressive. The questions asked should provide the student with opportunities to demonstrate that the work is their own.
- I) An accurate record of the viva voce should be taken; this record may be used to form the evidence base for any future investigation at an academic malpractice panel hearing (the note taker can be a member of the PSS). A copy of the record must be provided to the student.
- J) Notification that, in exceptional circumstances, a viva voce may be conducted, where academic malpractice is strongly suspected, should be included in the relevant student handbooks, on the website / intranet / Blackboard etc.
- K) If a viva voce is to be conducted it should not normally take place more than 30 calendar days after the assessment feedback deadline.
- L) If a viva voce is to be conducted the student must be advised in advance in writing of the reason for the viva voce being held and given adequate notice (i.e. 10 working days) of the requirement to attend the viva voce. Students must also be advised that if they do not attend the viva voce that the piece of work in question will be referred to an Academic Malpractice Panel.
- M) Students should be given guidance on what a viva voce is, the purpose of the viva voce and how to prepare for the viva voce. It is recommended that the information in appendix A is included as an appendix to the written notification to attend the viva voce.
- N) Reasonable adjustments must be made to ensure that candidates with additional support needs are not disadvantaged for reasons relating to a long-term medical condition, sensory impairment, specific learning difficulty and /or disability.
- O) Students are required to inform the School if there are any particular arrangements or adjustments that need to be made to enable their full participation in the viva voce (they should be advised of this in the letter inviting them to attend the viva voce).
- P) At the end of the viva voce there will be one of three outcomes:
1. The staff conducting the viva voce will confirm that they accept that the student wrote the work in question; no further action will be taken. If the piece of work in question has already been marked this mark will stand, and where not it will be marked on its own merit.
 2. The staff conducting the viva voce remain doubtful of the authorship of the work in question and the student will be required to attend an academic malpractice panel hearing.
 3. The student accepts that they have committed academic malpractice and their case will be referred to an academic malpractice panel hearing for a penalty to be applied.

Q) The viva voce, in itself, will not result in a penalty being applied if academic malpractice is still suspected or the student admits committing academic malpractice during the viva voce; penalties can only be applied by an academic malpractice panel.

Appendix A – Information for Students

What is a viva voce?

A viva voce is a conversation that will be held between members of academic staff and you.

What is the purpose of the viva voce?

The viva voce is being held because there is reason to believe that the piece of work you submitted, or parts of it, is not entirely your own work. The aim of the viva voce is to give you an opportunity to demonstrate that the piece of work is entirely your own and to confirm that you:

- undertook the reading and research yourself;
- undertook all the preparatory work yourself;
- understand what you have written;
- wrote the piece of work yourself.

Who will be present at the viva voce?

Normally the School's Academic Malpractice Officer and the marker of the assessment in question. A member of the School's Professional Support Service staff may also be present to make notes of the viva voce.

Can I bring anyone with me to the viva voce?

Yes. You may be accompanied by a person of your choice (normally a fellow student, member of staff or Students' Union representative). However anyone accompanying you will not be able to participate in the viva voce.

How should I prepare for the viva voce?

You must be thoroughly familiar with the content of your work and the research that was involved as you will be asked questions by the members of academic staff about the sources you used, your ideas, the words used, your research, references and data collection as relevant for the piece of work in question etc. These questions are asked so that the members of academic staff can be assured of the authorship of the work.

What will I need to bring to the viva voce?

You will need to bring with you all the documentation that you used in completing the piece of work e.g. your list of source documents, evidence of primary data collection, rough notes and assessment drafts etc.

What will happen during the viva voce?

You will be asked to explain / be asked questions on how you researched and produced the piece of work, how you found the sources quoted in your bibliography / reference list and asked to explain your ideas and theories and any elaborate vocabulary you have used. Your answers will help the academic staff make a decision as to whether the work you submitted is your own.

What will happen after the viva voce?

At the end of the viva voce there will be one of three outcomes:

1. The staff conducting the viva voce will confirm that they accept that you wrote the work in question; no further action will be taken.
2. The staff conducting the viva voce are still doubtful of the authorship of the work in question and you will be required to attend an academic malpractice panel hearing (for which you will be notified of separately).
3. You accept that you have committed academic malpractice and your case will be referred to an academic malpractice panel hearing for a penalty to be applied (for which you will be notified of separately).

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