

'Joining a community': Using a Viva as an assessment on an optional PGT unit

Dr Sheena Kalayil

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

Who, why, and how? What happened and what next?

Who

- MA in Intercultural Communication – Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies
- Optional 15-credit unit – *Language and identity in multicultural spaces* – using lecture-seminars, including pair and group work.

Why

- Changed student cohort and (decolonised) course content
- ‘Deficit’ narrative - my positionality – admissions
- English usage in seminars
- Academic integrity
- Workload and support from Faculty?
- Gen AI and future

How

- Discussed with MAIC team
- Discussed Assessment Director and e-learning, and submitted amendment to assessment to Assessment Board
- Included screencast and possible Viva dates on Canvas
- Student drop-out after Week 1 was high
- Wrote schedule for Vivas by Week 3
- Conducted pre-Viva survey, practice Vivas and post-Viva interviews

1. Have you ever had a Viva Voce before?

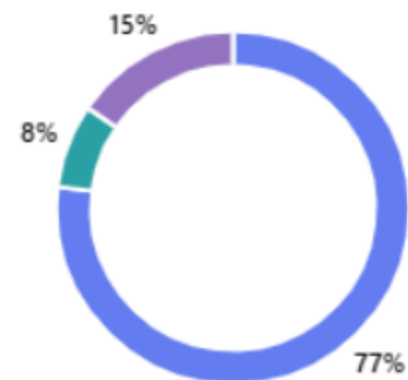
[More details](#)

Yes	6
No	7
I'm not sure	0



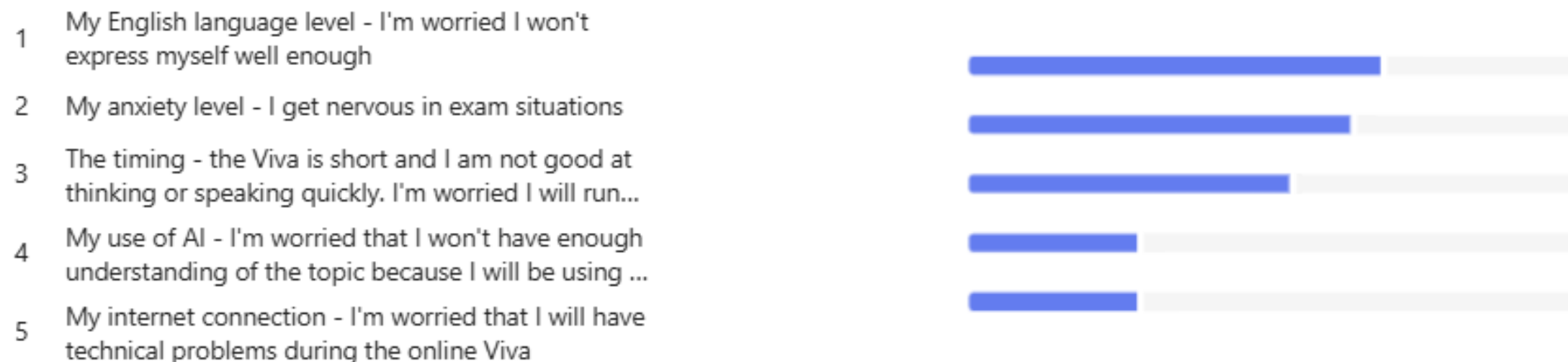
2. I introduced the assessments including the Viva in our first lecture, and there is also a written description, including the assessment criteria on Canvas. There is, also, a short screencast discussing all the assessment. Do you think you understand what the Viva Voce is? [More details](#)

Yes	10
No	0
Only a little	1
Not everything, but enough for now	2



3. Below are some concerns you may have. Please rank them in order of what worries you at this moment about the Viva - with your biggest worry at the top, and your smallest worry at the bottom.

[More details](#)





4. At this point, do you have any comments or suggestions to make? I will not be able to change the assessment, but I would like to hear any thoughts!

4 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Make everything face to face(offline)
2	anonymous	At this point, no
3	anonymous	I just want to say that knowing there will be a viva voce practice on the presentation makes me feel a lot more at ease about the real one, so thank you for doing that.
4	anonymous	no

What happened?

1. Group Presentation (2-3 members, 5 minutes total)	20 November in class	25%
2. Essay (1500 words not including references)	5 January 2026	50%
3. Viva Voce (oral exam, 5-10 mins, online, recorded)	w/c 26 January 2026	25%

Assignment 2 Essay weighted at 50%:

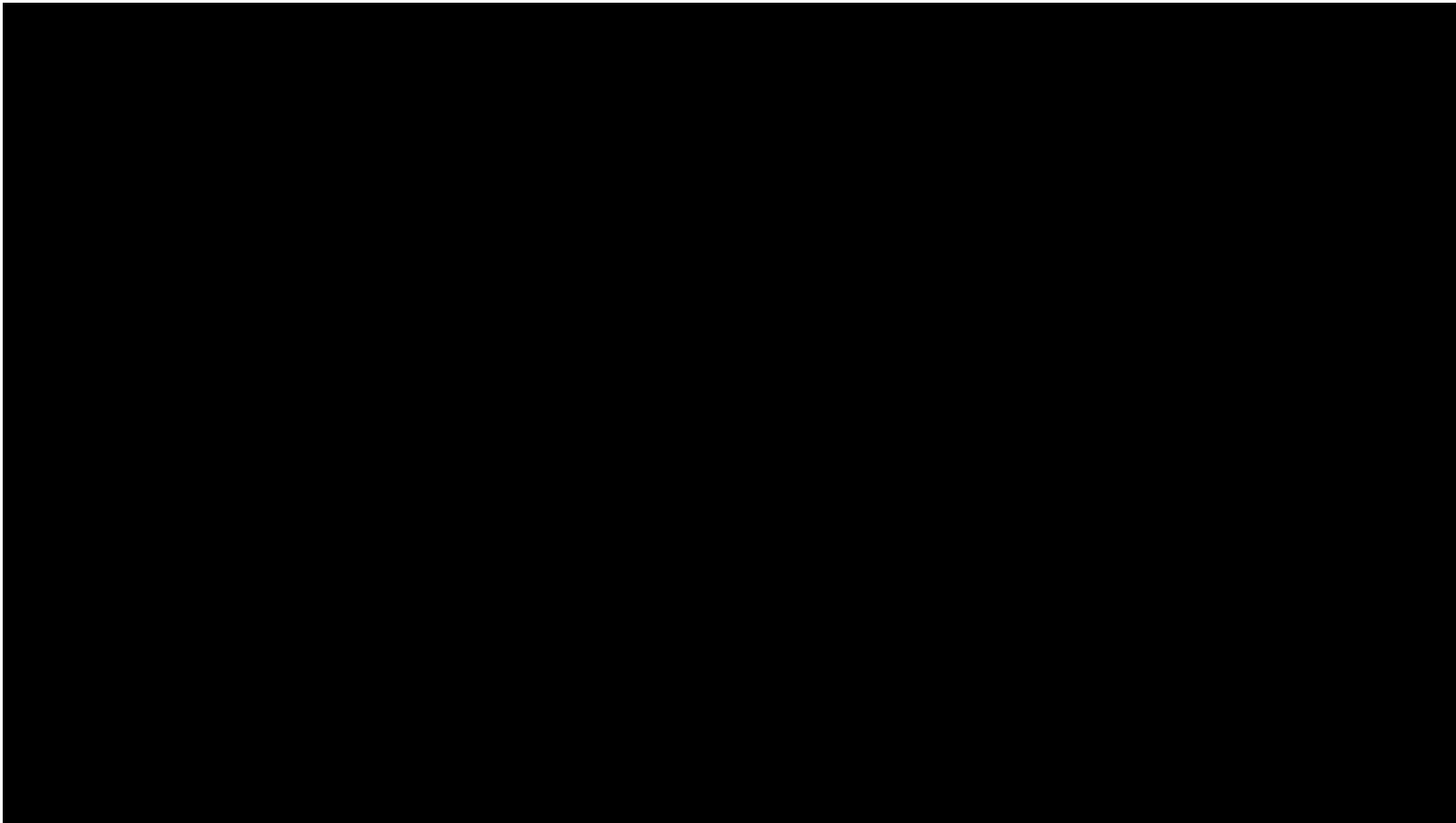
A critical essay on language
use in a diasporic community

- **Assignment 3 - weighted at 25% (29 January; oral feedback given on request in office hours)**
- [ICOM60031 Coursework Essay VIVA - Assessment Criteria \(1\).docx](#)
- **A Viva Voce or oral exam**
- You will have a one-to-one question-and answer session based on your Assignment 2 Critical Review. This will take place on Zoom and will be recorded. **This will take place in the week commencing 26 January 2026. You will not have received any written feedback on your essay beforehand.**
- *You will be asked about why you chose the topic but also about details from your essay. The exam will take between 5-10 minutes, and you will be told your slot (the date, time and Zoom room) in Week 3.*
- **You will be able to sign up for a practice viva (related to your Group Presentation assignment) in Weeks 10 and 11, in my office hour.**

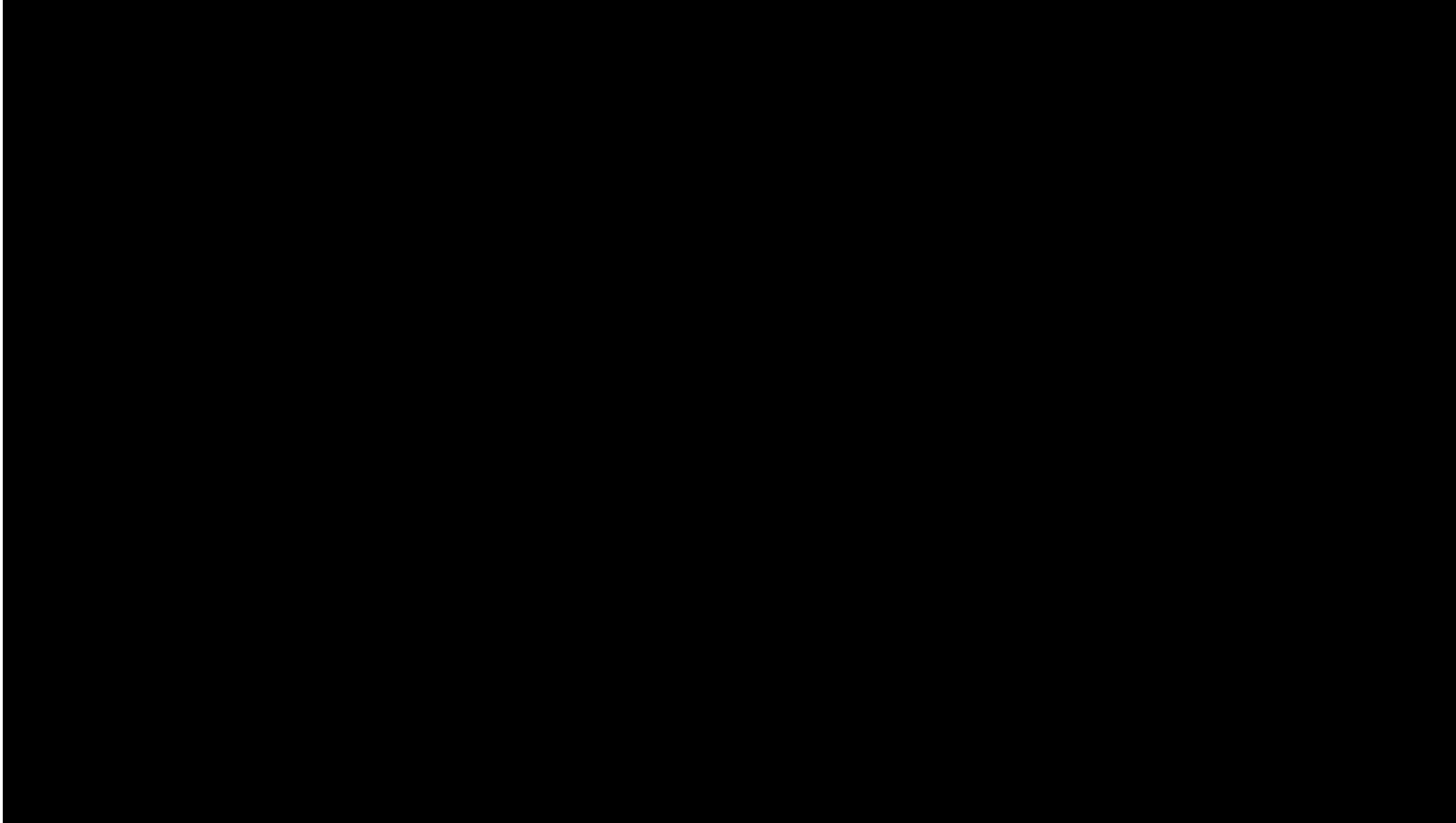
Viva Assessment criteria

[Viva 2026 Anon.docx](#)

What happened? Viva 1



What happened? Viva 2 (start, and from 5.00 mins)



What happened? 3 out of 15 students received below 50% for the Viva

SCALED Final Mark	Final Mark	Raw Final Mark	A1 Submi Status	Group Nu	A1 MC Extension	A1 C	A1 Late	A1 N	A1 Mark	A2 Submi Status	A2 MC Extension	A2 C	A2 L	A2 N	A2 Mark	A3 Submi Status	A3 MC Extension	A3 C	A3 L	A3 N	A3 Mark
	74	54.75		Group 4				75.00	75.00	On time				72.00	72.00						78.00
	72	54.50		Group 5				62.00	62.00	On time				78.00	78.00						70.66
	69	51.88		Group 3				63.50	63.50	On time				72.00	72.00						69.33
	68	49.75		Group 1				75.00	75.00	On time				62.00	62.00						74.00
	59	47.75		Group 4				75.00	75.00	On time				58.00	58.00						43.00
	64	47.75		Group 4				75.00	75.00	On time				58.00	58.00						65.00
	64	44.75		Group 2				55.00	55.00	On time				62.00	62.00						76.00
	58	44.50		Group 5				62.00	62.00	On time				58.00	58.00						52.70
	61	44.00		Group 6				60.00	60.00	On time				58.00	58.00						66.00
	56	44.00		Group 6				60.00	60.00	On time				58.00	58.00						48.30
	62	44.00		Group 6				60.00	60.00	On time				58.00	58.00						70.00

Why did students fail their Viva?

- They read from a script which did not change to reflect and respond to the questions I was asking (1 student, native-speaker level of English)
- Their essay was extremely weak, and they could not ‘defend’ it (2 students).

One essay was nearly all (Gen AI?) summaries of articles, and full of high-level terminology – but these articles had no relevance to the theme of the assignment.

What next?

My reflections 1

- *Different*, but not higher, workload
- I examined 15 students 10.00-16.00, with several breaks
- I marked the (shorter) essays, and noted questions for the Viva simultaneously
- I had to de-anonymise the essays after marking – Vivas are not anonymised
- I recorded on Zoom – before recording, took some exam security measures. Next time I would start the recording with face of student shown!

My reflections 2

- I examined with a positive attitude – I believe you, you have to make me not believe you...
- I felt better about obvious (but not illegal) Gen AI use
- I have experience with oral exams, and I am comfortable about English language issues
- It was impossible to predict who would do well in the Viva – many students were very reticent in class but performed very well in the Viva (and vice versa)
- Interviews: problem-solving, welcome challenge, drop-out