Universität Basel

Vizerektorat
Lehre

Oral examinations via video conference

Ressort Learning & Teaching
21.04.2021

1. What are video examinations?

The e-teaching.org website, which belongs to the Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien (IWM), defines video examinations as follows: "*A video examination reproduces a traditional oral examination situation through the use of digital media. Under these conditions, the student undertakes an oral examination with the support of an internet connection and webcam.*" (Source: www.e-teaching.org)

2. Requirements for video examinations

<u>1. Technical requirements</u>

At a technical level, the following equipment is required at a minimum to ensure the video examinations proceed smoothly for all participants (examiner, candidate, any supervising personnel, assessor, recorder):
– A stable, high-speed internet connection (use of a LAN cable instead of WLAN)
– Desktop or laptop computer (smartphones are not recommended)
– Web camera
– Headset (otherwise integrated microphone and loudspeaker)
– Reliable video conferencing software

The University of Basel has made the software Zoom available to assist with conducting video examinations. Other tools for video conferences are listed on the following page: https://edutools.unibas.ch/.

If the examination is held over Zoom,
– the application should be installed on the computer of each participant. If this is not possible, the video examination can be held in a browser;
– to ensure the examination conditions remain confidential and secure, the following settings must be selected when using Zoom:
   – A meeting room must be created exclusively for the video examination
   – When creating the meeting room, the following settings must be selected:
      1. "Meeting password"
      2. "Waiting room".
– To start a specific examination, the examiner gives the candidate access to the room by clicking on "Participants" and selecting the relevant person. The candidates cannot speak to one another in the waiting room.

<u>2. Organizational requirements</u>

– Generally speaking, the video exam should replicate a traditional exam. The confidentiality surrounding the examination must be guaranteed. As a rule, the only persons permitted to take part in the video conference are the examiner and the candidate – plus a supervisor, assessor and recorder as required.
   – No other persons may be present in the physical space in which the candidate is located.

– Other persons are not permitted to join the online session. See the guide above on how to use the software Zoom. Public recitals, e.g. as part of a debate, are an exception to this rule.

– If the examination is to be recorded, this must be clearly communicated to the candidate in advance and their consent must be acquired. The candidate must not be put at a disadvantage if they do not provide their consent. Recordings may only be stored locally on a storage medium belonging to the university. Whether it is wise to record the examination is a matter of discretion. Although it may make the exam situation more transparent and reliable, it may also be stressful for the candidate.

– The candidate must be able to prove their identity:

– The candidate must have a form of identification with photo (e.g. university card, ID card) and show it to the examiner on request. If the examiner and candidate are known to one another, they do not have to complete this step.

– To prevent cheating, it is not permitted to conduct an oral online exam via audio transmission alone – a video connection is mandatory.

3. Video examinations: types and options

There are two main types of video examination:

(A) Defense of a final paper; e.g. bachelor's or master's thesis, dissertation, etc.

(B) Oral examination as part of a seminar/course/lecture.

(A) Video examinations for the defense of a final paper

General comments

– For some time now, many universities have allowed students to defend their final paper (bachelor's thesis, master's thesis, dissertation, etc.) via video conference.

– This type of video examination can be easier to conduct for various reasons. Generally speaking, the examiner will personally know the candidate, so there is no doubt about their identity. As the defense of a final paper is often public, the confidentiality issue surrounding the online exchange is less important.

Organizational recommendations

1. The examiner and candidate agree in good time that the defense should take place via video conference.
2. If anyone other than the examiner and candidate are to participate in the defense, they must be informed of this obligation.
3. The participants should agree on the following points:
   – The exact time/date and duration of the defense.
   – The structure of the defense (introduction, presentation by the candidate, questions/discussion, etc.).
   – Feedback: whether this should be given immediately after the interactive section of the defense or issued in writing later. In both cases, the examiner will need time to organize their thoughts. During this period, the candidate should leave the meeting room and return/be readmitted to the session to hear the results at an agreed time.
   – Recording: this is not always required – in any case, the defense should be logged/recorded as would usually be the case.

4. All participants install the software and familiarize themselves with it.
5. The thesis should be submitted and assessed as usual.
6. The examiners should create a special password-protected meeting room in the video conferencing software for the purpose of the defense. They will email the link and password to the student's stud.unibas.ch address (and to the other participants) in good time. The link may not be made available online by the tutor or the student, or disclosed to third parties.
7. All participants should enter the meeting room at least 20 minutes before the defense to test the technical equipment.
8. The defense should follow the agreed format (see above).
9. The organizational requirements stated above should be observed.

(B) Oral examination as part of a seminar/course/lecture

Possible scenarios

There are three possible scenarios for video examinations:

1. Video examination with extensive preparation time: The person being examined is sent a task in advance. The duration may vary: the task, e.g. a book review or independent research, may be provided as early as the start of the semester. The person uses this time to prepare a talk or presentation on a relevant topic. The video examination consists of a talk or presentation by the person being examined, which is then followed by questions from the examiner. The examiner must indicate in advance whether they are expecting a talk or if the candidate should prepare other materials as well (e.g. PowerPoint presentation). In this case, video conferencing software such as Zoom or Webex – both of which have a screen-sharing feature – should be used.

2. Video examination with brief preparation time: This type of video examination is conducted in a similar manner to the scenario described above, but the candidate has less time to prepare, e.g. a few hours. Generally speaking, the use of digital materials (PowerPoint presentation, etc.) should not be part of the task.

3. Video examination without preparation time: In this scenario, the video examination consists of a dialog between the examiner and the candidate. The examiner asks questions that should be answered immediately. As a rule, it should be assumed that the examiner will ask several questions in succession (rather than just a single question). It is recommended that the candidate is informed in advance of the approximate number of questions and how long/detailed each answer should be.

Comments

– The scenarios can also be combined as required. In particular, scenarios 1 or 2 could be combined with scenario 3, with the examiner asking the students various questions after their presentation to assess their knowledge level.

– The scenarios involving preparation time may be of more interest to the candidate, as it gives them the opportunity to offer their own observations or present original research.

– Scenarios 1 and 2 are open-book examinations, i.e. those where the candidate has internet access to all the tools they need. In these scenarios, the questions should be adapted accordingly. It is often advisable to refrain from pure knowledge questions; problem-solving tasks that test cognitive abilities are a good alternative.

Organizational recommendations

The recommendations set out above apply here in an organizational sense:

1. The examiner informs the student in good time that the examination will be held in video format, along with the time/date of the exam and which scenario it will involve. Any supervisors (e.g. person recording the examination) should also be informed in good time alongside the candidate.
2. All participants install the software and familiarize themselves with it.
3. A few weeks before the day of the examination, the student will be informed of the date and time of the examination and how they will be sent the examination question(s).

   The format for sending questions to the candidates should be carefully planned in advance.

   – The best method is by email.
   – All emails should be prepared in advance and sent in good time, so all candidates receive exactly the same amount of time to prepare.
   – One option is to have Outlook automatically send the emails to the relevant addresses – see this guide.

4. For the video examination, the examiner will create a special password-protected meeting room in the video conferencing software and email the link and password to the student's stud.unibas.ch address, and to any other participants. The link may not be made available online by the tutor or the student, or disclosed to third parties.

5. On the day of the examination:
   – The examiners are in the meeting room.
   – The candidates enter the meeting room one after another at the agreed time; candidates wait in a waiting room (if the application has this feature), and are admitted to the virtual meeting room individually by the examiners.
   – The candidate may need to identify him-/herself by showing a form of ID with photo to the camera at the examiner's request. If the examiner and candidate personally know each other, they may skip this step.
   – The examiners must include extra time in each examination to cover any technical issues that may arise.

6. The examination takes place in the format as announced in advance (see above).
7. The organizational requirements above should be observed.

4. Preventing cheating

Form of cheating	Solution
The candidate finds the answer to the question online.	The exam questions should be adjusted: instead of pure knowledge-based questions, more cognitively demanding tasks test individual performance should be used.
The candidate received help from a third person during the preparation period.	Keep the preparation time in mind (based on scenario 2); check in case of doubt when questioning the candidate.
Other candidates have sent the exam question to the student.	Prepare multiple exam questions. Rely primarily on exam questions that require individual answers (questions leading to interpretation, application of knowledge, etc.).
A third person is in the room with the candidate (off camera) and gives them instructions.	The candidate should be alone in the room and face the screen at all times; generally speaking, the presence of a third party, even off camera, will not go undetected.
The candidate receives instructions from a third person via a headset.	If the candidate waits for instructions from a third person before giving their answer, this will be immediately obvious to the examiner and can be addressed by them.
The candidate receives instructions from a third person via chat or email.	If the candidate waits for instructions from a third person before giving their answer, this will be immediately obvious to the examiner and can be addressed by them.
There is some doubt as to whether the person sitting in front of the camera is the candidate.	The candidate must be able to prove their identity by showing a form of ID with photo to the camera. An oral online exam with only audio transmission is not permitted.