University of Essex
Conduct of Research Degree Vivas by Video Link, Skype or an equivalent audio-visual service

A. University Policy
Vivas may be conducted exceptionally by high quality video link, Skype or an equivalent audio-visual service where the attendance by the External Examiner at a viva on the University campus would be impracticable. Approval will not normally be given for the candidate to be at a remote site except in the case of distance learning students. Such cases will only be approved where the integrity of the examination can be guaranteed. In some cases approval will be granted for the viva to be conducted by video link, Skype or an equivalent audio-visual service where the attendance by the Internal Examiner is impracticable.

In all cases, agreement from all participants in the examination will be sought.

As per the Policy for the Appointment of Independent Chairs for Research Degree Vivas, an Independent Chair will be appointed by the Deputy Dean (Postgraduate Research Education) to facilitate the examination process and procedures for all vivas held via video link.

B. Procedures
Because the viva examination is not being conducted in accordance with standard procedures, it is particularly important to ensure that the candidate understands how the examination will be conducted and is in full agreement. It is also essential to provide the best possible environment for both the candidate and the examiners, and to ensure that the video link used is of a high quality. These procedures have been drawn up with these points in mind.

The agreement of the candidate and the Deputy Dean (Postgraduate Research Education) must be obtained in advance. A request form is provided for this purpose.

C. Technical preparation
Vivas must be held in the video-conferencing suite or another suitable venue if held via Skype or an equivalent audio-visual service. Bookings for video-conferencing should be made through the Audiovisual and Media Services whose staff will advise on timings.

Technical assistance will be provided by the Audiovisual and Media Services as required. This will include practical advice on the protocols of communication by video link. Time should be allowed before the start of the viva for a short ‘training’ session for both the candidate and the Internal Examiner.

If using Skype or an equivalent audio-visual service, time should be allowed before the start of the viva to test equipment. Video mode should be used, so that it is equivalent to video-conferencing.