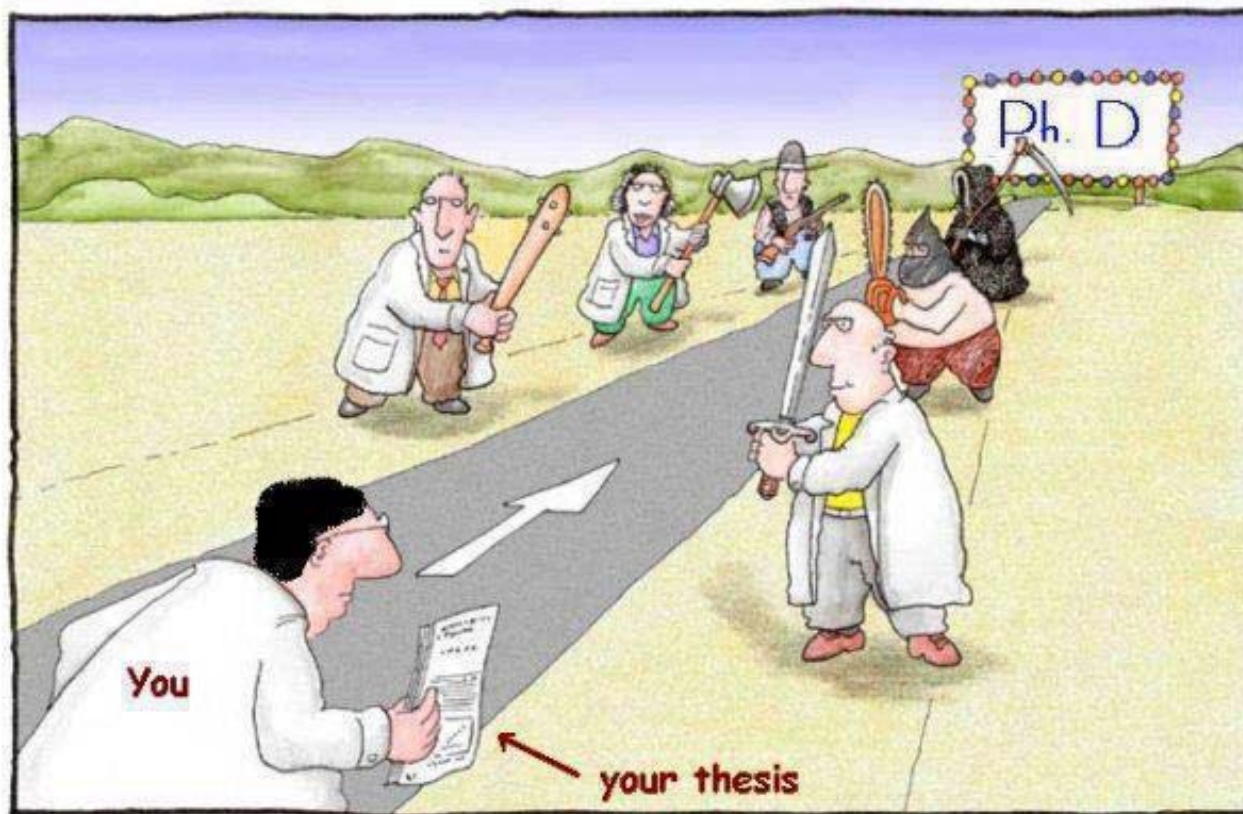


Viva time...



How the student might view it... (image careerprojections wordpress)

PhD viva examination

Internal examiner:

Familiarise yourself with MVM rules/regulations
– particularly with respect to outcomes...

Have a print copy of documentation
-especially post-viva form for external's signature.
Also a copy of your Part I report for the external

Arrange a room – quiet and conducive to exam

Arrange refreshments – water, hot drinks etc.
food if necessary...

Internal examiner - duties

Responsibility for all aspects of organisation of viva.
Date, time, venue and communication with student

Complete Part I report –
Postgraduate Office expect it within two months of receipt.

Organise and host viva, ensuring:
Appropriate conduct
All paperwork is completed
Feedback is provided to student

Verify completion of alterations or amendments to the thesis

Return thesis copies to College Postgraduate Office

Preparation

Read the thesis (and annotate – thoroughly)

- being unable to remember key points..
- flipping through the thesis looking for critical points during the exam

Some useful benchmarks:

Abstract adequately summarizes the work and what has been achieved?

Introduction a good foundation for the *Hypotheses and Aims* of the work?
preferably without excessive use of reviews/textbooks ?

Experimental approaches sound? data collected and analysed appropriately?

Evidence of critical appraisal, integration of information and intellectual input?

Are criticisms justified?

and have questions raised have been considered in the Discussion?

Decide on key points for the focus of viva

The viva examination:

should establish

Whether the thesis is the work of the student

Whether the student understood:

what they were doing?

and why?

Whether the work is a contribution to knowledge?

Part I report questions: actually quite useful!

guidelines for assessing the thesis

Is the thesis an original work that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of study?

Does the thesis contain material worthy of publication?

Does the thesis demonstrate adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature?

Does the thesis show critical judgement with regard to the student's work and other work in the research area?

Is the presentation and style of the thesis satisfactory?

Should Peason make his knowledge available to everyone?
Geoffrey Willans/Ronald Searle – Whizz for Atomms



*Whizz for Atomms (p.11)
The Peason - Atomms Atomic life:
Should Peason make his knowledge
available to everyone?*

Is it worthy of publication?

Other stuff

The viva can establish if the student has a command of their subject-area?

Do they know how their work relates to other work?

Differences and novelty?

Does the work demonstrate that the student is capable of independent research?



actually in the lab??

Viva strategies

The approach for the viva is dependent on:

Student/examiners

Thesis content

Before the viva:

discuss what the exam should try to cover

particularly:

weaknesses in the thesis,

issues that need exploring during the exam

Important to explain to the student how the examination process works... just in case they don't know!

The examination



Not necessarily a fight to the death....

Critical discussion of:

- Methods used

- Analysis of the results obtained

- How and why the student interpreted their results in the way they did

David Sherry



Just popped out
Back in 2 hours.

Worst case scenario.....

The discussion more productive
if the student relaxes....

Tell the student you enjoyed reading the thesis?

Phrase questions carefully
allow the student to answer fully

However - discourage the student from:
long answers and/or going off topic

Don't allow the student to flounder for too long
rephrase the question?
or lead them to the answer in stages?

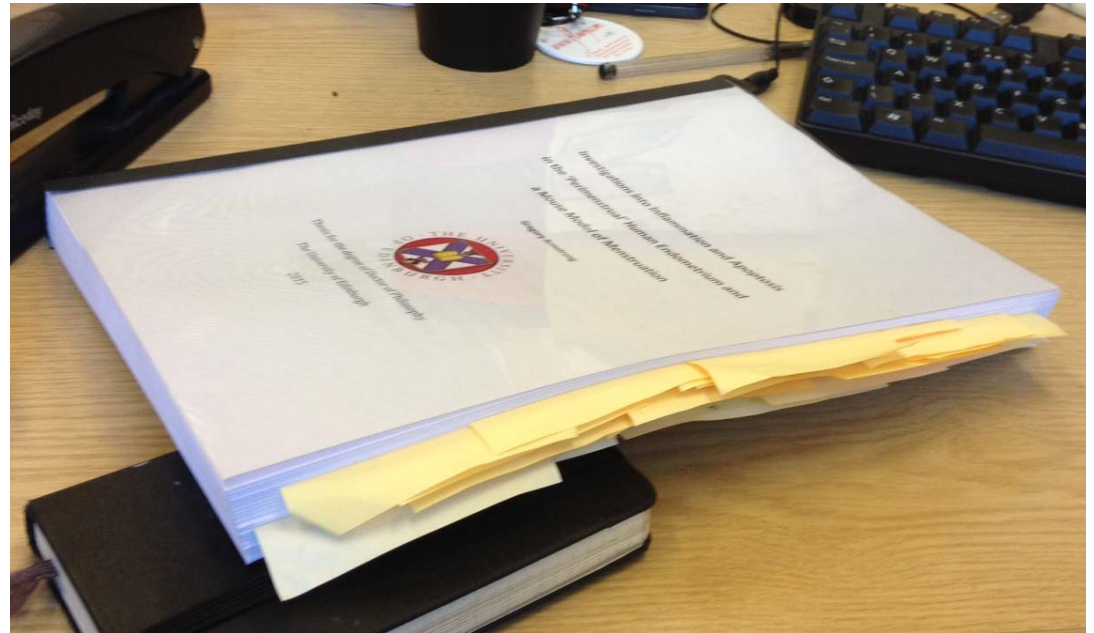
The examination

Breaking the ice.... settling the student into the exam

Ask the student to give a short presentation covering the key objectives/findings

Ask the student to fully describe principles and methodology of a technique they have used extensively in the work

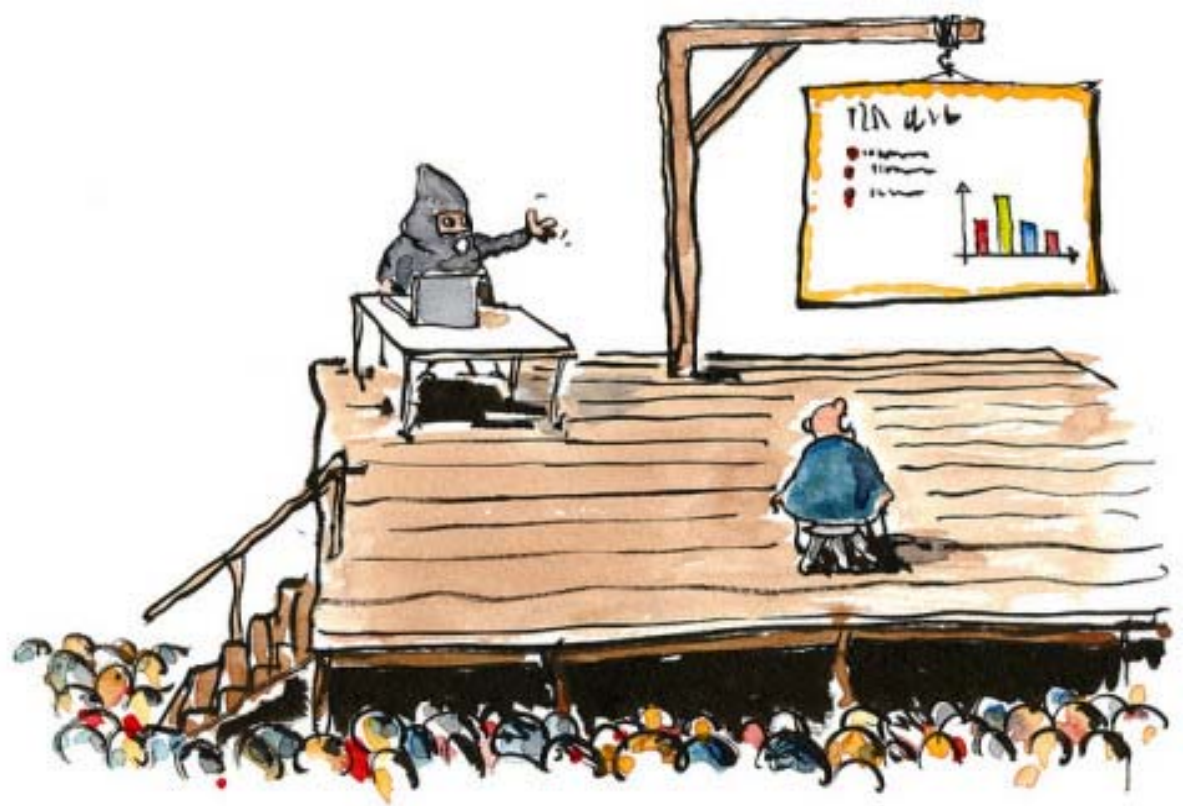
Ask the student what aspect of the work they enjoyed or thought was their most important contribution:
followed up by detailed questioning of that aspect of the work



Quell “the fear” when they see all the post-it notes are sticking out from their thesis

Avoid going through the thesis page by page in the viva...

- Viva questions
- experimental data
- Often easiest to examine



It can be helpful to ask the student to describe experimental design, including how data is collected and examined in detail

How robust is the work? Reproducibility/statistical analysis

Why were particular approaches followed?
- what were the alternatives?

Drawbacks/benefits of alternative approaches?

Viva questions – broadening the discussion

Which aspect of the work was the student most proud of?
What were the reasons?

What are the strongest/weakest aspects of their work?

Which aspect of the work did they learn most from?

Were there any aspects of the work that they would approach differently with the benefit of hindsight?

Viva questions – broadening the discussion

How does the work relate to other systems?

What was the students input to development of the work/project?

How would they develop their work – next steps?

Does the work have the potential to impact on industry/therapeutics/general public?

In cases where the work is unpublished:

Which aspects of the thesis could be published?

Where will the work be published?

What are the key things the student learned from doing a PhD?

More challenging viva questions

“Summarize the key findings of your thesis in 1 minute”

“What is original/novel about your work?”

“What would be your first grant application?”

“What are the current challenges in ***specific topic?***”

“What are the alternative experimental approaches to addressing these challenges?”

“How has ***specific topic*** changed/developed during the course of your PhD studies?”

“Where do you expect the major progress will occur in ***specific topic?***”

Other considerations....



What if you disagree with the approach, the paradigm or the conclusions of the thesis?

Does criticism reflect personal bias??

What if you and the other examiner disagree?

What if the thesis is outstanding but badly presented?

Role of the supervisor should be considered....

Outcomes

Award PhD/Doctorate: student meets the doctorate requirements without corrections.

Minor Corrections Needed: thesis is satisfactory apart from the rectification of editorial corrections or minor weaknesses.

Additional Oral Examination Needed: student's oral defence of the thesis was inadequate in specified respects. *

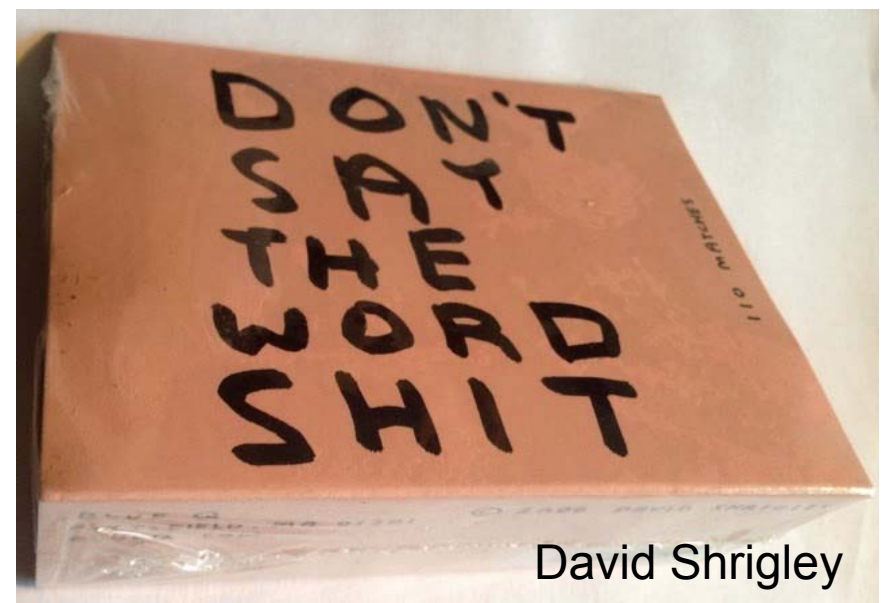
Additional Work on Thesis Needed - No Oral Re-Examination Needed: The thesis needs work above and beyond editorial corrections or minor weaknesses in order to meet one or more of the requirements for the degree, and this work may require further supervision *

Substantial Work on Thesis and Oral Re-Examination Needed: Examiners may recommend resubmission within a further specified period of study of between 12 and 24 months, with reasons stated in their Part II report. *



David Shrigley

It is important to be positive about other outcomes!



Award MPhil: thesis is deficient for doctoral award but meets the MPhil requirements without corrections.

Award MPhil following Minor Corrections: thesis is inadequate for doctoral award but student is eligible for an MPhil degree if specified corrections are made.

Substantial Work on Thesis Needed before Resubmission and oral examination for MPhil: thesis is inadequate for doctoral award but it may satisfy the requirements for an MPhil degree if student corrects deficiencies.

Award Masters by Research:
thesis is deficient for doctoral or MPhil degrees, but the work merits the award of Masters by Research.

Fail: the thesis is fundamentally deficient in regard to doctoral, MPhil or masters standards.