

# Appendix 1: Questions Typically Asked in a *Viva*\*

## Topic

1. What is original about your research? What are the questions underpinning the research?
2. What prompted you to undertake this research? Why did you choose that particular problem? Why did you not study this other problem instead?
3. What exactly were you trying to find out? I'm unclear about the meaning of your problem statement.

## Literature

4. What are the major theoretical strands in this area: what are the crucial ideas and who are the main contributors?

5. What are the main issues (i.e., matters of debate or dispute) in this area?
6. How are the questions underpinned and answered by the theories and literature? What are the relevant conceptual frameworks drawn from the literature?
7. What theories inform your work? Why this particular one?
8. What other theoretical approaches did you consider, but reject?
9. You have reviewed the important literature, but can you clarify for me what you learned from the review of the literature?
10. When you reviewed the literature, why did you decide to review that particular study?
11. What did you find especially useful in X's book/article?

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\* Adapted from: Glatthorn (1998, pp. 186-188); Delamont et al. (2004, p. 153); Pearce (2005, pp. 72-76); Roberts (2004, pp. 183-183); Rugg and Petre (2004, pp. 180-181); Russell (2008, pp. 128-129); Wisker (2001, pp. 299-300).

12. Your review of the literature seems to omit these important contributions. Can you explain why these works and their findings do not appear in your review? Are there any limitations due to the methods chosen?
13. Your review of the literature includes this particular work, which is no longer considered a serious contribution. Why did you choose to include that work?
14. I see you cite X in your bibliography. What do you make of their more recent work?
15. Where is your thesis *placed* in terms of the existing theory and debate? How would the major researchers react to your ideas?
16. Since you wrote your literature review, have you noticed any new work published?

## Methods

17. What are the relative advantages and limitations of the methods of enquiry you employed?
18. How do the methodology and methods enable you to ask and consider the questions and deal with the ideas?
19. Why did you choose that particular method? Why did you not instead use this other method?
20. Can you clarify for me how the particular method you chose relates directly to the problem you chose to study?
21. Take us through the main features of your sample. Were there any differences in the planned and achieved samples? Are you satisfied with the sample you achieved?

22. What specifically was your relationship to the context and subjects of the study? Do you think that relationship in any way contaminated your study?
23. In what ways was that context or those subjects not representative? Have you been sensitive to that problem of atypicality?
24. Can you clarify for me what procedures you followed to ensure your research observed canons of the profession with regard to ethical procedures?
27. I am unclear as to what that table means. Can you interpret it for me?
28. In the text of your thesis you refer to these particular data, but I cannot find any table or other support for that figure.
29. The results you cite on this page seem to conflict with the results you cite elsewhere. Can you explain the discrepancy?
30. Can you account for this particular result, which seemingly would not have been predicted?

## Findings

25. How do the findings fit in with the extant literature?
26. I think you may have misinterpreted the findings of that study. Could you review for me what you think the study showed?

## Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications

31. You posed certain specific questions in your first chapter. I am not clear that you answered each of those questions. Can you review those specific questions and relate them directly to your findings?

32. Your summary seems a bit generally stated. Could you speak more specifically about your important findings?
33. I am not persuaded that your conclusions are supported by your findings. Could you explain specifically to me how this conclusion derives from the results of the study?
34. Your recommendations or your discussion of the implications of the study seem too sweeping to me. Can you explain specifically how you arrived at this particular recommendation?
35. If you had 5 minutes to speak to a group of colleagues about the implications of your study, what would you say?

## Reflection, Contribution and Future Research

36. What were the surprises for you in conducting this research? Any disappointments?
37. What kinds of problems have you had in your research? How did you deal with and overcome any problems?
38. If you were doing the study all over again, in what ways would you change it?
39. What is your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of your study?
40. What would you consider was the most significant aspect of the work you've done?
41. Your thesis contains several proofreading errors. Were you aware of those errors?
42. What did you learn about the subject area? About yourself?