**University-Wide Viva Voce Examination Guidelines for Supporting Candidates with Disabilities**

**Document Purpose:** This document aims to provide standardised guidelines for the Viva Voce examinations across all departments and faculties at the university to support candidates with various disabilities. It outlines best practices and specific accommodations to promote inclusivity and equity in the doctoral examination process.

**Scope:** These guidelines are applicable to all Viva Voce examinations within the university and are designed to ensure that candidates with disabilities are supported effectively, allowing them to demonstrate their academic capabilities under conditions that cater to their individual needs.

**1. General Principles**

* **Inclusivity and Equity:** Commit to creating an equitable testing environment where candidates with disabilities can thrive.
* **Transparency:** Maintain a transparent process for requesting and implementing accommodations to build trust and ensure fairness.
* **Confidentiality:** Respect candidates' privacy by confidentially handling information related to their disabilities.

**2. Pre-Viva Preparations**

* **Examiner Training:** Conduct mandatory training sessions for all examiners on disability awareness and the specific needs associated with various types of disabilities.
* **Venue Accessibility:** Ensure that the examination venue is accessible, considering mobility, sensory, and other disability-related needs.
* **Communication of Examination Details:** Provide candidates with comprehensive information about the examination process, including examiner details and the structure of the session, well in advance.

**3. During the Viva**

* **Communication Adjustments:** Adapt communication methods to suit the needs of the candidate, such as using sign language interpreters, allowing the use of communication devices, or providing written questions.
* **Time Adjustments:** Offer extra time for candidates to process questions and articulate answers, and allow breaks as needed.
* **Assistive Technologies:** Permit the use of assistive technologies that candidates typically use, such as screen readers, magnifiers, or special software.

**4. Questioning Techniques**

* **Clarity and Adaptability:** Use clear and concise questions, avoiding complex or ambiguous language. Be prepared to rephrase or elaborate on questions to ensure understanding.
* **Supportive Feedback:** Provide immediate, supportive feedback to help guide the candidate’s responses and ensure they understand the questions.
* **Visual and Physical Accommodations:** Utilize appropriate visual aids, and ensure physical comfort and accessibility during the examination.

**5. Post-Viva Procedures**

* **Constructive Feedback:** Deliver feedback in accessible formats, tailored to the candidate's needs, and ensure that it is constructive and clearly outlines any required revisions.
* **Post-Viva Support:** Offer a follow-up session with the candidate to go through feedback in detail and discuss any further accommodations needed for future academic or research activities.
* **Extended Deadlines:** Provide flexibility in deadlines for thesis corrections based on the candidate's specific circumstances.

**6. Policy and Procedure Adjustments**

* **Accessibility Reviews:** Regularly review examination procedures to ensure they remain accessible and meet the needs of candidates with disabilities.
* **Documentation Standards:** Develop detailed, accessible documentation of these guidelines for dissemination among candidates, examiners, and academic staff.
* **Continuous Improvement:** Establish a feedback loop with candidates and examiners to continually refine and improve the guidelines based on real-world application and feedback.

**7. Implementation**

* **Resource Allocation:** Ensure that adequate resources are allocated for training, technological aids, and other accommodations.
* **Monitoring Compliance:** Regularly monitor the implementation of these guidelines during Viva Voce examinations to ensure compliance and address any issues promptly.
* **Evaluation and Reporting:** Implement a structured evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of accommodations and make adjustments as necessary.

**Approval and Review**

This document requires approval by the university's academic board. Once approved, it should be reviewed at least every two years, or more frequently if significant issues are reported or best practices in disability support change.