**University-Wide Viva Voce Examination Guidelines for Supporting Neuro-Diverse PGRs**

**Document Purpose:** This document aims to standardize the Viva Voce examination process across all departments and faculties to support neuro-diverse postgraduate researchers effectively. These guidelines incorporate universal design principles and specific accommodations to foster inclusivity and ensure that all PGRs have equitable opportunities to demonstrate their academic abilities.

**Scope:** These guidelines apply to all Viva Voce examinations conducted within the university, with particular attention to providing support for neuro-diverse candidates.

**1. General Principles**

* **Inclusivity and Equity:** Ensure that all PGRs, regardless of their neurodiversity, are given equal opportunities to succeed.
* **Transparency:** Maintain a clear and open process for requesting and implementing accommodations.
* **Confidentiality:** Handle all information about a candidate's neurodiversity confidentially unless disclosure is requested by the candidate for better support.

**2. Pre-Viva Preparations**

* **Examiner Briefing:** Provide training sessions for all examiners on neurodiversity awareness and effective communication strategies.
* **Environment Check:** Ensure the examination venue meets the specific sensory needs of the candidate, such as optimal lighting, minimal noise, and appropriate seating arrangements.
* **Advance Information:** Supply candidates with detailed information about the examination process, including the identities and backgrounds of the examiners, to reduce anxiety.

**3. During the Viva**

* **Communication Adjustments:** Use clear, direct language without idioms or metaphors. Allow candidates to ask for clarification and to have questions repeated if needed.
* **Timing Flexibility:** Provide additional time for responses if needed and schedule regular breaks to help candidates manage fatigue and stress.
* **Technology Use:** Allow the use of assistive technologies and personal aids during the examination to support communication and comprehension.

**4. Questioning Techniques**

* **Structured Questions:** Employ concise and structured questioning techniques that accommodate the cognitive styles of neuro-diverse candidates.
* **Visual Supports:** Utilize visual aids or written questions when beneficial to help clarify verbal queries.
* **Feedback Loop:** Incorporate immediate, brief feedback during questioning to confirm understanding and provide reassurance.

**5. Post-Viva Procedures**

* **Feedback Delivery:** Offer detailed, constructive feedback in both verbal and written formats to aid comprehension and provide clear guidance on any required revisions.
* **Support Debrief:** Arrange a post-viva debrief with the candidate’s support team to discuss the examination performance and any further accommodations needed for future academic engagements.
* **Adjustment Periods:** Extend standard timelines for thesis corrections based on individual needs assessed through consultation with the candidate.

**6. Policy and Procedure Adjustments**

* **Regular Reviews:** Periodically review and update these guidelines to adapt to new research and feedback from neuro-diverse communities.
* **Accessibility Audits:** Conduct regular audits of Viva Voce processes to ensure ongoing compliance with these guidelines and to identify areas for improvement.

**7. Implementation**

* **Training Programs:** Develop and deliver examiner training programs focused on neurodiversity, legal obligations, and practical adjustments.
* **Documentation and Resources:** Create accessible resources detailing these guidelines for examiners, candidates, and academic staff.
* **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of these guidelines and gather feedback from participants to drive continuous improvement.

**Approval and Review**

This document is subject to approval by the university's academic board. Once approved, it will be reviewed biennially or as needed based on feedback and evolving best practices.