Viva question bank: 54 questions with an answer plan

Plan each answer in four short moves (a planning convention, not an examination rule): **Acknowledge** the question, **Respond** directly, point to **Evidence** (page, table, citation), then **Engage** with what it opens up. Write brief notes, not scripts.

Question	Acknowledge	Respond	Evidence (page / table / ref)	Engage
Opening and the big picture Can you state your contribution clearly, briefly and without notes? Examiners use opening questions to settle you and to hear how you frame the work yourself.				
Can you summarise your thesis in a few minutes?				
Why did you choose this topic, and why does it matter now?				
What is the single most important contribution of your thesis?				
Which part of the work are you most proud of, and why?				
Who is the audience for this research?				
How did your research questions change over the course of the project?				
If you started again tomorrow, what would you do differently?				
What does your thesis add that was not known before?				
Literature and theory Do you know the field well enough to position yourself in it, including work published since you wrote the review?				
Which three or four authors have most shaped your thinking?				
Where exactly is the gap your study addresses?				
Why did you choose this theoretical or conceptual framework over the alternatives?				
How does your framework shape what you could and could not see?				
Has anything relevant been published since you submitted?				
Which body of literature argues against your position, and how do you respond to it?				

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How have you defined your key terms, and why those definitions?				
How does your work relate to [a named study the examiner raises]?				
Methodology and design Can you justify each design decision as a choice among alternatives, and do you understand its consequences?				
What is your philosophical position, and how did it inform your methodology?				
Why this design rather than [an obvious alternative]?				
How did you decide on your sample or cases, and how many?				
How did you recruit participants or obtain data, and what bias could that introduce?				
What ethical issues arose, and how did you handle them?				
How did you pilot your instruments or procedures?				
What would a critic from a different paradigm say about your design?				
How do you know your measures or questions capture what you intended?				
What role did you play in the research, and how did you account for it?				
How did you ensure rigour (validity and reliability, or trustworthiness)?				
Data and analysis Can you walk through the analysis transparently, and do you understand the assumptions behind it?				
Talk me through your analysis, step by step, using one example.				
Why this analytic approach, and what assumptions does it make?				
How did you check those assumptions, and what did you do when one was not met?				
How did you handle missing data or incomplete cases?				
How did you move from raw data to your themes, categories or models?				

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Did anyone else check your coding or analysis? What did that change?				
Which result surprised you most?				
Are there data you collected but did not use? Why?				
Findings and interpretation Do your claims match your evidence, and can you tell a finding from an interpretation?				
What are your key findings, in plain language?				
How confident are you in each finding, and why?				
What alternative explanations could account for your results?				
How do your findings compare with [a named prior study]?				
Where do your findings contradict the literature, and what do you make of that?				
Is this finding practically meaningful as well as statistically or analytically interesting?				
What would it take to change your conclusion?				
How far can your findings be generalised or transferred?				
Limitations and contribution Can you discuss weaknesses openly without undermining the whole thesis?				
What are the main limitations of your study?				
Which limitation worries you most, and how does it affect your conclusions?				
What is your original contribution to knowledge, in one sentence?				
Is your contribution theoretical, methodological, empirical or practical?				
Who should change what they do because of your findings?				
Which chapter is weakest, and how would you strengthen it?				
Future and closing Do you have a credible research agenda, and is anything left you want to clarify?				

Question	Acknowledge	Respond	Evidence (page / table / ref)	Engage
What are the next research questions arising from your work?				
How do you plan to publish from this thesis?				
If you had funding for one follow-up study, what would it be?				
How has doing this PhD changed you as a researcher?				
Is there anything you wish we had asked you?				
Is there anything in the thesis you would like to correct or clarify?				
Questions specific to my thesis				

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