

# Voice Over Internet Protocol Procedure – Effective from 2017/18

## Introduction

This procedure allows students to participate in panel meetings when they are unable to attend in person. The procedure applies to panels convened by the University and should be read in conjunction with the University's Panel Guidance document.

This procedure applies to all students who are enrolled directly with Birmingham City University and to students enrolled through some of our partner organisations. Your student handbook will tell you if this procedure applies. This procedure meets the 'General principles applying to Birmingham City University student procedures'.

In this procedure we refer to students as 'you' and to the University as 'we/us.'

Voice Over Internet Protocol ('VOIP') refers to technology that allows you make and receive calls via an internet connection rather than a traditional landline, e.g. Skype.

## Application

Wherever possible, we encourage you to attend panel meetings in person so that you can interact directly with the panel and put your case as effectively as possible. On occasion, however, a panel meeting will need to be held where you are unable to attend in person but still wish to participate. This is likely to be the case in particular where you are not in the UK at or around the time of the panel (e.g. you are a distance-learning student or an international student who has already returned to your home country).

Where you advise us that you can't attend a panel meeting in person but would like to participate, we will take steps to allow you to participate in proceedings via Skype. This is the best option where you cannot attend in person but wish to take part, because it allows the Panel to see and hear from you directly (and vice-versa). The only difference to you attending is that you will not be in the same room as the Panel.

When arranging a meeting via VOIP we will take the following steps:

- As soon as you are made aware that a panel is due to be convened at a time when you may be outside the UK, you must contact the panel Clerk to inform us that this is the case.
- Once you are made aware of the specific time and date of the panel, you must immediately confirm to the Clerk whether you will be in the UK at the time of the panel. We will make clear to you that if you will not be in the UK the meeting could take place via VOIP.
- The Clerk will inform the Panel that you are likely to be out of the UK at the time of the panel meeting and that the meeting may take place via VOIP. The Clerk will keep the Panel up-to-date as to arrangements for the meeting.
- The Clerk will make reasonable efforts to obtain a response from you.

Where you do not respond to the Clerk's attempts to contact you then the University's Panel Guidance will apply: the Clerk will explain to the Panel Chair that you have not responded and provide evidence of the efforts made to communicate with you and give reasonable notice of the panel meeting. The Chair will then decide whether the Panel should proceed in your absence or be reconvened at a later date.

When you respond to say you wish to participate via VOIP then the following applies:

- You must provide your VOIP ID to the Clerk, who will in turn give you the VOIP details used by the relevant part of the University.
- The Chair and other Panel Members will be informed that you intend to take part via VOIP.
- The Clerk will confirm with you that you will be available via VOIP at the time of the panel meeting, making clear that the stated time is UK time. If the planned time of the meeting will require you to take part at an unreasonable local time then the Clerk will speak to the Chair about whether the meeting should be rearranged.

At the panel meeting itself the Clerk will be responsible for setting up the VOIP connection and will contact you via VOIP at the beginning of the panel meeting.

- In the first instance, the Clerk will attempt to call you via a video call. If this does not work then an audio call will be used as this will use less bandwidth.
- On connecting, the Chair will ensure that everyone present can see/hear you, and vice-versa.
- You will be asked to confirm your identification by giving your student number or date of birth.
- The Chair may ask you (rather than the Faculty Representative) to speak first in case the connection should cease for any reason. Otherwise the meeting will proceed as usual.

Where you do not answer the call or the connection is lost during the hearing:

- The Clerk will attempt to call you at least five times over a period of 15 minutes.
- If there remains no answer, the Chair will consider whether reasonable attempts have been made to contact you and whether it is appropriate to proceed in your absence.

The Clerk will record in the outcome letter:

- Whether or not the meeting went ahead via VOIP;
- what (if any) changes were made to the standard procedure as set out in the University's Panel Guidance;

- where you did not take part, the view of the Panel as to the efforts made to contact you; and
- details of any decision to proceed in your absence.

### **Alternative arrangements**

Where you are unable to attend a panel hearing in person and a VOIP connection cannot be established then a hearing may take place via telephone in the alternative.

In exceptional circumstances a hearing may be postponed to allow you to attempt to take part at a later date. Whether a hearing is postponed will be a decision taken by the Chair.