

Preparing for the three required reflection sessions

How should I prepare for the first reflection session_

1. Think about subjects and areas of particular personal interest and do some initial background reading into a subject and topic of your choice.
2. Using this as a starting point, explore a variety of possible research topics.
3. Read the subject-specific section of the *Extended essay guide* for the subject you are interested in, paying particular attention to the nature of the subject and the treatment of the topic.
4. Undertake further background reading and begin to gather information around your area of interest. This exploration should give rise to a variety of topics and questions that you might consider for further research. At this stage it is important that you consider the availability of reliable and valid sources for the topic under consideration. All of this should be recorded in your Researcher's Reflection Space.
5. Begin developing a research proposal which might include a MindMap® of ideas, an annotated article or preliminary bibliography. Additionally, you should already be thinking in terms of the following questions.
 - Is my topic appropriate for the subject I am considering?
 - Why am I interested in this area and why is it important?
 - What possible questions have emerged from my initial reading?
 - Are there any ethical issues that I need to consider?
 - What possible methods or approaches might be used for research in this area and why?

What will happen at the first formal reflection session?

This initial reflection session should be a dialogue between you and the supervisor based on your initial explorations. It is recommended that you send your supervisor an outline of your research proposal ahead of the meeting in order to give the supervisor the opportunity to review your work. This will ensure that the reflection session is focused and productive.

Topics of discussion that should arise during this session include:

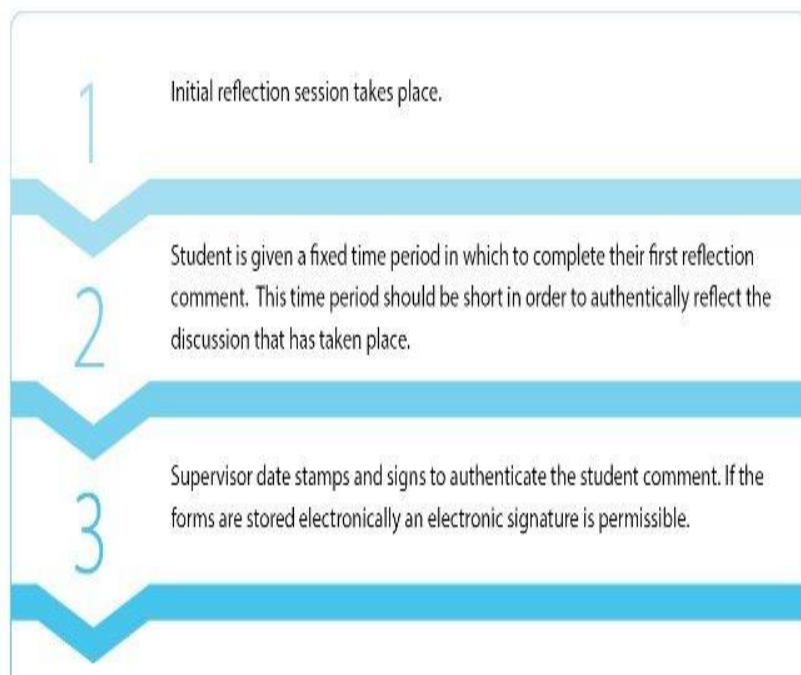
- a review of the requirements and assessment criteria for the subject
- a review of ethical and legal implications, if applicable
- a dialogue about possible approaches and any potential problems that might arise
- a discussion of strategies for developing your ideas for the essay and expanding the research so that the essay starts to take form
- probing and challenging questions that will help you focus your thinking; this should lead to the development of your working research question
- an outline of the next steps that you will undertake in order to refine your question; this should take the form of a research and writing timeline.

Some questions which your supervisor might ask you appear below:

Possible guiding questions

- What has motivated you to research this topic?
 - What do you already know about the topic?
 - What are some of the ideas/questions you have about this topic?
 - What background reading have you done, if any?
 - What are the EE requirements for the subject in which your topic is located?
 - Does your topic fit in with the chosen subject area specifications?
 - Do you understand the nature of the EE?
 - Have you chosen a viable area of research?
 - What sections of the guide might be helpful to you at this time?
 - Have you had any training in research skills?
 - How are you planning to organize yourself and manage your researcher's reflection space?
 - What do you think are the next steps in conducting your research?
 - Have you chosen a provisional research question that meets the subject criteria?
- Where are you searching for reliable sources?
 - Will you be able to collect sufficient resources to effectively answer the research question?
 - Will you need to revise your research question to ensure it promotes an analytical approach?
 - What challenges/obstacles have you encountered, if any?
 - What can you do about them?
 - What background information and/or data do you need to move forward to formulate a research question?
 - Have you developed a working research question?
 - What preliminary research question or questions are guiding your investigation?
 - Have you been made aware of any ethical issues in relation to the intended topic and proposed research methods?
 - Are there any ethical issues to be considered?
 - Do you have a good grounding in the relevant theories, methodologies or findings of the subject?
 - What is your theoretical/conceptual base for this topic?
 - What approaches to the topic/research question have you or might you develop for this topic? (See *Extended essay guide* for subject examples.)
 - Are you attaching drawings, MindMaps®, or recordings that show your thinking in your RRS?
 - What are the key resources you have investigated so far? (Students may have developed an annotated bibliography as part of the RRS.)
 - What needs to be done next?
 - When will you begin writing and how are you planning to manage your time?
 - What is the goal for the next meeting?

Following this first session, you MUST complete the first student comment section of the *Reflections on planning and progress form* and submit it to your supervisor who must then sign and date the form.



How should I prepare for the interim reflection session?

Between the first and second reflection session, you should engage in informal conversations with other people, such as subject teachers, the extended essay coordinator, the librarian and your supervisor. You should also ensure that you are progressing with your research plan.

In preparation for the interim reflection session, you should have:

- attempted to refine a focused and appropriate research question
- significantly deepened your research and recorded pertinent evidence, information or data in the Researcher's Reflection Space
- reviewed and consolidated the methodologies you will be using
- formulated arguments based on the evidence that you have collected
- added to your working bibliography any additional sources you have found and/or used.

What will happen at the interim reflection session?

This session is a continuation of the dialogue between you supervisor and you in which you must demonstrate the progress you have made in your research. You must also be able to discuss any challenges you have encountered, offering potential solutions and seeking advice as necessary.

During this session the supervisor might discuss:

- a completed piece of sustained writing in order to ensure that you understand the academic writing requirements, including referencing formats
- whether an appropriate range of sources has been accessed and whether you are critically evaluating the origin of those sources

- what you now have to do in order to produce the full draft of your essay, and ways and means of breaking down the task into manageable steps.

By the end of the interim reflection session you and your supervisor should feel satisfied that there is:

- a clear and refined research question
- a viable argument on which to base the essay
- a sufficient range of appropriate sources
- a clear vision for the final steps in the writing process.

Some questions which your supervisor might ask you appear below:

Possible guiding questions

- Where are you now in the research process?
- What have you achieved so far and how did you manage this?
- What challenges have you faced and what strategies have you used to overcome these?
- Have you encountered any obstacles/problems in the research process and how have you overcome them?
- How are you conducting independent research and adhering to the academic honesty policy?
- Is the research question clear and refined?
- How has your understanding of the question/topic changed?
- What changes need to be made in order to complete this research?
- What have you learned that might affect the way you continue?
- Are there any inconsistencies in your argument and analysis?
- Is your argument well structured and coherent?
- Have you provided enough evidence to support a reasoned argument?
- Have you critically evaluated this research?
- Will the examiner be able to follow your line of argument throughout the essay?
- Are there any last-minute adjustments or changes that you might make to improve your essay?

Following this first session, you MUST complete the first student comment section of the *Reflections on planning and progress form* and submit it to your supervisor who must then sign and date the form.

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Interim reflection session takes place.

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Student is given a fixed time period in which to complete their second reflection comment. This time period should be short in order to authentically reflect the discussion that has taken place.

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Supervisor date stamps and signs to authenticate the student comment. If the forms are stored electronically an electronic signature is permissible.



<http://thegradstudentway.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/phddefense.gif>

How do I prepare for the final reflection session – the Viva Voce?

Your Supervisor must have already read the final version of the essay before this session takes place.

For this session, you should bring with you:

- extracts from your RRS that illustrate how you have grown as learners through the process of reflection
- a willingness to share your personal experience and to discuss the skills and development of conceptual understandings that you have acquired through the completion of the extended essay.

What will happen during the final reflection session (*viva voce*)

The *viva voce* is a short interview between you and your supervisor, and is the mandatory conclusion to the extended essay process. Students who do not attend the *viva voce* will be disadvantaged under criterion E (engagement) as the *Reflections on planning and progress form* will be incomplete.

The *viva voce* is conducted once you have uploaded the final version of your extended essay to the IB for assessment. At this point in the process no further changes can be made to the essay. The *viva voce* is a celebration of the completion of the essay and a reflection on what you have learned from the process.

The *viva voce* is:

- an opportunity for your supervisor to ask you a variety of open-ended questions to elicit holistic evidence of your learning experience.
- an opportunity for the supervisor to confirm the authenticity of your ideas and sources
- an opportunity to reflect on successes and difficulties you encountered in the research process
- an aid to the supervisor's comments on the *Reflections on planning and progress form*.

The *viva voce* should last 20–30 minutes. This is included in the recommended amount of time a supervisor should spend with a student.

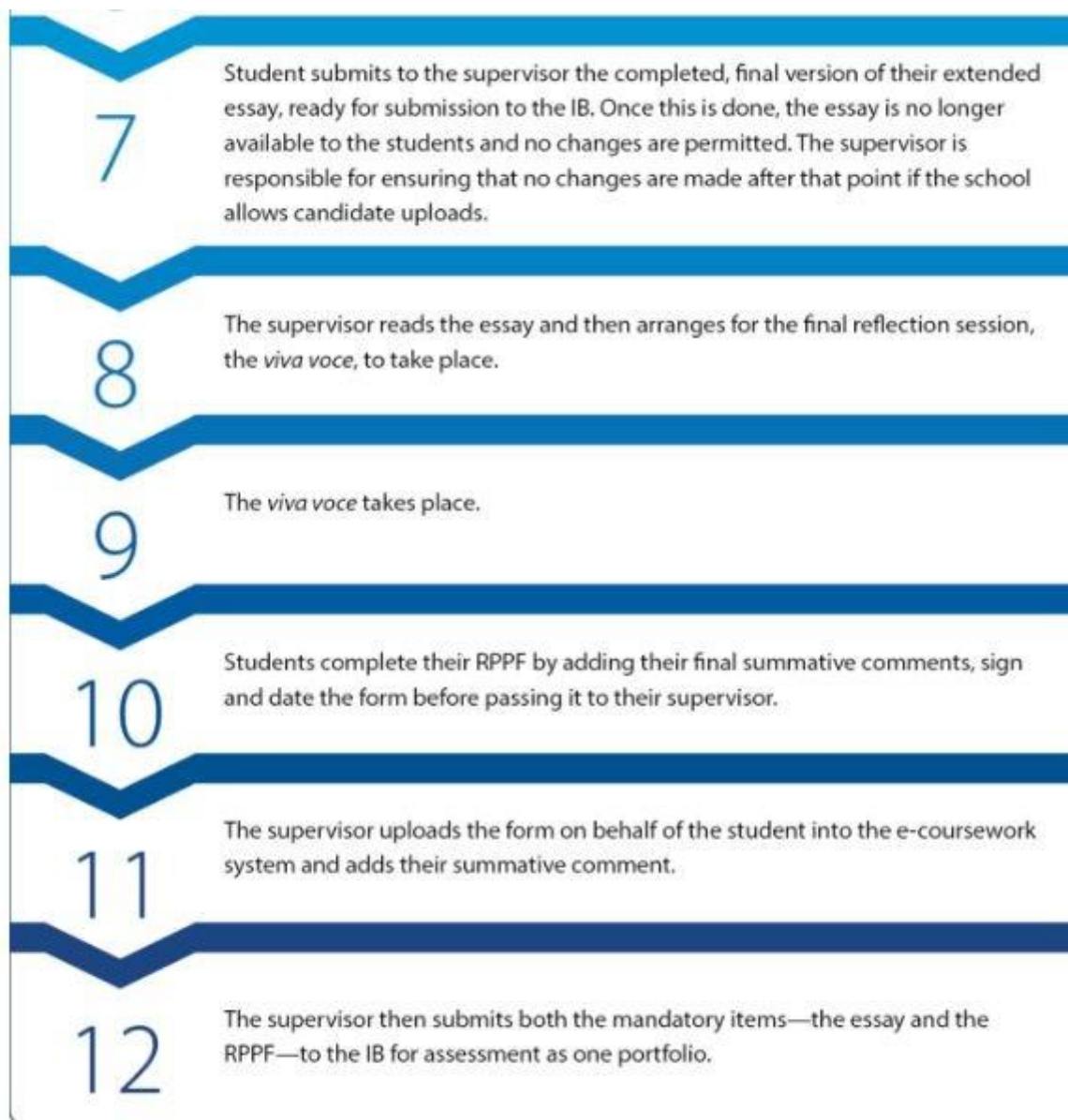
In conducting the *viva voce* and writing their comments on the *Reflections on planning and progress form*, supervisors will be bearing in mind the following.

- The form is an assessed part of the extended essay. The form must include: comments made by the supervisor that are reflective of the discussions undertaken with the student during their supervision/reflection sessions; your comments; and the supervisor's overall impression of your engagement with the research process.
- An incomplete form resulting from supervisors not holding reflection sessions, or students not attending them, could lead to criterion E (engagement) being compromised.
- In assessing criterion E (engagement), examiners will take into account any information given on the form about unusual intellectual inventiveness. This is especially the case if you can demonstrate what has been learned as a result of this process or the skills developed.
- Examiners want to know that you understand any material (which must be properly referenced) that you have included in your essay. If the way the material is used in context in the essay does not clearly establish this, the supervisor can check your understanding in the *viva voce* and comment on this on the *Reflections on planning and progress form*.
- If there appear to be major shortcomings in citations or referencing, the supervisor will investigate thoroughly. Your essay cannot be authenticated if the supervisor believes you may be guilty of plagiarism or some other form of academic misconduct.
- The comment made by the supervisor should not attempt to do the examiner's job. It should refer to things, largely process-related, that may not be obvious in the essay itself.

- Unless there are particular problems, the *viva voce* should begin and end positively. Completion of a major piece of work such as the extended essay is a great achievement and should be celebrated.

Some questions which might be asked during the *Viva Voce* are noted below:

Possible guiding questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent were your initial ideas realized?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were your original plans/ideas realistic and appropriate?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think your successes were in this process? • What was the most rewarding aspect of the entire process? • How will this experience prepare you for future work of this nature (in college or employment?)



Following this final session, the student is required to complete the last student comment section of the *Reflections on planning and progress form*, sign and date it and submit it to their supervisor, who must then add their own comments, sign and date the form. The supervisor must then upload the form into the e-coursework system,

confirm the authenticity of both the form and essay, and submit them to the IB for assessment as one portfolio. A blank or unsubmitted RPPF will score a 0 for criterion E.

It is important to note that students must not be allowed to make any changes to their extended essay after this meeting. Once you have submitted the essay as final to their supervisor, it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that changes are not made.