

Supervision: What should I know?

Who will be my supervisor?

The supervisor–student working relationship is probably the most important one in the extended essay process. Your supervisor must be a suitably qualified member of staff at the school which you are attending.

The supervisor plays an important role in helping you to plan and undertake your research for the extended essay. The relationship should be an active two-way process with the supervisor primarily there to support and guide you during the supervision and reflection sessions, at the planning stage, and when you are carrying out and writing up your research. This is done through the supervision process, including the **three mandatory reflection sessions** and the completion of the *Reflections on Planning and Progress Form. (RPPF)*

How many times should I meet with my supervisor?

You **MUST** meet with your supervisor for **THREE** mandatory reflection sessions, which are outlined on the deadline calendar. In addition, you will have a number of required 'check-in' sessions. And, other than that, you can meet with your supervisor as many times and you and s/he agree.

How long will each supervision session last?

The mandatory reflection sessions will probably last between 20 and 30 minutes each. The check-in sessions will probably last between 10 and 20 minutes, but could be longer, depending on need.

Overall, how much time can my supervisor give to me?

Supervisors may give you between three and five hours of supervision - they are not allowed to give you more than five hours. These hours include the three mandatory reflection sessions. Supervision time does not include overseeing any work in a lab - you need to make sure that you use supervision time for one-to-one discussions only. The amount of time your supervisor spends with you is recorded and noted on your essay when it is uploaded to the IB. More than five hours means questions may be asked about who actually wrote the essay - you or the supervisor.

What support can I expect from my supervisor?

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that you are familiar with the requirements of the extended essay. Supervisors and students must discuss:

- the nature of the extended essay
- their chosen subject, topic and research question
- the most appropriate research methods to be used given the subject for which the student is submitting their essay
- the formal requirements for the completion of the task.

What are supervisors required to do?

Supervisors are **required** to:

- undertake three mandatory reflection sessions with each student they are supervising

- sign and date each reflection summarized on the *Reflections on planning and progress form* and provide comments at the end of the process. If the form and essay are submitted via the eCoursework system, then it is deemed signed and authenticated. A blank or unsubmitted RPPF will score a 0 for criterion E.
- provide students with advice and guidance in the skills of undertaking research
- encourage and support students throughout the research and writing of the extended essay
- discuss the choice of topic with each student and, in particular, help to formulate a well-focused research question which is suitable to the subject of registration and ensure that the chosen research question satisfies appropriate legal and ethical standards with regard to health and safety, confidentiality, human rights, animal welfare and environmental issues
- is familiar with the regulations governing the extended essay and the assessment criteria, and gives copies of these to students
- monitor the progress of the extended essay to offer guidance and to ensure that the essay is the student's own work (this may include presenting a section of the essay for supervisor comment)
- read and comment on one draft only of the extended essay (but do **not** edit the draft); this should take place after the interim reflection session, but before the final reflection session, the *viva voce*
- ensure that the final version of the essay is handed in before the final reflection session (*viva voce*) takes place, and that no changes are made to it subsequently
- read the final version and, in conjunction with the *viva voce*, confirm its authenticity.

Supervisors are strongly recommended to:

- read recent extended essay reports for the subject
- spend between **three and five hours** with each student, including the time spent on the three mandatory reflection sessions
- encourage the development of a Researcher's Reflection Space for students
- set a clear schedule for the reflection sessions
- ensure that the chosen research question is appropriate for the subject
- advise students on:
 - access to appropriate resources (such as people, a library, a laboratory)
 - research methods
 - how to cite and reference.

What will my supervisor *not* do?

Your supervisor will not:

- Set up appointments with you - students must take the initiative
- Provide you with research material - although s/he may point you in the right direction, or suggest some reading you could undertake

- Chase you up when they have not heard from you for sometime - or when you have missed deadlines. Again it is your responsibility to contact your supervisor if you are struggling with your EE
- Read more than one full draft of your Extended Essay. This is an IB rule
- Edit your work - they can discuss your work with you at length, but they cannot edit it.

Can I work with an external supervisor?

You may work with or consult external experts in a particular area of specialism but it remains the responsibility of the supervisor within the school to complete all the requirements described above. There are some situations where students need to work with scientific equipment more advanced than that available in the school, or with language experts not available in the language department, and in these cases, the IB has made available regulations regarding the use of 'external mentors'. However, you must have a supervisor who is a member of staff in your school, and it is this supervisor who is responsible for all aspects of your EE.

The role of external mentors.

*In circumstances where the school deems it appropriate, students may undertake their research at an institute or university under the guidance of an external mentor. This must be with the agreement of the school, and the external mentor must be provided with a letter outlining the nature of the extended essay and clear instructions about the level of guidance that is permitted. Schools are responsible for ensuring that these external mentors are aware of the limits of their role in providing this service. It is important to note that if this is the case the student **must** be allocated a supervisor within the school and undertake his or her reflection sessions with this person. Only a supervisor within the school is permitted to complete the reflection process for the extended essay with the student and provide both signature and comments on the Reflections on planning and progress form (RPPF). The nature of these comments may be informed by the external mentor but must **not** be provided by them.*

The letter, which must be electronically signed by the external mentor, must be inserted in the appendix of the essay as part of the document file rather than as a separate document. If a student has had an external mentor, this signed letter is an important part of the authentication of the essay.

As the extended essay is an independent task and a formal assessment component, students must not receive assistance with any aspect of the research, writing or proofreading of the extended essay beyond that which is permitted through their supervisor. If a supervisor suspects that the extended essay submitted for assessment by a student could not have been completed without assistance they are required to bring this to the attention of the Diploma Programme/extended essay coordinator, who in turn must inform the IB. This may then be investigated as a possible case of academic misconduct.

My supervisor can only mark one draft of my Extended Essay - what does that mean?

The IB states the following about the marking of your draft Extended Essay:

‘Commenting on one completed draft of the essay is a very important aspect of the latter stages in the process, and the last point at which the supervisor sees the essay before it is finally uploaded to the IB for submission. It is therefore vital that the level of support given is appropriate—too little support and the ability of the student to meet their potential is compromised; too much help and it will not be the work of an independent learner.

The best way of conducting this last stage is for the student to submit the essay prior to a supervision session to allow the supervisor to add their comments. This should be followed by a one-to-one discussion between the supervisor and the student in which they go through the comments together as these become a starting point for

a dialogue about the essay. This advice should be in terms of the way the work could be improved, but this first draft

must not be heavily annotated or edited by the supervisor.'



What supervisors can do

Comments can be added that indicate that the essay could be improved. These comments should be open-ended and not involve editing the text, for example:

- Issue: the research question is expressed differently in three places (the title page, the introduction and the conclusion).
- Comment: is your research question consistent through the essay, including on the title page?
- Issue: the essay rambles and the argument is not clear.
- Comment: your essay lacks clarity here. How might you make it clearer?
- Issue: the student has made a mistake in their calculations.
- Comment: check this page carefully.
- Issue: the student has left out a section of the essay.
- Comment: you are missing something here. What is it? Check the essay against the requirements.
- Issue: the essay places something in the appendix that should be in the body of the essay.
- Comment: are you sure this belongs here?
- Issue: the conclusion is weak.
- Comment: what is it that you are trying to say here? Have you included all your relevant findings? Have you looked at unanswered questions?
- Issue: the essay has an incomplete citation.
- Comment: you need to check this page for accuracy of referencing.



What supervisors cannot do:

- Correct spelling and punctuation.
- Correct experimental work or mathematics.
- Re-write any of the essay.
- Indicate where whole sections of the essay would be better placed.
- Proofread the essay for errors.
- Correct bibliographies or citations.

The answer above relates to my supervisor marking a full draft of my essay. Can my supervisor see sections of my essay more than once?

Technically, yes - sections of your essay can be seen more than once. See the 'Tip' below from the IB.

TIP

If students give their supervisor sections of their extended essay to read, this is permissible but the same section of work should not be looked at repeatedly by the supervisor, nor should it be heavily annotated or edited. Students and supervisors must be clear that only one complete draft of the essay is permitted to be looked at by the supervisor.

And what about my final essay - can I make changes after I have submitted that to my supervisor?

After commenting on one full draft, the next version of the essay that the supervisor sees must be the final one submitted to them before the *viva voce*. This version of the extended essay must be clean; in other words, it must not contain any comments from the supervisor or any other person. **Once this version has been submitted to the supervisor, students are not permitted to make any further changes to it, unless deemed appropriate by the supervisor because of an administrative error.** For this reason, it is important that students are advised to ensure that it meets all formatting and submission requirements before they upload it.