

Extended Essay Reflections

First formal reflection session

This initial reflection session should be a dialogue between the student and the supervisor based on the student's initial explorations. It is recommended that the student sends their supervisor an outline of their research proposal ahead of the meeting in order to give the supervisor the opportunity to review their 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 the student's ideas for the essay and expanding the research so that the essay starts to take form
- probing and challenging questions that will help the student focus their thinking; this should lead to the development of the student's working research question
- an outline of the next steps that the student should undertake in order to refine their question; this should take the form of a research and writing timeline. What did I do?

Example of the kinds of questions students may have asked and answered of themselves:

- How did I undertake my research?
- What were the problems I faced?
- Did my approach or strategies change throughout the process?
- What have been the high and the low points of the research and writing process?
- About what did you initially want to write?
- Why did you choose this topic?
- What other areas did you think about before setting on this research question?
- What were your concerns about this topic?
- What does this topic have to do with your future plans?
- After your initial meeting with your supervisor, what actions did you take?

Your first reflection after your reflective session on your RPPF form should be limited to 150 words.

The interim reflection session

This session is a continuation of the dialogue between supervisor and student in which the student must demonstrate the progress they have made in their research. They must also be able to discuss any challenges they have encountered, offer their own potential solutions and seek advice as necessary.

During this session the supervisor might discuss:

- a completed piece of sustained writing from the student in order to ensure that they understand the academic writing requirements, including referencing formats
- whether an appropriate range of sources has been accessed and how the student is critically evaluating the origin of those sources
- what the student now has to do in order to produce the full draft of their essay, and ways and means of breaking down the task into manageable steps.

By the end of the interim reflection session both student and 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.

Example of the kinds of questions students may have asked and answered of themselves:

- Was my research successful?
- If I changed my approach or strategies during the process, why did I do this?
- What did I learn from the experience in terms of my understanding of the subject area and/or the skills needed to undertake research?
- How has my understanding of the topic and research process developed throughout the task?
- After you finished your research, what did you do/think about your topic?
- What were the initial challenges of writing on this topic?
- What was the feedback from your supervisor regarding your research?
- What were your resources of research?
- Was my research successful?
- If I changed my approach or strategies during the process, why did I do this?
- What did I learn from the experience in terms of my understanding of the subject area and/or the skills needed to undertake research?
- How has my understanding of the topic and research process developed throughout the task?

Between the interim session and the completion of the extended essay, students should continue to see their supervisor as appropriate to their needs, although the third and final reflection session should not take place until after the extended essay has been completed and uploaded for submission.

Your second reflection after your reflective session on your RPPF form should be limited to 150 words.

Final Reflection

- If I were to undertake this research again, would I do it differently—if so, why or why not?
- What has affected this?
- If I did do the research again, would I change the theories applied or the methodological approach? Would this have led to a different outcome?
- What can I conclude from this?
- Were the strategies I used for undertaking my research the most appropriate for achieving my outcomes?
- What, if any, questions emerged as a result of my research that I was not expecting? Would these questions influence my approach if I were to undertake the research again?
- To what extent has my thinking been confirmed or changed about my chosen topic as a result of my research?
- What strategies did I employ that proved particularly effective in the research process?
- What skills have I developed and how might these be useful in the future?
- What improvements might I suggest to my own working practices?
- How might different research strategies have impacted my outcomes?
- What did I learn about myself as a learner in this process?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn from your research?
- Were you surprised with your findings?
- What would you have done differently?
- How does this essay affect your future career plans?

Your last reflection after your reflective session on your RPPF form should be limited to 200 words.

The Viva Voce (concluding interview)

The *viva voce* is a short interview between the student and the 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 the student has uploaded the final version of their 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 the student has learned from the process.

The *viva voce* is:

- an opportunity to ask the student a variety of open-ended questions to elicit holistic evidence of the student's learning experience.
- an opportunity for the supervisor to confirm the [authenticity](#) of the student's ideas and sources
- an opportunity to reflect on successes and difficulties 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 the student.

In conducting the *viva voce* and writing their comments on the *Reflections on planning and progress form*, supervisors should bear 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; the student's comments; and the supervisor's overall impression of the student's 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 the student is able to demonstrate what has been learned as a result of this process or the skills developed.
- Examiners want to know that students understand any material (which must be properly referenced) that they have included in their essays. If the way the material is used in context in the essay does not clearly establish this, the supervisor can check the student's 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 should investigate thoroughly. No essay should be authenticated if the supervisor believes the student 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 for students.