

Supervisor comments and analysis

The supervisor writes her or his comments after conducting the *viva voce* with the student. The comments are summative in nature. They should reflect the whole process and the student comments made in their reflection sessions—initial, interim and final (*viva voce*).

The examiner will assess the RPPF against criterion E (engagement), but the supervisor should not attempt to do the examiner's job with her or his comments. The supervisor's comments should provide supporting evidence and context for what the student has shown on the RPPF.

Criterion E: Engagement

This criterion assesses the student's engagement with their research focus and the research process. It will be applied by the examiner at the end of the essay, and is based solely on the candidate's reflections as detailed on the RPPF, with the supervisory comments and extended essay itself as context.

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors or a RPPF has not been submitted.
1-2	Engagement is limited. <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Reflections on decision-making and planning are mostly descriptive.✓ These reflections communicate a limited degree of personal engagement with the research focus and/or research process.
3-4	Engagement is good. <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Reflections on decision-making and planning are analytical and include reference to conceptual understanding and skill development.✓ These reflections communicate a moderate degree of personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating some intellectual initiative.
5-6	Engagement is excellent. <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Reflections on decision-making and planning are evaluative and include reference to the student's capacity to consider actions and ideas in response to challenges experienced in the research process.✓ These reflections communicate a high degree of intellectual and personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating authenticity, intellectual initiative and/or creative approach in the student voice.

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.
- 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.

Exemplars

Exemplar One

<p>Supervisor's comment</p>	<p>The candidate’s connection with her topic is of a rather personal nature: as a matter of fact, one would be hard-pressed to identify an example that would hit closer to home. The student is Lebanese and lived in Lebanon, raised by a Shia Muslim father and Sunni mother.</p> <p>The EE process turned out to be a rewarding one, as it offered the candidate the unique and invaluable opportunity to study and begin to understand a conflict that she was aware of but not familiar with in terms of the historical significance of names, events and places. By looking at the facts, the student discovered that the underlying cause was religious factionalism.</p> <p>In addition, the candidate was surprised how she was able to maintain an objective distance from the topic, despite her background.</p> <p>One difficult aspect involving the research process was getting started in terms of laying the foundation and finding reliable historians. However, once started, and after finding several good sources, everything moved forward smoothly.</p> <p>Another challenge involved time management and the writing and rewriting of the essay. In general, the student spent most of her time establishing how various religious groups in Lebanon viewed each other and, in relation to this, how to separate opinions from facts.</p> <p>Overall, in the candidate’s assessment, the EE process was very much worth it. Main future application and benefit of having gone through said process is an awareness of the importance of managing one’s time well by getting a head start and spacing out time wisely. The candidate appreciated how the personal nature of the essay made her motivated to want to write and research.</p>
<p>Value of the comment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the student’s personal connection to the topic as well as her struggles with the process of writing an EE. • Demonstrates how the student consciously avoided bias in her research despite her obvious personal connection. • Focuses on how the student developed good research and time management skills through her work on the EE while demonstrating perseverance in executing the final product.

Exemplar Two

Supervisor's comment	The student was reflective in his writing process. He freely shared ideas with enthusiasm and was open to suggestions. He understood that the EE is about the process, not just the product.
Value of the comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The supervisor is positive about this student.• Lacks details and/or examples that address the importance of engagement in the process, eg mentions the student has engaged in reflection of the writing process, but there is no sense of what type of reflection was done nor any mention of its outcome.

Exemplar Three

Supervisor's comment	<p>The student chose this area because it relates to research he is currently involved in as a temporary intern at a local university.</p> <p>When discussing the EE process, he described how his greatest challenge was understanding the different journal articles he consulted. Because of the high level of knowledge needed to fully understand the concepts involved, he re-read the articles numerous times to try to comprehend the processes they employed.</p> <p>Through this approach, he has improved his use and understanding of scientific language and terminology, though his grasp of some of the concepts remains somewhat vague in the essay.</p> <p>The student showed himself to be something of a risk-taker in choosing to look at other scientists' research and data to come to new conclusions instead of doing his own experiment.</p>
Value of the comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicates student individual initiative and personal growth through engagement in the process. Even though the candidate's knowledge and understanding may be limited, this does not affect the level of engagement.• The level of student reflection is not indicated in the commentary.

Exemplar Four

Supervisor's comment	<p>I have worked with E over the last year leading up to the submission of her EE. Although E was somewhat slow in producing written work, she was engaged intellectually in the EE task.</p> <p>During the <i>viva voce</i>, E explained that she is passionate about visual arts but she wanted to analyse more current and pervasive texts in her EE, which led her to advertisements.</p> <p>Further, she chose her focus on company X since it is a multinational company with several brands around the world that she could analyse. She also explained that she liked the fact that company X has leading brands in the US and in Brazil, as she planned to analyse the use of language as well as images in the ads.</p> <p>E mentioned that she particularly enjoyed researching and analysing entire product ads and campaigns, yet she felt the need to select representative ads to analyse more carefully considering the scope of the EE. She also commented that she was surprised to find that beer advertisements are so culturally oriented.</p> <p>She explained that the difficulties she encountered in the EE were mostly within the writing process itself, as she struggles with writing generally. Thus, her advice to other students is to spread out the EE writing, so that there is more time to write and revise under less time pressure. Finally, E explained that she learned the value of time management through the EE, since she did not always manage her time well and she struggled to meet internal deadlines.</p> <p>E's comments during the <i>viva voce</i> illustrated a fairly good degree of critical analysis and depth of understanding of her research question.</p>
Value of the comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicates that the student was both engaged in the process of doing the EE and the topic of her research.• The supervisor clearly feels that the student has learned a lot through the process and has been able to some degree to reflect on this. There is also a clear insight into the rationale for subject choice in terms of the area of research.