

Commenting on a draft version of the 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 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.

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.