

# What is the role of a dissertation supervisor?

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



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When you're writing your dissertation your supervisor will become one of the most important people in your lives, up there with friends, family and loved ones. But before you put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, you are probably wondering what exactly a dissertation supervisor does. This guide will give you the basics about what to expect.

## **What you can Expect from your Dissertation Supervisor**

The role of your supervisor is to advise and guide you as you write your dissertation

Your supervisor can help you identify a topic, develop a preliminary bibliography, and outline how you will carry out your research.

If you haven't carried out primary research before but are planning to do so for your dissertation, your supervisor should help you plan, step-by-step, a suitable methodology.

Your supervisor will be able to advise you if what you plan to do is feasible or not

Your supervisor may approve (or reject) your dissertation proposal

You are likely to have three or more meetings with your supervisor. The

initial meeting, where you might identify a subject, research questions and rough methodology, is particularly important. Subsequent meetings might cover progress and structure; and final changes before submission

## **What Not to Expect from your Dissertation Supervisor**

You shouldn't expect your dissertation supervisor to correct minor mistakes in grammar and spelling.

Your dissertation supervisor should offer guidance and advice only, he or she won't tell you what topic you should write about, or dictate the details of how you should carry out your research.

It's likely that you will have to contact your supervisor and make arrangements to meet; your supervisor won't do this for you.

## **How to get the Best from your Dissertation Supervisor**

This is likely to become a very important relationship over the course of your dissertation. You might become quite stressed during this time, so it's important to do all you can to ensure the relationship is a smooth and profitable one.

Work out what you want from your supervisor - this will be unique to you as an individual. The degree of support, the type of working relationship, the form of contact you and your supervisor decide on - all these things and more are variables which depend on the individuals involved (you and your supervisor)

Before arranging your first meeting make sure you have done some initial research

Be aware that your supervisor is likely to be very busy, so don't be

disappointed if he or she isn't available on demand

Be flexible about communication methods

At your initial meeting agree some dates for major milestones, so you can track your progress

Don't get upset about feedback, see it as something of potential use to you.

Evaluation is the key: ask yourself how it can be used. Occasionally you might feel that a suggestion is really misplaced, so don't feel you have to act on all feedback. However, be very honest with yourself. Know the difference between finding it hard to take criticism and genuinely feeling evaluation is misplaced.

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