



# Working with a dissertation supervisor

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## Introduction

Some students who complete a dissertation will be assigned a project supervisor. This will be an academic who has expertise in the topic of your dissertation. This resource provides some tips around how to work effectively with a supervisor.

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## Expectations

The following outlines what you should expect whilst working with a supervisor:

### You can expect a supervisor to...

- ...Provide subject guidance related to your project
- ...Provide ethical guidance related to your project
- ...Challenge and question your ideas
- ...Be accessible (within reason)
- Some lecturers might look at plans / drafts of work (will depend on faculty rules)

### What a supervisor will expect from a student

- Maintain regular contact and provide progress reports (even if you are having problems)
- Undertake preparation before meetings (i.e. complete agreed targets / recommended reading)
- To work independently and be proactive
- To consider advice that is provided
- To attend all appointments that are arranged
- To take responsibility for the dissertation

## Getting a supervisor

There are different ways of getting a supervisor:

### Allocated supervisors

On some courses you will be assigned a dissertation supervisor. Typically before you are assigned your supervisor you will submit a dissertation proposal or indicate the area you intend to research. You will be paired with a supervisor who has expertise in this area.

Or

### Arranging your own supervision

Other course might involve you arranging your own supervision. This means that you will need to go and speak to lecturers about your dissertation ideas and agree that one will supervise you. If you have to find your own supervisor think about:

- **What is the expertise of difference members of staff?** – Approach someone who has expertise in your chosen area.
- **Who do you think you will work well with?** – If there is a specific lecturer that you want as a supervisor consider selecting a dissertation topic associated with their area of research expertise.

If you have a specific supervisor in mind you should speak to them as soon as possible. Lecturers will only be able to supervise a limited number of students. Some academics fill their quota very quickly.

## Once you have a supervisor

It is important that you arrange to meet with your supervisor as soon as possible. This will give you an opportunity to start to identify some targets for you to complete. If you are a second year student and you know who your supervisor is before the summer break you might consider arranging to meet them in June or July. This would enable you to set some targets that you can complete over the summer.

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## Tips when working with a supervisor

### Make notes about each meeting

Keep a record of what you discussed and what was agreed. This information will not only be useful in terms of reminding you why certain decisions were made. There may also be a requirement for you to document what you have discussed (this might be on PebblePlus).

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### Maintain regular contact

You do not need to meet your supervisor in order to update them of your progress. You can also communicate via phone or email.

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### Prepare questions

When you meet with a supervisor it can be difficult to remember everything that you want to ask. It is therefore a good idea to prepare a list of any questions that you want to address prior to meeting with a supervisor.

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### Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

**[lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub](http://lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub)**

