

Interacting with your academic supervisor/mentor

Your supervisor/mentor is the first point of contact for any questions or problems you may have. Their duties include giving advice and providing support, and they are responsible for assessment and grading. The rules for assessment and grading are clearly defined, while counseling and support are handled differently by various supervisors/mentors. It makes sense to prepare for meetings with your supervisor or mentor and to write down your questions. Depending on the type of writing project (Bachelor's or Master's thesis or seminar assignment, doctorate) you may need to have several, more detailed discussions.

What is the purpose of the meeting?

Ask in advance if the meeting relates to one of the following tasks and clarify them with your supervisor/mentor:

- Setting targets
- Showing progress
- Getting feedback
- Keeping in touch

Tips for shaping the conversation:

It is important that you get information about your supervisor/mentor's expectations (frequency of meeting, presentation of results, clarifying of questions, etc.).

- Plan and arrange regular meetings, even if they happen at longer intervals. Always talk about your schedule. This increases the level of mutual obligation.
- Preparing for the conversation:
 - Meeting schedule with content (what do you want to discuss?). Share how much time you need and clarify how much you can do.
 - If your supervisor/mentor needs to read something, give them enough time to do so.
 - Prepare the content and questions well.

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- The conversation:
 - Briefly describe the state of play/facts involved
Make your questions as precise as possible. Where do you most need support?
 - What reactions do you tend to have when criticized?
Take criticism on board - your supervisor/mentor is doing their job well if they help you do things better!
Firstly, try to understand the criticism and ask questions about it. Try not to immediately defend your position. Understand that specific criticism does not mean your academic abilities are being called into question.
 - Ending the conversation
At the end of the conversation, summarize what you discussed and schedule the next appointment. In some cases, it may be useful to summarize what you have agreed in writing and send it to your supervisor/mentor.

Especially with larger writing projects, such as a doctorate, it is important to consider the relationship with your supervisor/mentor.

To improve your relationship – or a future relationship – with your supervisor/mentor, answer the following questions:

- What do I want to change about the relationship?
- What can I change (or introduce from the start) that would make communication easier between us?
- How can I best prepare for the next conversation with my supervisor/mentor?
- Are there any other people that could support me?

Based on: Luka-Krausgrill & Hebenstreit (2002)