



How do I...

GET CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK FROM MY SUPERVISOR(S)

Receiving feedback on your thesis or article is an integral part of the doctoral learning experience; it is one of the main ways a supervisor provides academic training to their HDR candidate. However, supervisors tend not to be trained in providing feedback. Furthermore, HDR candidates and supervisors may approach feedback with different expectations, which can lead to ineffective feedback and confusion. So how can you, an HDR candidate, work with your supervisor to get effective, constructive and timely feedback on your writing?

BEFORE YOU START WRITING

DISCUSS EXPECTATIONS WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

Ideally this should happen when you first start your candidature and/or when you enter a heavy writing stage. Things to discuss include:

What:

- Does your supervisor want you to complete a thesis chapter or article before you ask for feedback?
- Do they want smaller sections sent through?
- In what order will your thesis be written?

When:

- Discuss your thesis writing schedule, ie when you will submit a section to your supervisor for feedback
- agree on a reasonable expected turn-around time, e.g. 1 month per chapter
- note your supervisor's anticipated busy workload periods and adjust expectations accordingly
- expect multiple revisions on the same piece of writing
- while awaiting feedback, work on the next section

How:

- written feedback only
- face-to-face meeting where your supervisors talk through all the comments
- written feedback followed by a face-to-face meeting a week later to discuss comments you don't understand

BEFORE SEEKING FEEDBACK

PROOF-READ YOUR WORK FIRST

While a draft does not have to be complete or perfect, do check for any typographical errors, incomplete sentences, and grammar issues before sending it to your supervisor.

ASKING FOR FEEDBACK

CLARIFY YOUR NEEDS

For each piece of writing, let your supervisor know what you'd like them to focus on. Highlight sections that you are having difficulties with or that you know are incomplete. Indicate how polished you think the draft is, and what **type of feedback** you would like. Eg. you could ask about:

Content

- Is the information accurate?
- Is the literature relevant?
- Are the methodologies correct?
- Are the arguments sound/valid?

Organisation and structure

- Is the structure logical?
- Does it flow well as an argument?
- Are there sections that need expanding, condensing, omitting?

Language

- Is the vocabulary appropriate for the register?
- Do I need to work on certain grammar, spelling, or punctuation points?

MULTIPLE SUPERVISORS

If you have more than one supervisor, it's worth clarifying how you will be seeking and receiving feedback from them. Do you send everyone the same draft at the same time? If not, do you work with your primary supervisor first with every draft? Submit different sections to each supervisor, based on areas of expertise, availability, or divided equally by number of words? How much or what sort of input can you expect from each supervisor?

RELATED "HOW DO I..." GUIDES

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Dr Megan Brewer
May 2020

FIND OUT MORE

HDR Learning Skills, Office of Higher Degree Research Training and Partnerships
Macquarie University NSW 2109 Australia
E: hdrlearningskills@mq.edu.au
CRICOS Provider 00002J