

# SUPER-VISION: THE DISSERTATION SUPERHERO

IN COLLABORATION WITH PREVIOUS WARWICK STUDENT, KATIE HALL



What's the point of supervisions? They may seem like a tedious formality, but **previous Warwick student, Katie, discusses ideas on how to make these sessions meaningful**, based on her own experiences throughout her MA dissertation project.

Dissertation, Masters thesis, final year project, it goes by many names and is definitely a big step up from the comfort zone of essays with a word count of under 5,000. Suddenly, I'm facing having to deliver 20,000 words on one single piece of work. But it's okay, right? I've got all year. That's what I thought last October 1<sup>st</sup>. That feels like a long time ago, and it's gone by in a flash. Which means it is time to get cracking.

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*I receive useful feedback with plenty of time...*

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I have realised that [my Long Project](#) is not simply a case of sitting down and writing 666 words a week to get to the word count. It's a [project management process](#) as well, made up of many moving parts. One of the most useful moving parts, that has really helped me to have a sense of control and empowerment,

are my supervision meetings.



Firstly, I have found that I can meet with my supervisor more often than the minimum expectation. This is priceless, even if it's just making use of the office hours system and email. Where else am I going to find expert feedback and a sounding board who gives me their full attention for an hour?

Not only that, my supervisor is one of my markers. Therefore, the better they know my planned work, my approach, and me - the greater the likelihood of a good outcome. It's not just that though, the supervision meetings are a chance to receive feedback about how to improve my work - which can only be

helpful for my final grade if I take it on board.

Once I got my head around **the what** of what I needed to deliver, which was covered in my first meeting, I was guided to think about **the how**. What are the specifics that I need to do, to finish this piece of work? For example [the research](#), the literature review, organising the material and finally [writing](#). Put all that together and voila - project plan.

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*...helped me to have a sense of control and empowerment...*

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I took this to the second supervision meeting, as well as the work I had already begun, and received feedback on both elements. The conversation about the project plan has given me a sense of confidence that I am going about things the right way. The feedback on the work tells me where I am

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delivering well, and what needs more thought.



At the end of the second supervision, I agreed on a series of milestones for the remainder of the year to enable me to achieve my assessment deadline in good time including editing and revisions, and space to take the work further towards the goal of completing the first draft of my novel. Essentially, the more I put in, the more I am getting out, and the more enjoyable it is.

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*...has given me a sense of confidence...*

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I have found that using supervisions as the spine of my project management approach is incredibly helpful. As well as meaningful milestones, I receive useful feedback with plenty of time to implement it and feel a sense of ownership and identity as both a writer

and a scholar. But it's up to me to make the most of them. That means:

**Being organised:** ensuring the meetings are scheduled and requesting more if needed; as well as turning up to them.

**Being prepared:** thinking in advance about what I want to get out of the meeting (eg creating an agenda or list of questions); completing agreed actions on time.

**Being action oriented:** I take clear notes of the meeting and highlight specific actions that I need to add into my project plan.

**Being open-minded:** I've had to learn that receiving feedback is not a personal attack, it's about learning from someone else who believes in what I am doing. I've also learned I don't have to adhere to it, either.

**Being focused and present:** It's only a short amount of time, in between the supervisor's tight schedule, so I try not to get (too) sidetracked by interesting conversations about books we are reading.

*Ultimately, it's up to me whether I put in the work, but I can increase my odds of doing well by making the best use of the support that is in place for me - as can you!*