

Individual supervision



In addition to the teaching activities at AWC we offer individual supervision sessions to students who experience difficulties in relation to their academic writing. We read excerpts from the students' texts, give them feedback and advice, discuss possible solutions to the problems they are having, and point to relevant resources such as handouts, books, pamphlets, websites, other student support services etc.

Our rhetorical supervision is meant to supplement, not replace the academic supervision the students typically also receive as a part of the particular courses they are undertaking. In practice, this means that we sometimes help the students not by giving them advice per se, but by pointing out unclarities and inconsistencies in their texts that they need to address and resolve with their academic supervisors.

Since AWC opened in September 2009 we have completed nearly 200 individual supervision sessions with over 110 different students from all education programmes at The Danish School of Education. Most of the students we supervise are either writing one of their first papers at the school or working on their master's thesis. As the numbers reflect, sometimes we have several meetings with a student, but often one session is enough. This of course depends on how severe the student's academic writing problem is.

Even though each individual supervision session is unique, there are some commonalities among the students we supervise and the problems they have. Some typical and recurring problems are:

- › **Research question:** Many of the students have no or only a vague research question. Instead they often have a more or less focused declaration of their topic. As a result, they have problems focusing, choosing theories and methods, structuring their text and so on.
- › **Structure:** Many of the students have problems structuring their text. Often this coincides with them not having a focused research question. But sometimes – and especially when it comes to students writing their master's thesis – the reason is that they are not used to work on such a large text and have lost track of what the primary functions of the different parts of the text are and hence where they belong in a classic academic structure.
- › **Analysis:** Some of the students are unsure of how to write an academic analysis – or even what such an analysis is. Instead they describe the object they are supposed to be analyzing, and/or account for the theories and concepts they are supposed to be using to steer the analysis. The two things, the object on the one hand and the theories and concepts on the other, never meet in an actual analysis or one of them is given too much or too little weight in the text.
- › **Language:** Finally, some of the students have problems writing a proper academic language where they use the academic terminology of their subject and write clear and comprehensible sentences and paragraphs without grammatical errors.



ACADEMIC WRITING CENTRE

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