STAT487 Research Project FAQ

1. What do I need to produce?

The STAT487 project is marked based only on the report that you submit at the end of it. That is the only output that will be assessed.

2. Does everything in my report need to be original?

No, it does not need to be entirely original. For most of you, this will be your first experience of research, and the first thing you will need to demonstrate is your ability to read and understand existing research. So at least 50%, possibly as much as 80%, of your work and your final report will be reading and explaining existing research in your own words. You will probably spend the first few weeks of the project period just reading and discussing your reading with your supervisor.

3. Do I have to work on my own?

You will have a supervisor from the Statistics and Mathematics department to guide you through the project. Even if you are doing it as part of an external practicum you will still have a VUW supervisor, to make sure you meet the requirements of the project.

4. How often will I see my supervisor?

This depends on what you arrange with your supervisor, but you will probably meet them roughly once a week or once a fortnight. Contact with them outside of meeting times will also depend on what you've agreed, but most supervisors will be happy to answer emails at other times during normal working hours.

5. What support will my supervisor provide?

Your supervisor is partly responsible for making sure the project is completed on time, so will check up on you regularly to make sure you are doing enough work throughout the length of the project. But your supervisor is also responsible for helping you with any of the technical parts of the project you are having trouble with, just as a lecturer can talk you through the technical concepts relating to an assignment. So parts of your supervisory meetings are likely to be technical discussions, talking about the coding details or the mathematical or statistical details of your project.

6. My supervisor already talked to me about the technical details of topic A, but now that I've worked on it a bit more I think there are still bits I don't understand. Is it ok to ask my supervisor about it again?

Yes, absolutely you can ask again. It is important that you understand the material you are working on, and it's perfectly normal for some topics to take more than one attempt before you fully understand them.

7. I am not very confident about coding, and I feel like I need a lot of help with it. Is that going to be a problem?

The important thing is for you to attempt any coding tasks your supervisor may suggest, before you ask for help, to at least try to work it out on your own, but yes, you can certainly ask for help with coding parts of the project.

8. I have written some of my report, but I am not sure if it's good enough. Can I show it to my supervisor during the project?

Yes, absolutely you can, and should, show drafts of your report to your supervisor. This is usually a good way for your supervisor to see what you've understood and where there are any potential issues. It is also good practice for you to start writing up parts of the project fairly early on, so that you don't leave it all until the end of the project.

9. I'm halfway through my project, and I think my research question has changed a bit. Is that ok?

Yes, in research any plans you make are almost guaranteed to change during the course of the work, so it's extremely common for your research question to change a bit, especially if you have found that your original idea was a bit more ambitious than feasible, and it is not a problem because you are not assessed on what your original plan was. Though you will probably not be able to switch to a completely different project or different supervisor!