

PGR Tips: negotiation

There may be many instances where you need to negotiate during your doctorate. In fact, in daily life we negotiate all the time. It could be about ideas or the direction of your research with your supervisor, use of your time with either academic people or a partner, money or other resources like space. We all behave differently and this can make negotiation unpredictable but also exciting. Here are some tips on 'principled negotiation' which you may find useful.

Plan carefully

Think about what is the most important negotiable for you. What might it be for 'them'? If they are not mutually exclusive there might well be a win-win outcome. Also think of a BATNA (best alternative to negotiated agreement) that is a real option for you, in case you really can't agree. Knowing what you'll do if the worst comes to the worst will put you in a stronger position

Separate people from problems

During negotiations, don't criticise other people. See the other people as fellow problem solvers, not adversaries. The other person's perspective is as valid as your own

Ask questions

And listen to the answers. This will help you understand their ideas, needs and concerns and demonstrate your commitment to understanding them. Probe, check understanding and summarise regularly.

Focus on interests, not on positions

What you want is a wise outcome, which addresses the needs of both parties, rather than winners and losers. Therefore it is usually best to avoid positional bargaining (tug-of-war). If they dig into their position, don't attack it, try to look for the interest behind it (by asking them to explain it)

Collectively generate options

Bounce ideas, possible solutions, choices and options off each other. Create and discuss lots of possibilities before you decide what to do. To do this you will need to have an environment of trust; constructive language will help create this

Focus on facts

Try to ignore personal views, hunches, opinions (including your own). Insist on facts

Take time out

Be prepared to break off the negotiation to think, consult others, check facts or regain control of feelings and emotions (and allow others to do the same)

I am pleased to invite you to a workshop called 'Strategies for busy researchers'. It is an all day workshop on the 8th of December and will be held at Bonhill House, London. It is designed to help you to be more effective in your research. It will be led by Hugh Kearns, co-author of "[the Balanced Researcher](#)" booklet.

Please see <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/1151-13901/Strategies-for-busy-researchers.html>