

# Collaboration in Research Workshop

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## 1. Why collaborate in research?

What are the benefits?

## 2. What could go wrong?

What are the risks of collaboration?

How do you avoid problems or fix them?

## 3. What skills would be useful to be successful in collaborations?

### Forming collaborations

#### 1) Making connections – networking

- Listening
- Exchanging – linking ideas/research
- Spotting opportunities for collaboration

#### 2) Developing your personal brand

- Communicating your research ideas, your expertise areas, your track record in an informal way

#### 3) Choosing partners wisely

- What are you looking for in a partner?

### Collaborating

#### 1) Project management

#### 2) Team-building

#### 3) Leadership

#### 4) Confidence in yourself and your collaborators abilities/expertise

#### 5) Creative and innovative thinking

### Sustaining collaborations

#### 1) Communicating and sharing – with openness and transparency

#### 2) Trust and respect for each other

#### 3) Clarity of purpose and contract: roles, expectations, IP

#### 4) Enabling different people in the team to lead in different situations where they have the expertise, knowledge and skills.

#### 5) Having confidence in yourself and your collaborators

## 4. How do you find collaborators? - Tips for making connections

Connections may not be obvious at first. A good place to start is to talk about:

- What brought you here today? Who/what influenced your decision to attend?
- Where do you study/work? (first degree and Phd)
- What do you research?
- Who is your supervisor?
- What research methodologies do you use?
- Who do you research/work alongside?
- Who have you met at conferences? What conferences have you attended recently?
- What are your leisure activities or interests?
- Where did you go on your holidays?

Share information, give advice, make recommendations or do something for someone

When you are meeting people, think about:

- 1) What do I know, that they might be interested in?
- 2) What can I contribute?
- 3) What can I learn from them?

Networking for researchers is about listening, keeping an open mind, looking for connections and exchanging favours and support. Building up social capital for future collaborations/partnerships. People collaborate with people they have a connection with and for whom they have trust.

### Tips for developing your personal brand in conversations

Make sure to tell people in an informal way, as part of the conversation:

- 1) Who you are – name, position, university – highlight with something interesting and memorable about yourself
- 2) Your research in a nutshell – 1 minute summary
  - What is it?
  - Why is it important?
  - What have you achieved or are going to produce?

### Follow through

Everybody has something of interest to you. Above all listen and enjoy the insights different people can give you. Take a few notes afterwards. Remember key things that interested you in what people have said so you can:

- follow up on the ideas they have given you
- give them the things/information you promised
- reconnect with the people for further discussions and
- maybe even form a future collaboration with them.

**Websites:** Check out [www.vitae.uk](http://www.vitae.uk) – postgraduate researchers – raising your profile

## Sixteen networking myths

### 1. “I don’t have any networks”

Think again. How many of these have you got?

- family (close & extended)
- friends (could be several distinct circles here)
- work colleagues
- people with an interest in your research topic (could be global, this one)
- a group of people that you play / watch a particular sport with
- neighbours
- people from the same club, society, gym etc

You can probably think of more. Try a spider diagram or mind map and see where you get to. You may be surprised by how many different circles you move in. They are all potential networking opportunities.

### 2. “I don’t know how to network”

Map out the opportunities you have (see 1 above). Identify an occasion when you would like to be able to network. Then think about these 3 things:

- what do I know?
- what can I contribute?
- what can I learn?

Once you are there, listen – really listen. Keep an open mind and the connections will make themselves. You are networking.

### 3. “Networking means being pushy”

Which you don’t want to be. And you would be quite right. Networking isn’t about ‘working the room’ and handing your business card to every person there. It is about making connections with people, which probably means more listening than talking. Pushy networkers are a pain: they get in the way of interesting conversations and put everybody’s backs up!

### 4. “I’m no good at networking”

Too shy to talk about yourself and what you do? Hate the triviality of small talk? Be kind to yourself. Ask the right question and people will be happy to talk to you – this is still networking. People remember a good listener who is genuinely interested in what they have to say. This can be as useful with a complete stranger as it is with someone you have identified as being useful to talk to. You will extend your knowledge and make a connection.

### 5. “Networking is only for salespeople / consultants / those on the make”

Wrong! It is a key skill, and not just for business. It is about seeing, and understanding the broader picture, keeping yourself up to date with new things that are happening – both inside and outside your organisation. It can help to solve all manner of problems, knowing the right people to ask. It is about developing your knowledge, understanding, awareness - your self.

### 6. “I need to go on a course to learn how to network”

Probably wrong, though if it helps you..... Just make sure it doesn’t say anything about ‘working the room’ in the blurb!

**7. “Networking is just management-speak for chatting to people”**

Yes.... and no. Yes, because there is no great mystique to it and we all talk to people, talk with a purpose, at some time or other. No, because the skill to networking is to do the chatting with awareness. And that awareness also implies that you can improve at it!

**8. “Networking is all about seeing what you can get from people”**

No, and if you approach it with this attitude you will soon find yourself out in the cold! Networking is an exchange of favours. This could be sharing information, giving advice, making a recommendation, or doing something for someone. It is the age-old ‘you scratch my back & I’ll scratch yours’, it is give and take, it results in that famous win/win situation!

**9. “I don’t like networking”**

How about talking to people who share the same interests, motivation, area of work? If you feel pleased, or even just relieved, to find someone at any sort of gathering who you can talk to about a common subject – then you enjoy networking!

**10. “I did it once, and it didn’t work”**

What were you expecting? Sometimes our expectations are just too high – we think that an event (conference / dinner / meeting) is going to solve all our problems, we are going to meet the Right Person immediately. Don’t give up, you may have to kiss a lot of frogs before you meet your prince (or princess)!! Perhaps you were concentrating too much on what you could get out of a situation, next time try thinking what you have to *offer* rather than what you *need* before you start.

**11. “I get embarrassed when I try to network”**

Just as everyone, even the most practised presenters, get nervous just before they begin a presentation, so it is with networking. Remind yourself that *you* have something to offer too. See 2, 4, 9 & 10 above. If it really scares you, try reading *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* by Susan Jeffers (also available as a cassette).

**12. “Everyone is more interesting than me”**

A self-fulfilling prophesy, if ever I heard one! Can you be a little more positive? I don’t mean convincing yourself that you are the most interesting person on the planet, but something along the lines of: “I have got some knowledge / experience that some of the people here will find interesting”. Make it your goal to find at least one of those people on each occasion.

**13. “No-one here can teach me anything”**

Oh, really? Give up now, shut yourself in an ivory tower somewhere and watch the rest of us enjoy finding out what we don’t know! Alternatively try sharing some of that superior knowledge with us lesser mortals – you may feel a warm glow from having helped someone. And you may learn something on the way.....

**14. “I never go anywhere to network”**

Unless you are a hermit, I bet you do. See 1 above.

**15. “I’m too busy to network”**

You are probably doing it anyway without realising it! If you like the idea of making connections with people, for whatever reason, try mapping out the opportunities (see 1 & 2 above).

**16. “People don’t like being ‘networked’ on”**

Not if that means being interrupted in the middle of a conversation, having a business card thrust into their hand and being told that the two of you have a lot in common! (see 3 above). But most people enjoy talking about what they do, what interests them etc (see 9 above)

**Have a brief up-to-date Biography statement ready to send after your networking. And highlight it on your home webpage.**

Example:

## Prof Bonnie Steves

*BSc (Hons) [University of British Columbia], BA [University of British Columbia],  
PhD [Glasgow University], FRAS Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society*

Professor Bonnie Steves is Professor of Mathematical Astronomy and Director of the Graduate School at Glasgow Caledonian University. She has responsibility for the strategic development, management and delivery of the Graduate School for the University, supporting the researcher development of over 500 research students and the staff of the university. From 2002 - 2008, she was the first Associate Dean of Research and Knowledge Transfer for the School of Computing and Mathematical Sciences at GCU, responsible for the development of the School's research, income generation, knowledge transfer and commercialisation activities.

### **Graduate School Achievements**

Under her leadership, the Graduate School at GCU was winner of the UK Times Higher Education Award in 2010 for *Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers*, with Universities Scotland partners. The Graduate School is rated by students as first in Scotland according to the IBarometer student survey results 2009, 2010 and 2011. As Director of the Graduate School, she is leading postgraduate education research into the development and impact of Graduate Schools, the skills and attributes of researchers, and the development of research learning environments to enhance the employability of Doctoral researchers.

### **Research Achievements**

Leader of a research team in Astrodynamics, Bonnie conducts research into celestial mechanics, solar system dynamics, stability and chaotic behaviour of stellar clusters, fractals and quaternionic theory. She has refereed papers for six international scientific journals; and successfully supervised eight PhD students. Since 1993 she has been Director of four of the Cortina Series of Advanced Study Institutes (ASIs) for post-doctoral studies in celestial mechanics/astrodynamics. She has published over 30 scientific papers and been the co-editor of five graduate textbooks on Astrodynamics. In the UK Research Assessment 2008, she was the only small group entry of one in the Applied Mathematics unit of assessment to receive a world class (4\*) and international excellence (3\*) rating, with 5% research output rated at each of these top class levels.

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