

Every Researcher Counts

Resource A

Team management: Important conversations

A3 – Conversation scenarios

The following six scenarios are based on real researcher situations.

Please consider each one in turn thinking about how you would prepare for the meeting described (using the negotiation worksheet) and what you would advise the member of your team to do in preparation for the meeting.

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Scenario 1:

Rebecca is struggling with her workload. She has three children aged 12, 10 and 3. She is in her late 30s, has childcare and support at home but always seems overwhelmed with the amount of work she has. She had very good career prospects before her three periods of maternity leave but recently members of the department have expressed concern about her ability to meet deadlines.

Rebecca has approached you to talk about her work and flexible working. You think this means part-time working and a reduction in her hours in the department. You are not keen on this option as you haven't had particularly good experiences with part-time research staff and have managed to avoid having anyone working in your team in this way for most of the last ten plus years.

- **How will you prepare for this conversation?**
- **How would you advise Rebecca to prepare?**

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Scenario 2:

Philip joined your department for his first postdoctoral role just over six months ago. Following a spinal accident he uses a wheelchair. Prior to him starting work in your department an occupational adviser made recommendations on specifications for Philip's workstation and adjustments that would be required to in the department more generally to enable Philip to get around with ease. Philip has sent you an email asking for a meeting, as he would like to talk about modifications to enable him to work more effectively.

- **How will you prepare for this conversation?**
- **How would you advise Philip to prepare?**

Scenario 3:

Marion is a doctoral researcher you are supervising. You are aware that she is gay.

She has produced an excellent paper that you would like her to submit to a key international conference. She has asked you to talk about attending the conference in Dubai as she has not travelled to the UAE before. The paper has already received considerable interest so you know that it is likely to get accepted and it would really help Marion progress her career if she were to present at the conference.

- **How will you prepare for this meeting?**
- **How would you advise Marion to prepare for this meeting?**
- **How would the situation be similar/different if Marion was male and gay?**

Scenario 4:

Judith is a postdoctoral researcher in your department. She has recently informed you that her partner is pregnant and she would like to take leave when the child is six months old. She is keen to share childcare with her partner who works in a different department within the university and holds a more senior post.

You are very pleased for them both but are concerned about how your research project will be affected if Judith takes more than a month off.

Judith has asked to see you about options for taking extended leave once the baby is born so that her partner can return to work as soon as possible after the birth.

■ **How will you prepare for this meeting?**

■ **How would you advise Judith to prepare for this meeting?**

Scenario 5:

James's mother has recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. His father died a couple of years ago and he is an only child. Whilst his mother is very self-sufficient and only lives 70 miles away, she is going to need some help during the period she is receiving chemotherapy and in the recovery period afterwards.

James needs some flexibility in the coming months to be able to provide support to his mother and has asked you if you have time for a chat to be able to discuss the options.

- **How will you prepare for this meeting?**
- **How would you advise James to prepare for this meeting?**

Scenario 6:

Habib is a doctoral researcher that you co-supervise. He has put in a request to take 4 weeks leave to take part in the Hajj pilgrimage and visit his family who live abroad.

You are concerned because the time of the pilgrimage falls during school holiday time and a number of other staff who are parents have requested leave during this time. You are likely to be at a critical stage in your project and need to ensure that you have enough researchers covering the project.

- **How will you prepare for this meeting?**
- **How would you advise Habib to prepare?**