AIRS
Advanced Information Research Skills

AIRS Module 9

Collaboration

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Contents

Module 9: Collaboration

Learning objectives

This module explores networks and technologies to support the successful researcher in communicating, writing, and researching collaboratively. By the end of this module you should be able to:

- identify a conference to attend with networking benefits.

Applying the content to your resource log
As you progress through this module, consider, and refer to the requirements of the resource log and apply your learning to each question.

Resource Log

Collaboration (3 marks)

Identify a conference you would like to attend, and explain why the conference is appropriate to your research and/or the various ways in which it will help your networking opportunities. See the checklist on thinkcheckattend.org for advice on selecting an appropriate conference *[See Module 9 and https://thinkcheckattend.org/]*.

E.g. I would like to attend… [conference] because…

9.1 Networking

Networking is the process of cultivating relationships to draw upon the expertise of other people in order to enhance your own research process and impact. In this section you will learn how to network in-person and online with your supervisor, peers and industry at events, conferences, professional organisations and online. Self-promotion improves your global profile as a researcher and opens up prospects for further research, invitations to present at conferences or publish in journals, and opportunities to engage with industry.

In-person networking

Supervisor

Your supervisor is your adviser to achieve your research outcome, your mentor and a guide to success beyond your degree. Supervisors are obligated to help you prepare presentations of your research work in faculty seminars, arrange to meet other researchers in your field and attend meetings or conferences. The QUT Higher Degree Research Guideline details the support you can expect to receive from your supervisor.

Peers

You will benefit from a continuous mutual exchange of ideas with peers and co-workers throughout the duration of your degree. Remember, not all your peers will be working with you at QUT, or even in a University, but can also be in industry, start-ups, or government. These colleagues bring together a vast amount of knowledge in your discipline so it is important to spend a portion of your research time interacting through casual conversations or formal communications and meetings. Experienced peers can also provide you with guidance on important research activities such as useful software, managing your literature, or conceptualising your research question.

Faculty events

Your faculty will organise a variety of professional events including talks, guest lectures, workshops and conferences. There are also informal social activities that you might attend to extend your range of networks and professional relationships. Many events are advertised via email lists and social media so scan and register for lists and groups that are in your field of research. Even if you cannot attend all the events, you will keep informed of current topics of interest and how your research aligns with new research directions.

Conferences and events

Conferences are important opportunities to discuss your research ideas in a wider forum. With the support and guidance of your supervisor, you will submit research papers to conferences and symposia. It is also important to attend conferences to extend your professional networks and to be fully aware of evolving areas of research. Conversing on your topic with a wider range of peers increases the likelihood that your work will be relevant and interesting to your research community.

QUT Library provides access to a variety of databases that include records of previously held conferences. To find these on the QUT Library homepage firstly select the 'View all databases' link. The image below then shows how to perform a search for **conferences** via the 'filter by database name field'. In addition, you can also use free tools such as Conference Alerts.

Make sure that the conference is legitimate. Much like deceptive or low quality journals, questionable or fake conferences are set up to look like a scientific conference or meeting but have exploitative practices, lack editorial standards and provide fake agendas. The trouble is many look legitimate. Due diligence is the key to ensure you make the right decision about attendance at the conference. Think.Check.Attend. "provides guidelines that help researchers to differentiate between an authentic conference and the one they should avoid".

QUT can also connect you with other events where you'll have the opportunity to discuss your research, often with a broader community of researchers, government, and industry. These include events like hackathons or Grand Challenge Lectures, and even training events. The regular GRE+D email alert contains details of all these opportunities and is delivered to your student inbox.

Professional organisations

Professional organisations facilitate networking by connecting you with industry and giving you access to email lists, Twitter and other communications that alert members to events, conferences, newsletters and continuing education opportunities. You may have to pay a yearly fee to be a member of these organisations.

Online networking

There are a variety of ways to network with colleagues online. Well conducted online behaviour may positively affect how employers come to be aware of your work and recognise your potential to become an invaluable member of their team.

Professional website

Creating your own website is a good way to centralise your online presence. Use a website to direct colleagues to your publications, curriculum vitae and social media outlets such as X (formerly Twitter). Be aware that, in your own online space, you do not officially represent QUT so ensure you remain neutral in your descriptions of yourself and your research and do not speak in any way on behalf of the University.

Blogging

A professional blog of your own or blogs of other researchers is a useful method for conceptualising and exploring your own topic. Be guided by recommendations of your peers, mentors and researchers in which blogs are worthwhile. However, when you contribute to blogs, remember that you have a responsibility to respect the work and views of others and to maintain academic integrity (see module 6. *Acknowledge*) at all times. By tagging the title and contents of your blog posts (e.g. using Dublin Core), your content can be indexed by search engines thereby ensuring your research can be broadcast to a wider community.

X (formerly Twitter)

X (formerly Twitter) can be an excellent way to share the latest news and topics in your research with peers. X is best used to summarise ideas interesting to you and to share those with like-minded scholars. Link to recently published articles in your area or your own blog posts to generate interest but do keep your activity professional to assure followers engage with your intellectual ideas.

Facebook

Appropriate use of Facebook to connect with colleagues and peers is a good way to stay in touch and communicate to a broad community of researchers. Relationships formed at faculty events or conferences can be consolidated via Facebook.

However, while high quality online work may enhance your reputation as a scholar, consider carefully the information you make public. Conduct yourself professionally and represent the work and views of your colleagues respectfully and without prejudice, and ensure your account has the appropriate privacy settings.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the most popular professional networking site, and is a fantastic way to expand your

networks, follow up from face-to-face meetings, and connect with professional and research opportunities. Increasingly, recruiters and HR departments are referring to LinkedIn when searching for and assessing candidates, and LinkedIn is a useful place to post your publications, research outcomes, and share interesting articles with people in your network.

Activity – Sign up to faculty email lists

1. Email the administrator of your faculty and ensure that you are signed up for email alerts for upcoming faculty events.

2. Search your region for faculties with events relevant to your research interests. Email the faculty administrator requesting to be added to their event email list.

3. Keep an eye out for the regular GRE+D email alerts, sent to your student email address. They collate opportunities available at QUT for HDR students, including training and events.

9.2 Collaborate with researchers

Research is increasingly collaborative and moving into this world can be daunting for a new researcher. This module introduces you to options for identifying and meeting potential collaborators within QUT and around the world via QUT Academic profiles, QUT ePrints, researcher identifiers, researcher databases and academic social networks.

Finding collaborators at QUT

Local collaborators understand your research and institutional context and provide you with immediate access to feedback, support and mentoring.

QUT Academic Profiles showcases QUT academic staff and you can search by keyword for those with research interests similar to your own.

QUT ePrints is an openly accessible online digital collection of scholarly publications and other research outputs created by QUT staff and postgraduate students. Search QUT ePrints for QUT researchers who have written in your research area.

QUT ePrints opens up a range of collaboration opportunities. Increased visibility increases the likelihood that other researchers will read and cite your journal articles and conference papers. Readers can contact you for more information or to offer research partnerships and opportunities.

Activity – Find QUT peers

Search QUT Academic Profiles and QUT ePrints for people at QUT who share your research interests.

Building your academic profile

Start to think early about how you will build your profile. Use online tools as discussed, become a player in your field by becoming a member of professional associations, attend conferences, seminars and webinars. Consider creating a Google Scholar author profile to keep track of citations to your articles. You can make your author profile public so that it may appear in Google Scholar results.

Activity – Google Scholar profile

Go to Google Scholar Citations and create a profile.

9.3 Collaborate with information

Research today involves large amounts of information, data (see Module 8 for more information on sharing data), references, images and more. Collaborative research teams need to be able to share the readings they have found, the data they have gathered, and the information they have created. This section covers social bookmarking, and reference sharing.

Social bookmarking

Social bookmarking allows you to share the websites you find useful or entertaining (as well as letting you access your bookmarks from any computer).

- Pinterest lets you bookmark, tag and summarise websites visually and display them by category.
- Diigo allows you to highlight, annotate and attach 'sticky notes' to the pages you have bookmarked. You can also use it to organise your notes, pictures and other information.

Activity – Social bookmarking

1. Open one of the social bookmarking sites mentioned above or choose your own.
2. Search for keywords that are relevant to your research.
3. Can you find other users who are interested in your area? If so, see what sites they have bookmarked.

Sharing references

A variety of online tools help you share, as well as manage, your scholarly references.

- Use EndNote to tag, annotate, organise, share and publicise references relevant to your research.

- Use Mendeley to set up collaborative projects, work and discuss in groups, and share data.
- Use Zotero to create shared libraries or publish your library so all researchers can see it.

9.4 Collaborate with writing

This section will introduce you to a variety of tools to help you write with others.

Online communication tools

Email

Make sure what you write via email is clear, respectful and does not misrepresent others or misinform your recipient. Your QUT email address and your signature is an indicator of your academic reliability and authority. Include the link to your personal QUT ePrints page in your email signature as this can prompt email recipients to investigate your publications.

Voice

Speaking to a collaborator over the phone can quickly clear up the small confusions and misinterpretations that proliferate in emails. Internet based phone services (VoIP) can save money for long distance calls and may have video capabilities.

- Zoom is an online meeting/virtual conferencing tool. Use Zoom in your studies to communicate online by video with users within QUT and outside of QUT, send instant messages, share screens, and annotate a presentation.

Talking in groups

Many telephones and VoIP services allow conference calls allowing a group of collaborators to discuss their research together. Videoconferencing can be used by both staff and students to communicate across two or more locations. You may also be able to use video conferencing from your desk or mobile phone. QUT offers videoconferencing facilities at campuses for communicating across two or more locations.

Collaborative work spaces

Wikis

Wikis allow you to create, edit and use content together via an ordinary web browser. It is like a web page that you can edit yourselves. You can control who can view, contribute or edit and attach files or images and data.

- QUT Wiki is a secure and powerful workspace that can be used as a complete workspace for your team, including calendars, chat, checklists and news pages. There are many other

wiki 'farms' where you can create a wiki for your group. Some offer free access (usually limited) with advertisements, or you can pay for a premium wiki.

SharePoint

QUT currently uses Microsoft SharePoint as a tool for collaboration. This tool creates a single web based environment that integrates with MS Office applications. It is used for a variety of different purposes to coordinate and communicate within groups and includes version and access control. Currently it is only available to QUT staff but if you are collaborating with a staff member access can be arranged.

File sharing and sync tools

QUT offers access to QUT OneDrive and Dropbox as endorsed and supported tools for you to share files with colleagues, both inside and outside of QUT, or synchronise (sync) your own files, so you can access them any time, any place, from any device.

Note: The H and U drives (excluding the Research folder on the U drive), OneDrive, Google Drive, Dropbox and portable storage devices should not be used for the storage of master copies of research data.

All staff need to consider the most appropriate tool for your needs considering the type and classification of information you are sharing or syncing. All file sharing and sync tools are to be used in accordance with the Acceptable Use policy, the Information Security policy and the Management of research data.

9.5 Engage with industry

Industry engagement is increasingly important to future careers of HDR students, whether or not they intend to work in academia. Employers from all sectors report that researchers who apply for jobs have difficulty articulating the skills they have gained during their research degrees from the research itself (Edge & Munro, 2015; McGagh et al., 2016; Nous Group & Australian Technology Network of Universities, 2017). At the same time, demand for transferable skills like digital literacy and critical thinking has grown over recent years (Foundation for Young Australians, 2016) and employers are also reporting difficulties in finding employees that deliver the skills they need (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2012).

To be career-ready you will need to demonstrate that you have, and can put into practice, transferable skills such as:

- Project management
- Problem solving
- Collaboration

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Digital literacy
- Critical thinking
- Leadership – and many more

This section provides guidance on engaging with industry during your research degree, and on strategies to expand your networks and develop your skills so that you can be industry-ready when you graduate.

Training and workshops

Each semester, QUT's Graduate Research Education and Development (GRE+D) team host a number of events designed to help you engage with industry and innovation. All are specifically for HDR students and workshops are available in a number of modes, including online. Topics range from transdisciplinarity to entrepreneurship. Information about workshops and events is sent regularly to your student inbox in the GRE+D email alert.

e-Grad School is a virtual graduate school providing flexible, moderated, online modules to research students and is free to all QUT HDRs. Modules to help you engage with industry and innovation include research commercialisation, entrepreneurship, and public policy. Run over five weeks, these and other modules give you the chance to network with peers from universities around Australia while building your industry-engagement skills. Successful participants receive a certificate of completion. Like GRE+D training and events, information and registration for e-Grad School modules will appear in the GRE+D fortnightly email alerts, delivered to your student inbox.

Working with a mentor

Mentors can be incredibly helpful in introducing you to professional life, new research practices, and expanding your network. They also help break down barriers between academia and industry and can help you develop skills such as communication and leadership. Mentoring can take different forms, from informal chats with an experienced and trusted professional, to a formal arrangement such as those organised through IMNIS Engage industry mentoring | ATSE . GRE+D fortnightly email alerts promote networking opportunities at QUT as they arise.

QUT Internships

With a QUT internship you can put your skills to work on an industry funded project. You'll collaborate with an industry and an academic mentor to develop a three-month project, which is separate to your thesis research. Internships are open to both MPhil and PhD students, and domestic and international candidates. Find out more or email hdr.intern@qut.edu.au.

Industry engagement events

Each year, QUT runs a range of events designed to introduce HDR students to industry projects and partners. The regular GRE+D email alert will keep you informed about upcoming events.

Further reading

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