

Support Networking

What

Networks are essential for success in an academic career. The earlier one starts to build their network, the more successful they will be.

Why? – Gender perspective

The opportunity to obtain grants, travel supports for conferences and overseas study depends considerably on the ability of the academic to establish an appropriate network of contacts. PhD supervisors should invite PhD students into their own networks, advice PhD students on ways to develop networks and facilitate exposure of PhD students to people who will collaborate with them. As networks are male dominated, it is particularly important that supervisors introduce and promote female PhD students to ensure they are not excluded from networks.

Evidence / background - Gender perspective

Networking leads to visibility. The more visible you are, the more successful you are perceived to be (FESTA, WP 3.1 Presentation).

A woman in the Irish organization noted the male dominated nature of networks, in which she felt unable to participate and which limited her ability to achieve professional visibility:

“It shouldn't be any harder [for women] but it does seem to be. But I think in terms of networking as a woman, because most of the networking is done in a social environment ...If I was at a conference on my own and I didn't know anybody, then I'd be very reluctant to go into the bar and network on my own”.

The male dominated social locations in which networking takes place are difficult for women to access.

From contexts and experiences in the FESTA-project

Networking is very important. This is one aspect of an academic career: that you need strong network and these days a large, international network of people. Without this it is simply impossible. So it is very important to develop such a network. You have to be proactive you know, approaching people and building new contacts, also maintaining contacts' (male academic, FESTA research, 2014).

'It is important as a young scientist to go abroad, and at an early stage in your career, focus on developing an international network and contacts; it makes a big difference on your CV' (female academic, FESTA research, 2014).

Recommendations for good practice

Start your PhD students' network:

- Introduce the student to your own network of contacts
- Attend conferences with the student and introduce them to your network
- Write and present jointly with your student

Advise your PhD student on how to develop their own network:

- Start early to create your network
- Make use of every opportunity to enter into contact with your colleagues.
- Become a member of academic societies
- Attend presentations, conferences and colloquia
- Get involved in groups, teams and research clusters at your university
- Present at a group seminar, national and international conference,
- Follow up any contacts made with emails

Ensure your student is alerted to important events and networks:

- The student should be informed about important events related to the structure of the PHD programme through official, administrative channels. Make sure your student knows who to contact and how to access academic regulations. Encourage your student to be proactive in sourcing knowledge necessary to pursue and complete a PhD
- Encourage your student to subscribe to mailing lists, professional organizations, research groups and research-gate in order to ensure they are always aware of important events related to their research interests and which can help expand their networks (e.g. seminars, conferences, visitors, meetings)

From literature and other sources

'Establishing basic research credibility and visibility as an academic should be a top early priority'. Junkins (2012:42).

Bagilhole and Goode (2001) found that self-promotion is in itself gendered, and that women are excluded from male networks.

Bagilhole, B and Goode, J. (2001) The Contradiction of the Myth of Individual Merit, and the Reality of a Patriarchal Support System in Academic Careers A Feminist Investigation. *European Journal of Women's Studies* May 2001 8 (2) 161-180.

Junkins, J.L. (2012) *Engineering your Academic Career*. Texas: Lulu.com.