

## Collaboration and hybrid working

Collaboration is one of the Universities key Values. But how do we make collaboration effective, and is it different in a face-to-face context from a hybrid context?

The key elements for effective collaboration are where both parties:

- Share their needs and objectives, up front.
- Discuss taking a collaborative approach before discussing solutions.
- Stimulate information sharing.
- Offer many different alternatives
- Refrain from interacting when emotions are high.
- Use creative problem solving. We do this by;
  - Step 1: Exploring the problem using open-ended, exploratory questions. Open-ended questions tend to be those that start with – what (especially what might ...), where, when, why (and why might, or why not ...), who, and how (especially how might ...). The addition of the ‘might’ indicates an openness and tentative approach to seeing things from a different perspective. We do this so we can understand what it looks like from both perspectives? Have aspects been overlooked, exaggerated, is it the same problem!?
  - Step 2: Create lots of options (rather than getting stuck on ‘your’ one way to do things).
  - Step 3: Agree to implement the best option (rather than the one you have come tied to).

You can work through this using a standard coaching model, such as the ToGROW Model, a variation of the GROW Model, adapted by Myles Downey.



- TOPIC – What is/was the issue? Why this? How did you recognise this? Why now?
- GOAL – What is important to you (both) about this right now? What would be the benefits if you both in addressed this?
- REALITY – How have you approached something like this before? What could stop you from achieving this? What actions have you both taken so far? On a scale of 1-10 how motivated are you both in reaching the ‘best option’? What is missing now that you would like to have?

- **OPTIONS** – In what ways could you both approach this? What would be the advantages and/or disadvantages? What else could you both do? What may hinder this? What's the best/worst thing about this possibility?
- **WILL/WAY FORWARD** What? By When? By Who? What will you need to **MAKE THIS HAPPEN?!**

### **Can collaboration be done remotely or in a hybrid situation?**




To make collaboration work there needs to be a humbleness and a level of trust that you will both approach the situation with the same mindset, the same desire for the 'best option', to get the best outcome. It is important therefore we build trust on the one hand, and our own humbleness on the other.

Humbleness comes through the development of self-awareness and emotional intelligence. It might be worth considering your starting point in terms of your personality and current behaviour (see Hints and Tips document on Understanding your and other peoples personality and behaviour).

Trust is developed through having integrity, being true to your word, thinking carefully before committing and being consistent, being open, honest and helpful, avoiding self-promotion and admitting to your mistakes. All of these things can (and should) be done remotely, in a hybrid context and in face-to-face situations.

And finally, it is important we move away from the assumption that collaboration, or communication, can only be done through team meetings. This is a waste of resources (time) and ineffective. There are other ways much more effective, such as;

## Meeting Alternatives

			
Asana, Monday	Google, SharePoint	Slack, Discord	Mural, Ideanote

- Project updates are better done through project updating software.
- Shared documents and joint working is better done in SharePoint.
- Social chat, catch ups and cohesion is better done through software such as Slack and Discord.
- And ideas creation, discussion and development are better done through the appropriate technology.

For the most effective collaboration, meetings, whether face-to-face or online, are rarely the answer.