

Collaborative Research Cards



What these cards are for?

Collaborative research can involve many things: from developing trust, to moving out of your comfort zone, to doing things together that you couldn't achieve on your own.

Sometimes it feels easy, like a walk in the park; other times it can be awkward, like treading across a minefield.

These cards aim to develop better collaborative research by helping you reflect upon how you are working together.

How to use the cards

The cards are divided into four sections, relating to different stages of a collaborative research journey. These are colour coded for clarity. Use the cards at these key points during your research project.

The cards in each section can be answered in any order. Shuffle them and work through them in pairs or a small team. If you decide a card is not useful, you can skip it. Keep a record of your responses in order to return and reflect upon them later.

Four stages in research

Getting Started

These cards aim to speed up and enhance the process of getting to know each other.

Relationship Building

These cards aim to help you build a strong and reflexive relationship.

Oiling the Wheels

These are cards to explore at the mid-point of your project, to help keep things going smoothly and productively.

Time to Harvest

These are things to explore as you approach the end of your project, when you hope your hard work is bearing fruit.

Four kinds of questions



Do. These cards ask you to do something – typically write, list or draw – sometimes independently and sometimes together.



Reflect. These cards ask you to think and share your ideas, values and experiences.



Rank. These cards ask you to rank things in importance.



Scale. These cards ask you to place yourself on a scale between different qualities or values.

Adapt the cards for you

These cards aim to elicit constructive and useful conversations. Feel free to bend and stretch the questions on the cards in order to have the most productive experience.

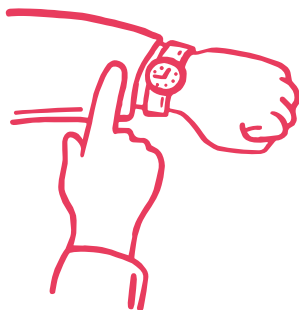
Adapt the cards and questions so they work best for you. The only rule you cannot break is being honest with yourself and being compassionate with each other.



Short of Time?

If you've limited time, don't feel like you need to work through all the cards.

Select one card at random and save the rest for another time.



Getting Started

Ask each other:

“Why do you do what you do?”



Reflect

Getting Started

Think back to previous collaborations.

Tell each other about one thing that went really well.

And one thing that went... less well.

Discuss what you've learnt from these experiences.



Reflect

Getting Started

What assumptions are you making about your partner and their motivations, interests or values?

Make a note and then share your assumptions with each other.

Be honest but kind!



Reflect

Getting Started

Each think of three values that guide your work.

Compare and discuss these values.

Ask each other for an example ofA how these values are present in what you do.



Do

Getting Started

Draw a picture of yourself in your ideal working environment.

Draw or label all the things you need to be able to do your best work.

Share your drawings and discuss how you can help make this happen.



Do

Getting Started

Rank the following from 1 (least important) to 7 (most important).

- Achieving goals
- Being passionate
- Building trust
- Having control
- Learning new things
- Making new connections
- Meeting deadlines

Compare your answers. Is there anything missing?



Rank

Getting Started

Together come up with a list of five qualities that you both agree would define success in this collaboration.

Each make a note of these to revisit later.



Do

Getting Started

Indicate where you would position yourself on a scale between these qualities:

Planner ●————● Spontaneous

Controlling ●————● Delegating

Organised ●————● Instinctive

Discuss your answers and how this might impact on how you work together.



Scale

Getting Started

What do you think are the ethical issues raised by this project?

Discuss how you would address these from your different organisational perspectives.



Reflect

Getting Started

Rank which of the following ways of working you prefer, from most to least preferred.

- In-person (one on one)
- Online (Teams/zoom)
- Email
- Phone
- Out of hours
- In-person (bigger meetings)

Compare your hours and plan how you will work together.



Rank

Getting Started

Take a selfie of yourselves together.

(You'll do this at each stage of the project.)



Do

Getting Started

Work together to come up with five possible endings for this quote:

“If we knew what we were doing ...”



Reflect

Relationship Building

Share with each other a highlight from your previous working week.

Discuss how you were involved and why it mattered to you.



Reflect

Relationship Building

What lived experiences do you have that relate to how you approach your work?

How might they inform or shape your working together?



Reflect

Relationship Building

What do you know are your own weaknesses?

Make a note of three and compare them with your partner.

What can you do to counterbalance each other?



Do

Relationship Building

Each make a list of things that might be threatened by a lack of time or resources.

Compare them with each other and discuss how best to address these challenges.

Agree one action.



Do

Relationship Building

Each draw what working in your organisation feels like to you.

Indicate where you are within this drawing.

Compare your drawings and discuss how this might affect your project.



Do

Relationship Building

Indicate where you would position yourself on a scale between these qualities:

Ideas-focused •————• Hands-on

Imaginative •————• Grounded

Logical •————• Intuitive

Discuss your answers and how this might impact on how you work together.



Scale

Relationship Building

What do other people tell you are your strengths?

Make a note of three and compare them with your partner.

What can you do to best employ each other's strengths?



Reflect

Relationship Building

Each write down three words that define how you see research.

Compare your answers.

Work together to create a haiku (5-7-5 syllable structure) that captures your joint understanding of research. Keep this somewhere safe.



Do

Relationship Building

Draw yourself as a superhero.

What are your special powers?

What is your kryptonite?



Do

Relationship Building

Take a selfie of yourselves together.

(You'll do this at each stage of the project.)



Do

Relationship Building

Draw your 'identity pie chart',
dividing a circle into all the
components or things which make
you, you.

Share your pie charts and discuss
where this project fits in.A



Do

Relationship Building

Use these cards to build a tower together.

As you do, tell each other one thing about yourself you've not shared before.



Do

Oiling the Wheels

List all the reasons it is useful to receive feedback, and one reason it isn't useful.

Discuss with your partner and explore how you might best give each other feedback during this project.



Do

Oiling the Wheels

Make a list of the project's audiences (stakeholders potentially interested in the outputs).

Describe how best to communicate to each of them.



Do

Oiling the Wheels

Working together, indicate on a scale from 1 (not very well) to 10 (excellent) how well you think the project is going so far in terms of:

- Generating new insights
- Developing new skills
- Plans being on track
- Building a strong partnership

What could you do to improve these rankings?



Scale

Oiling the Wheels

Draw a spider diagram of yourself surrounded by all your professional networks.

Use this to learn about each other's networks. Who might it help to put the other person in contact with?

Make at least one new introduction.



Do

Oiling the Wheels

Rank the following statements in order of how important they are for this project, from most to least important.

- Changing practice
- Clarity of communication
- Creativity of outputs
- Impact on policy
- Obtaining further funding
- Quality of research findingsA
- Reaching wide audiences

Compare your answers. Is anything missing?



Rank

Oiling the Wheels

Share moments when you have felt short of time during this project.

Consider how you can help and support each other.



Reflect

Oiling the Wheels

Think about the collaboration so far.

- What has been working well, and should continue?
- What isn't working, and should stop?
- What haven't you done, that should start?



Reflect

Oiling the Wheels

Who owns what you are doing together?

Discuss how you feel about authorship, accreditation, ownership, intellectual property.

Identify any mismatches.



Reflect

Oiling the Wheels

Who is benefiting?A

Each draw a picture or diagram of what benefits or impact you hope the project will have.

Discuss with each other whether you think you are on track to achieve this.



Do

Oiling the Wheels

Say something that you appreciate about working with your collaboration partner.

Make sure they take notice.



Do

Oiling the Wheels

If the biggest problem you've encountered on this project so far was a monster, what would it look like?

How would you communicate with it?



Reflect

Oiling the Wheels

Take a selfie of yourselves together.

(You'll do this at each stage of the project.)



Do

Time to Harvest

If you were stuck in an elevator with a stranger, how would you describe what you achieved in your project in a single sentence?



Reflect

Time to Harvest

Working together, indicate on a scale from 1 (not very well) to 10 (excellent) how well you think the project is going so far in terms of:

- Reaching the right audience
- Completing objectives
- Learning new things

What could you do to improve these rankings?



Scale

Time to Harvest

What have you learnt from collaborating that you would share with others starting out?

Together write 3 top tips for:

- Individual academics
- VCSE organisations
- The University as an institution
- The VCSE sector as a whole



Reflect

Time to Harvest

What are the advantages of keeping in touch and working together after the project ends?

If you were to end the collaboration now, how could you ensure that ending felt positive?



Reflect

Time to Harvest

Draw a Venn diagram together, one circle representing the academic and the other the VCSE partner.

What is the magic in the overlapping middle point?

What have you achieved from working together that you could not have achieved alone?



Do

Time to Harvest

Imagine a party to celebrate the end of the project.

List who you would want to be there.

What would you want to say?

What cake would most accurately symbolise the project?

Consider if you want to put this event on.



Do

Time to Harvest

Dream together about where this work might be in five years' time.



Do

Time to Harvest

List everybody who has been involved in the project.

Reflect on how you think they might have experienced their involvement.

Think about if you need to reach out to them.



Do

Time to Harvest

Impacts!

Each write two lists:

A. The project's concrete impacts

B. Things not yet achieved.

Discuss what you can do to move things from list B to list A.



Reflect

Time to Harvest

Take a selfie of yourselves together.

Look back at pictures you took together.

Smile.



Do

Time to Harvest

Indicate on a scale from 1 to 10 how likely you feel you are to do the following together:

1 being unlikely, 10 very likely.

- Bid for further funding
- Build a new form of collaboration with your partner
- Build upon your partner's networks
- Reach new audiences together
- Keep in touch from time to time

Agree one action each.



Scale

Time to Harvest

Draw a map of your collaboration and plot your journey through it.

What places have you passed through?

Where have you lingered?

Where haven't you been yet?



Do