



Module 7: Leading and Managing People in a Research Context

Introduction

As a future research leader, you have to lead and manage your research team effectively and efficiently. This module focuses on the things a leader needs to do to ensure team members perform at their best. It aims to develop your skills as a leader and manager by discussing how to set clear directions, create norms for respectful and innovative discussion and behaviour, provide a safe work environment, and recognise and reward achievement and efforts. It also focuses on how to cultivate the most productive culture possible for your next research team.

The knowledge gained through this module will help to develop a successful and productive work environment. It will also be of assistance in managing your research funds in an economical way. Between 60 and 80 percent of a project's financial resources are directly invested through salaries and on-costs and indirectly through recruitment and development costs. Good leadership and effective communication is needed to inspire the best use of staff talents. Good people management is also good *financial* management.

Research projects require a tailored approach to people management. This module builds on the recruitment approach in *Module 2: Start-up and Collaboration – Putting Ideas Into Practice to identify effective approaches to leading and managing members of a research team.*

Aims

Module 7 aims to assist researchers develop their preferred leadership style; it also aims to educate researchers about how to create an effective research environment while managing the issues that arise from the typical research context of fixed-term employment and short time-frames.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module you should be able to:

- identify the characteristics of an environment in which research teams flourish
- understand the relevance of different leadership styles in a research context and the stages in team development
- implement key characteristics of effective communication, negotiation skills, and team management
- understand your responsibilities in creating a safe equitable workplace for the team
- provide tools and skills for researchers to plan and monitor activities and meet the requirements of the research plan.

Content overview

The module comprises the following topics:

1. **Research Leadership**
This topic explores leadership behaviours and the ideal research culture.
2. **Leadership and Management Styles**
This topic explores leadership styles, the nature of the research team, and the environment you should cultivate to ensure success.
3. **Leading Teams**
This topic deals with setting standards and the importance of developing interpersonal and communication processes.
4. **Managing People**
This section focuses on motivating, guiding, and developing the individuals working on your project.

Workshop details

To complete this module, you must attend the corresponding workshop.

This module comprises online learning material and a workshop.

You are expected to devote time to reading the online material and carrying out compulsory activities before attending the workshop. This module should take less than 3.5 hours to read and you may need to devote up to another 1.5 hours to carry out the compulsory activities. (Please note you can complete the conversation with an experienced researcher following the workshop.) The workshop assumes you have completed the reading and carried out the compulsory activities.

Requirements for completion of Module 7:

1. Complete the pre-course reading, including the [Safeguarding: the Murray–Darling Basin case study](#).
2. Read through the module and complete all activities.
3. Arrange to have a guided conversation with an experienced researcher in your unit/area/faculty and get them to sign off on the 'record of completion' form (included with this manual). This can be done before or after the workshop.
4. Attend the *whole day* face-to-face workshop (check details on your confirmation email). Bring this manual to the face-to-face workshop.
5. Complete the post-course evaluation.

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Accessing the module material

Now that you have read the module introduction you can access and navigate your way through the module content via the Module 7 Organiser link in the navigation bar at the top left of this page or in the bar below.

If you wish to print this page you can generate a pdf file via this printer icon []. A pdf file for each topic in this module can be generated using the printer icon to the left of each topic title on the Organiser page.

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Organiser

Topic	Subtopics	Activities	At your university
 Introduction			
 1. Research Leadership	1.1 Vision setting 1.2 Culture 1.3 Leadership 1.4 Knowing yourself 1.5 A high-performance culture	Optional activity	
 2. Leadership and Management	2.1 The nature of a research team 2.2 Ensuring a safe environment 2.3 Promoting an equitable environment		At your University2.2 At your University2.3
 3. Leading Teams	3.1 Organisation and communication 3.2 Setting and maintaining standards 3.3 Virtual teams		
 4. Managing individuals	4.1 Motivation 4.2 Performance expectations 4.3 Feedback 4.4 Developing the individual 4.5 Developing yourself as a leader 4.6 Caring for your staff as individuals		At your University4.2 At your University4.6
 Module review and completion	Frequently asked questions Checklist Record of completion		At your University

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Topic 1: Research Leadership

Creating knowledge through research is a fundamental objective of any university and it makes a real contribution to society. Universities are among the few organisations that have research as a key objective. Such a vision requires leadership, and this means not only achieving the current project, but also inspiring others to share in the creation and expansion of a body of knowledge. In sum, this requires setting a specific research vision, leading the research team, and creating a culture in the research team which encourages high performance even when the outcome is uncertain.

To lead others effectively you also need to know yourself – your strengths, weaknesses, and growth areas.

Learning outcomes

After successfully completing this topic you should be able to:

- articulate the vision of a research project
- recognise the importance of a positive and supportive culture in research teams
- explain the differences between leadership and management
- recognise the level of development of research teams and understand how a research leader can assist the team
- gauge how your characteristics impact on others.

Topic content

1.1 Vision setting

1.2 Culture

1.3 Leadership

1.4 Knowing yourself

1.5 A high-performance culture

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1.1 Vision setting

As a research leader you need to have a mental picture of what the research project could produce, even though in the early stages this may not be precise. Articulating your vision means describing the possible outcomes of the research and the benefits and flow-on effects it could deliver to the university and to society.

Your vision should be able to be described in a short, pithy statement readily understood by all stakeholders. In essence, it is the media release outlined in *Module 2: Commencement and Collaboration – Putting Ideas into Practice*.

While it's important to have a clear picture of what you would like to see the research team achieve, members of the team will probably have their own view or vision. Clarifying the different views is important and research team members will probably have insights that can help improve the collective vision. Sharing perspectives will help build commitment and motivation.

In stating your vision you need to consider:

- The objectives of the research
- The possible findings
- The benefits for the university and the community
- Possible future research directions that may emerge from the expected findings of the current research
- The likely structure of the research and how the project will be executed
- The broad activities required
- The responsibilities of the members of the research team
- Any support groups that will be working with the research team
- The reporting requirements
- The administrative support available.

The strategic vision must be kept prominently in sight of all the research team members. The vision will operate at two levels, the strategic and the tactical. The strategic is a matter of defining the vision and ensuring that the team members keep their focus on the big picture. At the tactical level it means ensuring that the activities necessary to achieve the goals are achieved. This is research management.

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1.2 Culture

The culture of a research team describes the character of a team's internal work climate and personality. This is shaped by its core values and entrenched behaviours – the normal way things are done which create work practices and styles of doing things. The first strategy in influencing your team culture is to express team values during a new team member's induction.

Creating the right culture is important early in the life of a research team. This means you will need to be explicit in describing and modelling the behaviours that support the values you want to become standard.

As a leader of a research team you can develop a supportive culture by being supportive of research team members, being friendly and considerate, showing regard for team members as individuals, and by trying to understand their problems. Become aware of their goals. For instance, many team members will be developing their careers and may be looking for opportunities to establish their researcher credentials. Be willing to include them as authors of research papers when they contribute.

A key part of creating a positive culture is to create an atmosphere free from conflict and where differences of opinion are handled constructively. This requires just treatment of your colleagues, showing trust in your team members, and being flexible and open to points of view other than your own.

As the research leader, you need to be a model of how research team members interact and relate to each other, showing consistency between what you say and what you do and cultivating a 'can do' attitude.

Your attitude to the university administration, support staff, and external contributors will also affect the behaviour of team members. Being positive and understanding towards university administration, and promoting a proactive attitude towards administrative tasks, will keep the project running smoothly and provide a positive example. The values you display as a research leader will strongly influence the team culture. Research team members like to see their leader display values and attitudes they themselves are expected to display.

Examples of values that build a culture which encourages creative research are:

- Personal values of truthfulness, trustworthiness, and integrity
- Respect for others
- Ethical business principles, including worker safety and environmental sustainability, and consistency between what is said and done
- Creation of standards guiding how managers and employees interact and relate to each other
- Demonstrating a 'can do' spirit (being proactive)
- Taking pride in doing things right (focus on high quality)
- Taking responsibility and being accountable
- Open-mindedness and willingness to learn.

Unhealthy cultures can be recognised by a highly politicised internal environment in which issues are only resolved on the basis of political clout. Such a culture loses energy to political infighting, creates a disregard for high ethical standards, and feeds 'ego gratification' by senior team members.

To change a preexisting problem culture you need to talk openly about its problems and discuss new behaviours that will improve matters. You need to identify those facets of the present culture which are conducive to reaching goals and those which aren't. You also need to specify what new actions, behaviours, and work practices should be prominent in the new culture and follow up with visible, definite actions – either substantial or symbolic – to ingrain a new set of behaviours, practices, and cultural norms.

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1.3 Leadership

Leadership in research involves influencing people in order to achieve a research goal. It also involves having a vision for the project and its future, and promoting the right culture among the research team.

While it's easy to recognise leadership, there are no universally accepted theories to explain it. Effective leadership behaviours are suggested below. You might want to engage with any or all of these behaviours and create your own personal leadership style.

One model of leadership strongly supported by the literature is 'transformational leadership'. Research leaders who engage with this style may lift team members to higher levels of performance through the methods set out in the following table.

Component identified by the research of Bass & Avolio (1994)	Explanation of component	Suggested action in a research team
Intellectual stimulation	Encouraging others to see what they are doing from new perspectives	Inspire others to consider the benefits of the completed research to the university and community
Idealised influence	Articulating the mission or vision of the research project	Regularly communicate the potential goals of the research to keep team members interested and on track
Individualised consideration	Developing others to higher levels of ability	Carefully understand the current skills of the research team members and seek to stretch and develop them
Inspirational motivation	Motivate others to put organisational interests before self-interest	Leaders and managers need to set a good example of dedication and commitment; stretching others by expectations; providing support with regular staff social events (some of which may involve team members' partners and spouses)

An effective leader of a research team will:

- Show genuine concern for team members
- Be accessible to team members
- Enable and encourage them
- Display honesty, dedication, integrity, and consistency
- Be decisive
- Assist to resolve complex problems that staff have
- Encourage networking
- Keep the focus
- Keep communicating the vision
- Support a positive culture.

Arvonen (2002) has identified the different behaviours of leaders and managers, and these can be translated into research terms. Both sets of behaviours are necessary for a team to meet its goals.

Leadership

- Offers ideas about new and different ways of doing the research
- Makes quick decisions when necessary
- Consistently pushes for ways to improve the research and research culture
- Likes to discuss ways of improving the current research project and ideas for future, related research

projects

- Is willing to take risks in making decisions
- Is open-minded
- Is future focused.

Management

- Plans the current research project carefully
- Defines and explains the work requirements clearly to members of the team
- Is very exacting about plans being followed
- Gives clear instructions
- Creates order
- Analyses and thinks about the project carefully before making decisions
- Makes a point about following rules and principles.

Note that these two sets of behaviours are significantly different.

The research leader's behaviour tends to be divergent while the research manager's behaviour tends to be convergent. The manager assists in reducing variation in outcomes, which is a quality function. The leader maintains focus on the vision despite the problems which inevitably occur.

The following diagram represents the connections between research leadership and research management, and the relations between the research team and outcomes. All four of these domains need to be monitored and supported by the research leader.



As the team matures, the leadership behaviour that assists the team's development changes. Initially, it will focus on the task to be achieved and the role of the people involved. Subsequently, building relationships between team members becomes just as important, until eventually there is a shared understanding and support for the group and its goals.

Crawley (1979) reinterpreted an earlier theory of Tuckman (1965) and his work can be applied to the research team in the following way.

Stage of group development	Work issues facing the group	Suggested leadership functions
Forming	Identifying a research group's vision and obtaining agreement about it	Clarification of the research task. Promoting interaction. Providing guidance to let members feel safe to show initiative
Storming	Development of a more detailed understanding of the research task and how it can be achieved	Provide a sense of security, holding the research group through difficult periods. Showing that the leader is strong and competent but not inflexible
Norming	Developing procedures for achieving tasks	Development of detailed procedures. Identification of tasks. Allocation of roles to complete tasks. Modelling of appropriate behaviour. Validation of helpful behaviour. Clarification of boundaries and rules.

Performing	Identifying activities to achieve the task. Concern for quality	Monitoring progress: reinforcing the importance of quality, consistency, and allowing for a work-life balance
Adjourning/Terminating	Completion of the research tasks: did we achieve what we set out to do?	Assisting in the successful completion of the task and encouraging thoughtful reflection of the process

Supporting these stages of development in research teams requires an understanding of the degree of competence or capability of each individual. By having this understanding, the right form of leadership can be applied.

Tuckman (1965) described the stages of team development as:

Forming

Members of the team are identified and begin to get to know each other. Members look to the leader for direction in their tasks and for recognition and benefits. Team leaders need to be fairly directive during this phase. The team leader provides attention and resources to those team members who actively comply with his or her expectations and engage with the tasks required, and ignores those who don't. This results in people having different status within the group.

Storming

Team members may express their ideas of how the project should proceed. A subgroup or individuals may challenge the leader and the atmosphere can be unpleasant and contentious. Group members, or the disaffected, provide support for each other so the leader is no longer the sole source of support and reward for some members. More energy and attention is spent in dealing with the interpersonal issues than on the task. Team leaders during this phase may be more accessible but still need to be fairly directive in their guidance, decision making, and professional behaviour. This phase may last a short or long time depending on the maturity of the members and the patience and negotiating skills of the leader.

Norming

The team identifies their commonality, forming a cohesive group that is defined by adherence to a set of group norms. Team members, including the leader, support each other. However, the team does not accept the views of people who think differently to the group norms. Teams in this phase may lose their creativity if the norming behaviours become too strong and begin to stifle healthy dissent. The phenomenon of 'groupthink' can be one outcome of this stage of team development. Leaders tend to be more participative than in the earlier stages. Team members can be expected to take more responsibility for making decisions and for their professional behaviour. By reiterating the common goal and by supporting the expression of different views (even if they challenge the group's thinking and even if the conclusion is not accepted), the danger of this phase can be addressed.

Performing

At this stage the team will support autonomous action by members, challenging their ideas but respecting their differences. The binding factor is the purpose or goal for which the team was established. The leader's role is participative within the team, although he or she may need to refocus work on the vision and key output of the project and represent these to people outside the team.

Adjourning/Terminating

When the team's goal is reached (or the funding finishes), the team is disbanded. Typically, people feel a sense of loss as the bonds dissolve and a ritual to mark the end helps to celebrate the achievement and recognise that the task is complete. Finalising records can be seen as a way of leaving a mark or legacy.

By understanding the phases in team development you can introduce processes to assist the team move through the formative stages to an autonomous, high-performing team. Building opportunities for all team members to express their points of view and for the group to decide how it will deal with interaction problems, you can build bridges that make the team perform highly.

Awards that acknowledge staff whose contributions have helped the team be more effective encourage members to add to the common effort rather than just meeting their own goals. Although the award doesn't have to be expensive, it must be meaningful to the individual and the group.

Within teams people tend to adopt different roles. Research has shown that effective teams have members who undertake a range of roles. This includes those who:

- generate and assess new ideas
- apply new ideas
- win support by attracting resources
- provide direction
- support members
- complete outcomes
- monitor the social and ethical impacts.

Hersey-Blanchard Theory

An alternative research style comes from Hersey and Blanchard (1999). They suggest that the leader's behaviours must correspond to the developmental level of the follower – and it's the leader who adapts.

For example, a new person joins your team and you're asked to help them through the first few days. You sit them in front of a PC, show them a simple set of results that need to be analysed today, and leave to

go to a meeting. They're at level S1, and you've adopted D4. Everyone loses because the new person feels helpless and demotivated, and you don't get the data processed.

On the other hand, you're handing over to an experienced colleague before you leave for a holiday. You've listed all the tasks that need to be done, and a set of instructions on how to carry out each one. They're at level S4, and you've adopted D1. The work will probably get done, but not the way you expected, and your colleague despises you for treating him like an idiot.

But swap the situations and things get better. Leave detailed instructions and a checklist for the new person, and they'll thank you for it. Give your colleague a quick chat and a few notes before you go on holiday, and everything will be fine.

By adopting the right style to suit the follower's development level, work gets done, relationships are built up, and, most importantly, the follower's development level will rise to S4, to everyone's benefit.

Four different styles of leadership are:

- *Directing* (D1): Leaders define the roles and tasks of the 'follower', and supervise them closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one-way.
- *Coaching* (D2): Leaders still define roles and tasks, but seeks ideas and suggestions from the follower. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more two-way.
- *Supporting* (D3): Leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the follower. The leader facilitates and takes part in decisions, but control of the specific tasks is with the follower.
- *Delegating* (D4): Leaders are still involved in decisions and problem-solving, but control is with the follower. The follower decides when and how the leader will be involved.

The appropriate leadership style for the different levels of team competence and commitment are listed below:

Leader Style	Team Member Competence and Commitment	Description of Team Member Competence and Commitment
<u>Directing D1</u>	S1: Low Competence– Low Commitment	Generally lacking the specific skills required for the job in hand, and lacks any confidence and/or motivation to tackle it
<u>Coaching D2</u>	S2: Some Competence– Low Commitment	May have some relevant skills, but won't be able to do the job without help. The task or the situation may be new to them
<u>Supporting D3</u>	S3: High Competence– Variable Commitment	Experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well/quickly
<u>Delegating D4</u>	S4: High Competence– High Commitment	Experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. May even be more skilled than the leader

As we've previously seen, research management requires different skills and allocates different responsibilities to research leadership. Research management involves identifying work requirements, recognising the size, complexity, and scope of the research project, and implementing an appropriate structure.

There are a number of project management tools and methodologies that can be used and adapted in order to identify the activities for your project, for example, the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide). Supervision of staff is a major task, but if the team is small this will not be too difficult and it will rely mainly on your dealing with a few people. If the research team is large you will need more formal structures, including job descriptions and regular performance reviews. You will need to gauge whether staff appointed to the team require training to complete their appointed roles.

On a medium or large research project you will need to think about how you can attract and retain administrative staff. Organisations are confronting an increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining good staff – and re-advertising, re-interviewing, appointing and training staff is a distraction for research leaders. You need to make it clear to support staff what you expect in order for them to complete their job. This will reduce your need to micro-manage the administrative process, and there will be less confusion over the functionality of each role. (Supervision is discussed further in Topics 3 and 4)

In summary, a number of leadership models have been discussed. To apply them effectively, as a research leader you will need to decide which model is most relevant to your project and to the stage of your team's development.

References

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1.4 Knowing Yourself

It is important to understand our own personality type. It allows you to understand the way you interact with people of other types and the contribution other ways of thinking can make towards your project.

The Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and Kirton's Adaptor–Innovator (KAI) personality paradigms provide helpful tools with which to gain greater awareness of yourself and of others.

Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

One of the most reliable and common descriptors of personality is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the development of which was based on the typologies of Carl Jung. The MBTI uses four opposite pairs, or dichotomies, with a resulting 16 possible combinations. The dichotomies are:

Extraversion (E)	Introversion (I)
Sensing (S)	Intuition (N)
Thinking (T)	Feeling (F)
Judging (J)	Perceiving (P)

The terms used for these pairs have a specific technical meaning which can be different to everyday usage. The poles, such as Extraversion or Introversion, largely measure people's preferences, and the preferences indicate likely behaviours. For example, a person with a preference for Extraversion (Myers–Briggs spelling) is motivated by action and if they are not active their motivation tends to decline. Conversely, those whose preference is Introversion become less energised as they act. They prefer to reflect, then act, then reflect again.

Sensing–Intuition and Thinking–Feeling pairs are often called MBTI functions. Individuals tend to be biased in one dimension rather than the other, although many individuals can use both. Individuals with a preference for Sensing prefer to trust information that is in the present, tangible and concrete. They tend to distrust hunches. For them the meaning comes from the data.

Thinking and Feeling are the decision-making or judgment-producing functions. Both Thinking and Feeling types attempt to make rational choices based on the data received from their information-gathering functions (S or N). People with a preference for Feeling prefer to come to decisions by empathising with the situation, that is seeing it 'from the inside', and attempt to achieve the greatest consensus and fit by recognising the needs of the people involved. Those with Thinking preferences prefer an analytical, logical method of arriving at their conclusions.

The Judging–Perceiving pair correlates with brain-hemisphere dominance. Judging is generally associated with left-brain dominance (tendency to mathematics, science, and engineering), whereas Perceiving is associated with right-brain dominance (arts and creativity).

Effective research teams have members with preferences that range across most of these pairs, because they approach their relationships and the data in different ways. This allows for comprehensive analysis of and insight into the results. However, you can see its relevance by realising that clashes and arguments can simply occur because people are interpreting data and situations differently.

Kirton's Adaptor–Innovator

Another descriptor of personal difference is Kirton's Adaptor–Innovator (KAI). Basically, Kirton identified two descriptors of innovation style which he called the Adaptor and the Innovator. Extreme Adaptors focus on improving and perfecting one solution while Extreme Innovators keep developing potential solutions, none of which quite work. Like the MBTI, this scale has been tested on a large number of people across a range of cultures and is highly reliable.

The two extremes are:

Adaptors

- Characterised by precision, reliability, efficiency, discipline, conformity
- Concerned with resolving problems rather than finding them

- Seeks solutions to problems in tried and conventional ways
- Challenges rules rarely and cautiously
- When collaborating with innovators, supplies stability, order, and continuity.

Innovator

- Seen as undisciplined, thinking tangentially; approaches tasks from unexpected angles
- Discovers problems as well as solutions
- Queries assumptions
- Often seen as unsound, impractical
- Takes control in unstructured situations
- When collaborating with Adaptors, provides task orientations.

Both Adaptors and Innovators are required in most research teams. Also, when an extreme innovator communicates with an extreme adaptor, they will need a person who is between them in style to interpret what is being said. Where would you sit on this scale? What implications does it have for your leadership style?

Optional activity

Reflect:

- What implications do the differences in personal work preferences have for the way you lead a group?
- What sort of issues might arise with people whose preferences are significantly different or who have to work in a way that is not their preferred style?
- When have you adapted your style and what was the outcome?

Pursuing the topic further

Engaging with this material is optional. However, if you wish to gain a deeper understanding of the topic you may find this material useful.

While the effective use of the MBTI instrument uses a battery of questions which produces results of high reliability, you can attempt to make a judgement of your preferences on the five dichotomies. When you have done this check out the relevant description based on the four letter code on:

www.myersbriggs.org/mymbtipersonalitytype/mbtibasics/the16mbtitypes.asp

(Note that if you want to access the MBTI it will incur a fee.)

Once you have done this, speculate as to how a person on your research team, with a very different MBTI code, may see some aspects of research differently, such as the role of vision, objectives, and communication.

References

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MBTI www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/the-16-mbti-types.asp

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1.5 A High-Performance Culture

The culture of a research team is defined by the character of its internal work climate and personality. This is shaped by its core values and entrenched behaviours, the normal way things are done, and its work practices and styles of doing things.

A high-performance culture is one in which the following are delivered:

- Research goals are achieved
- Developments occur which exceed the original expectations.

High-performing cultures will normally achieve this by:

- A strong focus on key outcomes
- Research team members being highly motivated and supportive
- Research team members feel respected and valued by the team leader
- Strong networking occurring with all members being encouraged to participate
- Having a tolerance of failure
- Being willing to take risks
- Fostering collaborative efforts that mix individualism and communalism
- Respecting confidences within the team.

To use a sporting analogy, the research leader will act as a captain-coach, which means:

- Assisting team members by working with them in the detail of their work while encouraging them to improve their performance
- Standing back and identifying how team members can improve.

The captain-coach research leader will:

- Involve others in decision-making, which is rational and group-based
- Provide clear instructions and a sharp focus on achieving results
- Provide constructive feedback
- Work to maintain harmonious relations within the team
- Provide particular help to less experienced team members
- Defuse crises
- Enhance productivity
- Cooperate with other research teams.

By contrast, research leaders with poor behaviours often:

- Dwell on crises
- Create instability
- Only focus on results rather than on how to achieve the results
- Provide unclear instructions
- Are indecisive, inconsistent, and authoritarian
- Take the credit for any successes and pass on blame for failure.

The performance of research team members will be enhanced by the research leader who displays conviction, integrity, and willingness to take a stand. The leader needs to articulate a vision that is appealing and inspiring. They will challenge team members with high standards, communicate optimism about future goal attainment, and provide meaningful instruction. They stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers while attending to team members' concerns and needs. Such behaviour leads to greater research team member job satisfaction and job performance.

Social events for team members – some including the partners who are being deprived of the team member's time and company – will facilitate relationships and reduce friction.

Tolerating people who don't care about their jobs creates very negative attitudes and undermines team performance. Research leaders need to take appropriate action.

Behaviours of high-performing team members are those in which:

- Team members are focused on the task
- People discuss goals, methods, and activities socially
- Team members being willing to accept constructive criticism of their work
- Team members offer to assist other team members with their work

- The team recognises and compliments good performance
- Members accept responsibility for project outcomes.

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Topic 2: Leadership and Management

Leading and managing in a research context is a challenging task. At the outset it may not be clear how to achieve the research goals – which makes leading, planning, and managing more difficult. Throughout the life of the research project, people may need to learn new skills and use new processes, which may either confuse or stimulate them. Because of the breadth of knowledge involved, much research is undertaken through collaboration or through formally constituted research teams. Good leadership will drive higher performance of the research team. This will require the research leader to understand how research teams operate and to create the right environment for them to perform at a higher level.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this topic you should be able to:

- recognise how research teams operate within the complexity of a research project
- describe some of the management processes that need to be established to ensure teams are effective and members satisfied
- recognise the importance of fostering a respectful environment
- identify your obligations to ensure a safe and equitable working environment.

Topic content

- 2.1 The nature of a research team
- 2.2 Ensuring a safe environment
- 2.3 Promoting an equitable environment

Module 7: Leading and Managing People in a Research Context

2.1 The nature of a research team

Research projects

Research projects are undeniably complex. The research goals, or at least the method of achieving the goals, are likely to be unclear when the project is first planned (see *Module 1: Research Strategy and Planning, Topic 4.1, "Types of research projects"*). To achieve the desired results, the research team in such a project typically needs to learn new strategies, tactics, and skills along the way. This is known as 'double loop' learning. The research team will probably need to cycle back and forth between the concept for the research, the development of a solution, and the implementation of the solution.

Team composition

There are significant advantages to research teams being multidimensional, that is, with members coming from different backgrounds and disciplines, and having different degrees of experience. This kind of diversity brings the advantage that team members can learn from each other and may come up with new ideas by combining their skills. Creativity and motivation are greater in teams whose members have different skills. However, for cohesion, a certain level of overlapping skills is desirable.

Cohesion of a team of different specialists needs to be actively managed, since their differences may lead to conflict. It is an advantage if members of the research team are fairly emotionally stable. Self-confidence is required because team members will have different perceptions and different views of the research problem, and there can be greater insights if these differences are constructively explored rather than ignored.

Group cohesion is lower if team members differ greatly in how comfortable they are with levels of uncertainty. Some members of the research team may demonstrate anxiety and feel insecure when confronted with ambiguous research problems and tasks. This will have a negative effect on team performance. Others may respond completely differently and not see a threat but a challenge. You can prepare your team in advance for the potential challenges that are a normal feature of research projects.

Research leaders need to be careful when subgroups with similar attributes form since this can produce tensions within the larger group. A classic example is when all the senior team members are of one gender and all the junior members are of the other. Similar divisions could be based on disciplinary lines. This can produce a 'them versus us' mentality. It is better to have a diversity of characteristics to dilute potential factions and conflict.

Leaders of research teams are faced with a complex situation in that they have to achieve the research objectives, including completing on time and within budget, while helping team members develop their own competencies. Many research studies show that for a research team to function successfully, leadership is highly important. The leader has to adopt a leadership style that fits in with the general research environment, the objectives outlined in the grant application, the discipline being studied, the characteristics of the team itself, and the needs of individual team members.

Studies on research leader behaviour show that, to achieve good research results, a combination is needed of consultative leadership style, empowerment of team members, clear research goals, and a degree of research leader charisma. Stoker (2001) found the relationships shown in Fig. 1.

Figure 1. Research leader and team characteristics

Model of complex research projects

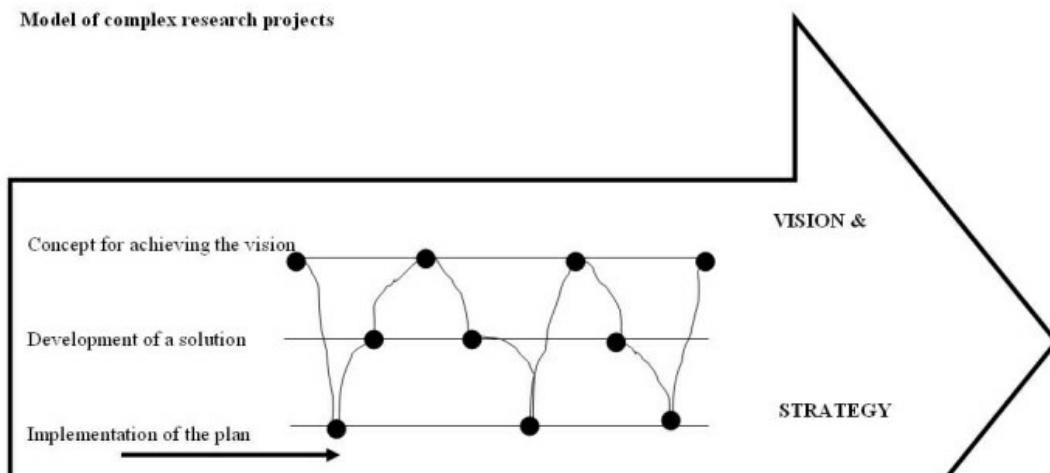


Fig 1 Double loop learning of research teams

Team processes and issues

A team is greater than the sum of its parts. Research suggests that, in addition to the leadership styles, member behaviours, and attitudes shown in Figure 1, effective research teams also need to identify who belongs to the team, how decisions are made, and what management supports are available. Coordinated effectively, these characteristics will produce desirable research outcomes.

O'Connor et al. (2003; p. 361) provide some good advice to consider as you establish and work with your team.

1. Build teams based on the skills and characteristics required as well as interests/motivation and willingness to cooperate.
2. Expect team fluidity as members come to understand the workload, difficulties associated with learning others' thought styles, and the need for flexibility in the interpretation of the research question and how it impacts on them.
3. To help ensure continued motivation throughout the term of the project, clarify the importance of the research question and the multiple objectives associated with answering it. Express personal career objectives as part of this (e.g., tenure or promotion).
4. Be as explicit as possible about rules, policies, and work process issues, but also clarify the issue of 'learning how to learn' as a group. Make this the responsibility of the group, and implement ways by which team members can make suggestions about work processes.
5. Reduce perceived risk by clarifying publication outlets, and gaining signs of legitimacy both within and outside the university. External funding and key partnerships help.
6. Set norms/expectations regarding the research process. Allow for continued learning and change. Identify multiple participation levels and clarify expectations regarding outputs at each level. Communicate to all team members the participation level expected from each, so members know what they can appropriately expect from one another.
7. Build in a set of security mechanisms regarding paced dissemination, rules for co-authorship, and an understanding of who owns the data so team members are clear about what level of risk/reward is associated with participation in the project.
8. Build in mechanisms for periodic team composition assessment and renewal.
9. To ensure continuity, identify core team members who will collect data across all cases.
10. Mix subteams of interviewers so that they hear, over the course of a site visit, every other team member's questions on each case.
11. Develop decision rules about how to manage the interview meeting so that each researcher gets appropriate time needed and so the team of researchers together probes insights beyond what a single interviewer could do.
12. Maintain a central storehouse of data for all to access.
13. Provide frequent, periodic delivery events that require researchers to confront the data and prepare for interaction with an external audience.

In choosing team members you should note that more effective research teams are composed of members who are:

- More highly rated as individual performers
- More satisfied as to their professional needs
- Perceived by their teams as more willing to take calculated risks
- More willing to trust other team members
- More willing to encourage cohesiveness.

The major challenge of leading research lies in dealing with the uncertainty of not knowing whether you can produce results having significant impact. This has implications for the nature of the team environment you develop and manage, your leadership style, and the characteristics you look for in the group you lead.

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2.2 Ensuring a safe environment

An employee of the university has a duty to follow safety rules and instructions, use safety equipment provided, not endanger themselves and others, not be affected by drugs or alcohol, and report hazards/issues to their supervisor. As a supervisor, you are responsible for ensuring that your staff and students comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations and university policies. In particular you are directly responsible for providing a safe working environment, safe systems of work (i.e., safe ways to perform specific tasks), and safe plant such as machinery and electrical equipment. You are also responsible for making sure that substances are in a safe condition (e.g. chemicals are stored safely) and that information, training, instruction and supervision (e.g. about hazards, procedures, policies) are available for your staff and students.

Your university will have a comprehensive suite of policies and good practice guides to assist managers and staff to address their legal obligations under state and federal OH&S legislation. Fines issued for noncompliance with legal requirements can be so high as to take up a large amount of your research budget. So although OH&S may seem like an irrelevant distraction from the main business of research, including it as part of best practice is good (and cost-effective) insurance against the cost of injury on your research team and its work.

[At your University](#)

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2.3 Promoting an equitable environment

It is up to the research leader to initiate and monitor behaviours that enable staff to work at their best. Building a reputation as a leader whose team has the opportunity to have their views heard can help you attract other talented researchers onto your projects. The analytical process is by its nature challenging. The focus of the challenges should be on the ideas being tested and not misdirected to personal characteristics of individual team members. Standards of interpersonal behaviour that stress respectful treatment provide a supportive context within which people can feel confident of being well treated even when exploring creative and unusual ideas. This is the purpose of academic freedom.

Equal employment opportunity initiatives ensure that all employees are treated with fairness and respect. It protects them from discrimination or harassment in the workplace. EEO does not assume that everyone has the same abilities or that everyone will reach the same levels of seniority or remuneration. Rather, it requires that everyone be given an equal chance to use his or her skills and capabilities.

Equal opportunity in the workplace matters because:

- People feel valued and able to contribute to the best of their ability
- The economic status of traditionally disadvantaged people is improved.

Workplace effectiveness increases because:

- Workplace relationships improve
- Staff are more productive, innovative, and creative
- Relationships with outside groups improve when the staff diversity reflects the stakeholder's diversity
- The organisation is tapping into 100% of the talent pool
- Absenteeism and staff turnover drops.

As a research leader, you are responsible for ensuring that your staff make decisions and allocate tasks and resources that promote individual members reaching and challenging their potential. You must also ensure that they are not discriminated against on the basis of irrelevant characteristics such as race, sex, age, or religious belief.

The social norms and processes you develop should be:

- Open
- Transparent
- Inclusive
- Free from discrimination or bias.

As an equal opportunity employer, your university will not condone any form of discrimination and expects all staff to know and to adhere to the related policies and procedures. Federal and state legislation outlines the requirements to be legally met to uphold the values of fairness, and the consequences for the university and the individual if these are breached are severe.

These obligations are specified under the following federal Acts of Parliament and state laws.

- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992(Commonwealth)
- Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986(Commonwealth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975(Commonwealth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984(Commonwealth)

At your University

A respectful culture can be established by discussing with the team as a whole the kind of workplace relationships that enable them all to be most productive. Typically, the norms that are listed are: respect for others' opinions, open communication, acceptance of diverse backgrounds, and supportiveness. When the pressure of deadlines, multiple demands, heavy workloads, and challenges to produce results put pressure on individuals, then reminders of the agreed standards can help stop destructive interactions at an early stage.

In addition to the values that underpin ethical and courageous enquiry, you have an obligation to uphold the espoused values of your university and the legal obligations it faces as a good employer. These include a safe and non-discriminatory workplace so that people can perform more effectively. Confrontations based

on irrelevant issues such as race, gender, colour, sex, and sexuality must be addressed quickly. Not only does discrimination deny you the best source and performance of talented individuals and upset effective teamwork, it is illegal. As a leader you are responsible for establishing a culture that supports respectful behaviour.

Reference

http://www.eowa.gov.au/About_Equal_Opportunity/Why_Equal_Opportunity_Matters.asp

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Topic 3: Leading Teams

Research often depends on the combined skills and expertise of a number of people. A team can be described as a group of people whose activities are directed towards achieving a common goal, the achievement of which depends on their integrated efforts. Managing the team's interactions and workload can make the difference between an ordinary or inconclusive result and an exceptional outcome. High-performance team leadership attracts talented staff and students who want to enjoy working in a team with a clear purpose, high standards, and good relationships.

This topic outlines common team dynamics, and identifies the actions a leader should take to effectively coordinate team members and manage the team dynamics. This includes establishing and maintaining effective communication, defining roles and responsibilities, clarifying standards of performance, and determining the special requirements of 'virtual teams' that rarely meet face to face but interact electronically.

Although this topic may seem irrelevant to sole researchers it can prompt the question: "Could I improve my research impact and outcomes if I collaborated with other researchers?" Members of your discipline or people whose work impacts on the same area that your research is addressing could form a community of practice in this area. The sections on communication and virtual teams can be applied in these instances.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this topic you should be able to:

- Identify the attributes of high-performing teams
- Establish sound communication and information practices
- Recognise the importance of establishing expectations, clarifying roles, and building accountability
- Recognise the role of team dynamics in interpersonal relationships
- Recognise the challenges faced in virtual teams.

Topic content

Read the following notes.

3.1 Organisation and communication

3.2 Setting and maintaining standards

3.3 Virtual teams

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Online

Team Management Systems (Margerison, C. J. & McCann D.) <http://www.tmslearnonline.com/>

http://www.12manage.com/methods_margerison_team_management_profile.html

Meredith Belbin Team Roles. <http://www.belbin.com/>

For detailed information about virtual teams:

http://www.managementhelp.org/grp_skill/virtual/virtual.htm

<http://www.seanet.com/~daveg/ltv.htm>

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3.1 Organisation and Communication

Effective research can only occur within the context of sufficient, appropriate communication. As the research leader, you are responsible for setting and modelling the processes that ensure team members can easily receive and share information necessary for their work. The project funder and the university will have requirements about managing records and intellectual property (see [Module 4](#)) relevant to the research and you should establish systems (or adopt local processes) that can allow this to occur.

The best way to introduce and then maintain clear and open lines of communication is, at the beginning of the research project, develop processes and standards that suit the team and its objectives. At the start up meeting for your program, sit with your team and discuss the importance of regular communication and how best to access each other for information or assistance. Creating a system for filing aspects of the research ensures it can be readily located. Systems also need to be established for 'configurational' control in order that versions of systems and data are clearly identified by dates, researcher, etc.

The Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and Project Plan (refer to [Topic 4 of Module 1](#)) are examples of ways that leaders can outline the work to be done, and in turn provide a basis for identifying the roles, and the related skills and knowledge, that will be needed to perform project activities. The roles and responsibilities of team members should already have been broadly set out in the position description or role statement that was prepared for recruiting staff. However, when individuals are named in a grant application then this formal step is regularly overlooked. Good research leaders take the time to make sure that staff understand the outputs required of their role, the standard of work that is required, and how their work relates to the overall project goals.

Agreed-upon processes can streamline some aspects of communication. For instance:

- Set up regular meetings face to face or electronically so that researchers can receive and share information relevant to their work, identify and build support in their work, and raise issues before they become problems
- Provide time for people to interact to maintain social cohesion within the team
- Team protocols for creating and managing emails (such as wording of headers) can help manage these communication tools more efficiently
- Data and reports that the group may need to refer back to can be placed in a shared computer file or on a website.

However, it is the interpersonal aspects of communication that are often the most challenging. Since much communication occurs nonverbally, it is wise to bring the team together physically, if at all possible, early in the life of the project. This gives the people involved the opportunity to get to know each other and the different research styles from which they operate. This is especially relevant when the team is multidisciplinary, since each discipline may have unspoken but fundamentally different assumptions which can impact on the way research is conducted.

Cultural and communication issues in building an effective team

In some projects the actual research work can be quite isolating. It may involve long periods of running tests or sitting at a computer trawling through articles and reference material. While this may suit some people, for others it can be sterile. Some people require social connections either within the team or with others, and you may want to use these skills in liaison or interpersonal activities within the team.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicators mentioned earlier - and other tools such as the Team Management System and Belbin team roles analysis - can help you and the team become more aware of different working preferences and how they can be used positively to support staff job satisfaction and team performance. Other supports can be provided through regular phone calls, emails, or onsite visits. You can structure meetings and regular morning breaks (e.g. morning teas that everyone is 'strongly encouraged' to attend) to reduce isolation and encourage the sharing of insights and lively debate that is indicative of a vibrant research culture. In such an environment the insights of the quieter members of the group are as valuable as the more outgoing. It is important that you model the inclusive behaviour that invites, and respectfully listens to, everyone's point of view. Aside from breaking down isolation, your modelling will help promote healthy debate based on well-reasoned argument rather than personal assertions and attacks.

A leader has the responsibility of addressing any behaviour that may be counterproductive to a good working environment. Without wanting to reinforce stereotypes, men and women have well documented differences in their communication styles. While a male team member may perceive an exchange as a robust and challenging debate, a female team member may perceive the exchange as an aggressive and uncomfortable attack. You can influence the group's communication style by emphasising the importance of challenging the idea, not the person, and thereby create a safer context for energetic and robust debate.

Cultural differences

The pursuit of knowledge is a global endeavour so you are likely to have team members from different cultural backgrounds. The inherent differences between people on your research team promote different perspectives that can contribute new insights. However, different cultures also have their own standards about who should initiate communication, what constitutes an affront, and how polished an idea should be before it is exposed. In some cultures maintaining harmony and respect within the group is more important than individual expression. Increasing awareness and valuing these differences can help you consciously develop a team environment in which staff are more comfortable; they will then tend to adopt communication styles that are likely to produce good levels relationship building and problem solving. Australia is a multicultural society and it is illegal to treat someone less favourably because of his or her race or ethnicity.

An example of cultural difference might be found in the Safeguarding the Murray-Darling scenario. The MDBproject had the potential to fall far short of its goals if the leaders were not able to communicate effectivelywith and understand the strong community and stewardship intentions of the Indigenous community.Potential sources of miscommunication and frustration can come from different norms about nonverbalcommunication. An example is the lack of eye contact that in Aboriginal society is a sign of respect, but inwestern societies can be interpreted as evasiveness. And 'delays', which can allow a research group toestablish relationships strong enough to address difficult issues, may be interpreted in another culturalframework as 'obstructionism'.

In the early stages of the project it is vital that you set and model the norms around discussion and respecting the views of others. This can also be done at the start up meeting and managed through a brainstorming session. At this time focus on the characteristics of the past effective teams the team members have worked in. Together you need to discuss strategies on how your team can talk together and work effectively.

The discussion should raise behaviours such as:

- listening to each other without interruption
- respecting the other person when challenging their point of view
- following through – doing what you say you will do
- giving credit where credit is due – acknowledge assistance and recognise the good ideas of others.

The aim of this approach is to build a climate of open communication in which it's safe to raise and explore unconventional ideas or approaches without feeling at risk of personal attack. Fear tends to reduce the openness of discussion and the creativity of fresh ideas. However, this does not mean that new ideas shouldn't be challenged. There is a significant difference in the impact on interpersonal relationships between the passionate delivery of a statement such as: "That idea is obviously wrong. You're an idiot and I'm not going to waste my time on such notions" and "I appreciate your idea is an exciting one; however, I believe...". By enabling the group to explicitly recognise the standards of acceptable behaviours in the early stages of its development, you establish a basis by which the team can exert legitimate social pressure to reduce the kind of behaviour that can lead to destructive conflict.

Good leaders are repeatedly identified as being open, trustworthy, and transparent in their interactions with staff. Open communication flourishes in a situation where there is a high degree of trust and mistakes are taken as signals to adjust the process rather than a dereliction of duty. This is helped by focusing on the issue at hand and not blaming the person - i.e., 'hard on the problem, soft on the person'. Approached in this way the individual is less likely to become defensive and uncooperative from feeling as if they were forced into a corner, and more information can emerge that will help resolve the question or problem.

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3.2 Setting and Maintaining Standards

As a supervisor you are responsible for helping team members perform at their best. This involves:

- providing structure and clarifying pathways as the group explores possibilities and generates more specific descriptions of the problem (Mumford, 2002)
- providing a structure or process to research and test the project hypothesis.

Better outcomes are likely to be achieved when team members have:

- A clear understanding of the goals they are trying to achieve and the standards expected/required
- Resources needed to achieve their goals, including access to training and development
- Regular feedback on their work
- Rewards or recognition for their effort and the outputs
- Methods for addressing shortfalls.

Setting standards

To successfully lead a research project you need to be confident that the quality of the work will meet the standards of the funding body, your university, your discipline, and yourself. Having explicit standards of behaviour will also build trust and a work environment where everyone can do their best. The university and the funding bodies have codes of conduct and often the research grant or contract will specify standards of confidentiality in relation to intellectual property.

Clarifying the standard of performance and behaviours for the team is something that is best addressed at the commencement of the project, to make sure that each person shares a common view. If possible, it should be done at the startup meeting. The descriptions should be as specific as possible to reduce confusion. The Goal Attainment Scale (Kiresuk, 1994) below provides a framework for identifying a satisfactory goal and also for clarifying what over- and underachievement may look like. This perspective can help identify where to put extra effort rather than overachieve on one goal while falling short on others.

In some situations and stages staff will need detailed instructions about what is required. However, most team members will be highly educated and self-directed, and the issues to be addressed will relate to specific technical procedures, the standards to be applied, and the time frames. The degree of direction and structuring you will need to provide also depends on the maturity of the group and the experience of the individuals within it. Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership model (referred to in [Topic 2](#)), which incorporates team capability and willingness, provides a useful framework for balancing the task and the relationships aspects of leadership.

As a group, or with individual staff members, you should clarify the minimum standard of performance necessary to satisfy the project, and any 'stretch targets' that could yield greater dividends. Check that these standards are consistent with the project management plan and are reasonable for a staff member at their level. In the research and analysis phase, identify the specific measurable achievements that are required, including the time frames, so that expectations are explicit. Where outputs cannot readily be described in numbers or are particularly unclear, you may want to use a Goal Attainment Scale (Kiresuk, Smith & Cardillo 1994). This technique asks you to describe satisfactory, very satisfactory, and exceptional outcomes, and then poor and very unsatisfactory outcomes (see the table below). This will provide you and your team members with a common picture of the result you are seeking and highlight when the process is moving significantly off track.

Goal Attainment Scale example – Clinical study subproject

Level of predicted attainment of the goal	Rating	Goal Indicator 1: Quality of the science	Goal Indicator 2: Timeliness
Much more than expected level of outcome	+2	Enabling extrapolation of long term scientific and commercial impacts of the amount of the product required to produce effect	
More than expected level of outcome	+1	Statistical expertise in data analysis was used to strengthen confidence in conclusions. All implications of the	Ahead of schedule

		results were elaborated in the report. Links from this study made to results in other sub-projects.	
Expected level of outcome	0	Report provided preliminary information to inform the design of subsequent clinical trials. Large data set and fundamental analysis used	Within 1 week of agreed time
Less than expected level of outcome	-1	Discussion of the results was incomplete and some relevant results were not included	
Much less than expected level of outcome	-2	Some samples not analysed. Poor quality operational management – e.g. samples lost	One month overdue

The Goal Attainment Scale also provides a safe basis for discussing outcomes that do not meet expectations, identifying contributing factors, and working out how problems can be addressed. The same meeting can be used to highlight the interdependencies between staff members' work outputs, so team members can organise their work to support each other's part of the project and reduce foreseeable delays. Draw on team members' previous experience to identify what behaviours make a team a happy and productive place to work.

Typically the factors that emerge are:

- Open communication
- Trust
- Supportive colleagues
- Transparent processes
- No bullying.

It is useful to describe the behaviours that illustrate these qualities so that you and your colleagues share the same expectations. You can develop the list as a brainstorm and it is most effective when done at the start up meeting. Group together items that are similar, ask the group to prioritise them, and then seek a clear indication that they will act in accordance with them. Acknowledgement can be a simple nod of the head or as formal as signing a paper. Note that it is important that there is an act of acceptance and be sure to explore any resistance to the plan so that it can be appropriately modified.

By using the group setting you are drawing on the power of the group to reinforce these behaviours in the future. This common reference point makes it easier for a team member to talk about behaviours that contradict them. For instance: "Hey, why are you going round telling other people that you thought the analysis was weak? I thought we agreed at the start up meeting that there would be open communication. We should be discussing this as a group."

Maintaining standards

Tempting as it may be to focus solely on your own section of the research, it is important as a supervisor that you monitor how the work is progressing and whether it is meeting the standards you have agreed upon. At this stage there is usually more focus on the interpersonal relationships within the group as well as making sure that the work is on track. This phase involves providing direction, feedback, and regular guidance about research output and workload. It is an opportunity for you to pick up possible problems and address them in the early stages, and possibly to identify unexpected patterns that may influence the analysis of research results.

The value of having explicit standards for procedures and outputs will soon become apparent. If the level of performance was identified as the tasks were assigned (see [Topic 4.2](#) or the [Goal Attainment Scale](#)) then the discussion will focus on the difference between the standard and the reality. If expectations were not made explicit, you will find it harder to convince the person that their work was below standard since it becomes your opinion against theirs. At the other end of the spectrum is the work of the perfectionist who spends too much time on minor aspects of a project when you need them to get on with the next piece of work. Again, the standards become the external reference point for the definition of what needs to be delivered. Keep a note of issues that arise and raise them in a broad rather than personal way at team meetings or internal project review points to see if the standards established at the beginning of the project need to be revised.

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3.3 Virtual Teams

Research collaborators who are separated by time and distance rely on many electronic communication mediums: teleconferencing, electronic brainstorming, group display screens, discussion threads, and net meetings. Virtual teams are becoming a common component of modern research teams and are formed when there are physical boundaries that must be overcome. Zigurs (see [Topic 3 references](#)) suggests that virtual teams may be geographically, temporally, or organisationally separated and so rely on information technology to communicate (Zigurs 2003). Compatible computer and communication technology are therefore required for a virtual team to work together.

In addition to managing interpersonal dynamics at a distance, it is wise to make sure your contracts with overseas team members specify which currency is the basis for payment in order to manage the impact of changes in the exchange rate. Similarly, make sure you are aware which country's laws apply in the event of difficulties.

Virtual research teams need to maintain regular communication. Scheduled meetings need to be established to ensure both accountability and the maintenance of group cohesion. Team members will rely on meetings to share issues, discuss implications of decisions, and explore emerging concerns. Trust in each other is necessary for rich collaboration, and can be more difficult to build when people are "out of sight". The opportunity to misconstrue intentions and actions needs to be recognised by research team members. The research leader needs to be sensitive to emerging issues and should seek to help members resolve any concerns in a constructive and open manner.

The following tips come from research into virtual teamwork.

- Hold an initial face-to-face start up meeting and, if not possible, the research leader should visit each partner
- Have periodic face-to-face meetings, especially to resolve conflict and maintain team cohesiveness
- Establish a clear code of conduct or set of norms and protocols for behaviour (especially when visual contact is not available)
- Ask people to give their names before responding
- Check if there are other people in hearing distance of teleconferences
- Structure the dialogue by actively asking members for their response
- Determine a protocol for indicating support or disagreement with a decision
- Agree on response protocols when a member emails for information or sends material for comment, such as "Seen? no comment", or a rule that there are 3 days to comment/vote
- Recognise and reward performance
- Use visuals in communications
- Recognise that most communications will be nonverbal and agree to be cautious with your tone and informal language
- Ask people to paraphrase their understanding of your request
- Keep in mind that words often have different nuances in different cultures.

Strong leadership is needed to maintain virtual team cohesion. Frequent communication and connection with the leader will establish the effective "telepresence" necessary to retain group identity. Team members need to retain a sense of themselves as team members, and the other members as identifiable personalities. The challenge for leaders of virtual research teams are facilitating regular, rich, constructive, rewarding, and fruitful interchanges across members, and to ensure that sense of connection is maintained following the exchange.

Zigurs notes the importance of developing strategies as a team to ensure everyone contributes to the relationship maintenance processes. Standards for communication, interactions, and problem resolution need to be established at the beginning of a new project. A knowledge-sharing culture is critical to these teams. Members need to be conscious of their obligations to the other members, and to make additional efforts to support the development of an inclusive culture. The leader acts as a strong catalyst for these processes, and is particularly important in establishing opportunities to explore and clarify critical issues. Thus, virtual research teams require strong and involved leadership to ensure their connectedness across the electronic divide.

Keep members informed about how the project is progressing and where their piece fits in the puzzle. You could send out an updated project plan, or set up a website for the team with progress charts and a place to lodge papers and common documents.

When the team disbands look for ways to celebrate its achievements together. New cheaper cameras and split screens at least mean that everyone can bring their favourite drink, food, and hat to the final meeting and toast the result! Throughout the virtual team's existence, the team leader's focus on maintaining connectivity with all members is critical. Regular updates and reminders of agreed commitments maintain

the presence of the research agenda in their separate lives.

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Module 7: Leading and Managing People in a Research Context

Topic 4: Managing individuals

This topic focuses on motivating, guiding, and developing individuals in your research team. The arrangements and contracts by which people come to be working with you will vary, which will affect their performance and the way in which they are best dealt with. For instance, critical expertise may be provided by a visiting fellow or a clinical titleholder. Staff on fixed term contracts have less job security than those on continuing/tenured contracts. External consultants and contractors may be working on other projects, which influences their availability. Students not only need to meet project goals, but also write their theses and publish. They have a right to expect supervision. These factors will influence their availability and attitudes to their work on the project. Being aware of these factors can help you to accommodate each team member's requirements.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this topic you should be able to:

- Motivate the individuals working with you
- Develop clear performance expectations
- Build your skills in giving constructive feedback
- Identify areas for the continued development of your leadership skills and of others on the project
- Use university policies to care for your staff as individuals.

Topic content

Read the following notes.

4.1 Motivation

4.2 Performance expectations

4.3 Feedback

4.4 Developing the individual

4.5 Developing yourself as a leader

4.6 Caring for your staff as individuals

Module 7: Leading and Managing People in a Research Context

4.1 Motivation

The intellectual stimulation provided by research is intrinsically interesting, especially if you are aware of the results, analyses, and impact. However, tasks that are required within the project may not be so motivating, and individuals vary in what they find motivating. Motivated and engaged staff produce high quality results, and as research leader you have an opportunity to create rewarding roles and build motivators that will encourage people to do their best.

Considerable work has been done to identify what motivates people's behaviour (Maslow 1943) and performance at work. One of the most representative studies covering career aspirations is that of Herzberg (1987) (see [References in Topic 3](#)).

Herzberg's theory of staff motivation

Herzberg found there were 2 kinds of influences on staff motivations: 'satisfiers' (or 'hygiene factors') and 'dissatisfiers'. Hygiene factors include "policy, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and salary". If the hygiene factors are not addressed, people will be dissatisfied? however, it is the presence of satisfiers that motivates high performance.

Sources of satisfaction include:

- *Achievement* – satisfactory completion of a project
- *Recognition* – within the research team and beyond for the results of good work
- *Nature of the work* – the inherent interest of the work, particularly when it serves as professional development for the researcher
- *Responsibility* – recognition through receiving important work and being given authority over how it is completed
- *Advancement* – scope for career growth and development.

Herzberg's research identified that motivators, such as money and good working conditions, were necessary for staff to come to work ("hygiene factors"), but had to be substantial in order to make a difference in performance outcomes. Other factors, such as interest in the work or social attitudes in relation to colleagues or clients, were more likely to make a difference to the quality and quantity of a staff member's performance. Job satisfaction, intellectual curiosity, good co-workers, and job security were often higher motivators than salary.

However, there are considerable individual differences between people, and what is motivating to one person (such as having their effort publicly recognised) can feel like punishment to another. So it is important to know what your team members appreciate when you want to reward them. Priorities change at different times of people's lives. For instance, job security becomes more important when staff settle down to start a family, and friendly co-workers may be more relevant at times of career plateaus or stagnation. Being aware of staff aspirations means you can look for opportunities to support your staff while they are working with you.

Informal or formal motivators

Informal motivators are powerful and can be delivered through an expression of interest in an unexpected result, a simple "thank you", or the opportunity to engage with others in discussion about the project (or related ideas). Such informal motivators can have a significant impact on staff attention to, and engagement with, your project. Delivering informal motivators is like making a deposit into an 'emotional bank account': you can make a 'withdrawal' from it later when a deadline is close or when future involvement is being negotiated. This is best done by recognising people, by being respectful, by being reliable, and not saying negative things about them behind their back.

Senior researchers focus on building a body of work to win grants, so being the first-named author on a paper is very important for them; however, more junior researchers and PhD students are more focused trying to establish a research presence that will enable them to apply for grants in the future, and so co-authorship is very helpful. For external consultants and visiting fellows the quality of their relationships with you and other members of the team, and the interesting discussions which unfold, may be significant motivators. For technical support and administrative staff, respect, sharing stories of progress, acknowledging their contribution, and including them as members of the team are important ways of recognising them.

Universities also have more formal reward programs ranging from promotion to recognition schemes, and it is useful to consider how you might use these. When applying for funding you should budget for promotions within your group. By being aware of an individual's career aspirations, and using this to guide the work you

allocate to them, you are likely to get a higher level of commitment and output, now and in the future. Recognition of their contribution, both within the group and in the discipline, is a strong reward for most researchers.

Researchers tend to be more strongly motivated by achievement, so acknowledging milestones and outcomes is important. Structure the project plan and identify milestones, and when these key markers are met your team can celebrate. This helps keep the project on track and maintains staff motivation. Having an outline of the objectives for each stage also makes it possible to check progress against agreed time-frames without over-supervising an individual's activities. The achievement of the milestone can be formally recognised in performance review records, and outcomes are already acknowledged through authorship of papers.

For staff who are at an early stage in their career, like PhD students, being named as first author on a paper adds enormously to their career record. Many teams have agreements that those junior staff who have contributed much to the project are named as first author, while the chief investigator is listed as last author. Such a practice contributes to building a body of researchers who will be recognised by the funding bodies as an excellent team for developing future research leaders. It is important to remember that the creation of an idea can feel like a very personal, and sometimes risky, event. Acknowledging an idea's possibilities at inception, rather than immediately analysing it critically, may help to sustain a researcher's willingness to give new form to emerging data.

Job security

Job security is one of Herzberg's 'hygiene' factors. If job security is absent there is potential for dissatisfaction. With many research staff on fixed-term contracts, the terms of their employment has a significant effect on their engagement with the project. At the beginning of their contract, these staff may be as excited and motivated as the rest of the group, but when the project or their term draws to an end they are likely to be more concerned about where their next job will come from than the quality of their work. As a supervisor your challenge is to keep their attention on the objectives, and retain them if new work arises. By swiftly signing casuals' payment forms, or new contracts if they are available, you can reduce the anxiety that staff on less secure employment arrangements feel.

Building good relationships with staff early in the project will help maintain their commitment, as will the quality of your reference at the end of the project. However, it would be counterproductive to stand in the way if these team members are searching for jobs; your university will also have a policy that stipulates that fixed term contract staff must be allowed time to attend job interviews.

Student expectations

The motivation of Higher Degree by Research students working on a project is to get useful research results upon which their thesis can be based. They have a schedule to meet, and the university has obligations to provide them with appropriate supervision. Your role also includes ensuring they receive support and that the project plan is timed to take their requirements into account. It is important they get the opportunity to gain proper recognition of their efforts through the publication of papers, since this is the key to developing a future career path.

Make sure you provide them with enough challenges through giving open-ended tasks rather than just predictable and repetitious ones. Many students also need to balance their studies with work to support themselves financially. This puts a constraint on their flexibility, and conflicting demands between the project and their employer can cause stress. Providing paid work can help reduce pressure, as can making sure they are included as full members of the team.

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4.2 Performance expectations

After you've identified the roles of individuals in a project, it's important to develop a clear and shared understanding of the outputs and of the interactions and accountabilities attached to each task. You should assign people and other resources to undertake the tasks listed in the project plan (see [Module 1](#)). The plan should also indicate the time by which work needs to be completed, and list the other people who are affected by meeting these timelines.

Good organisations have a formal process to ensure that supervisors and staff have a written record of structured conversations to cover these points. As a result, you and your team members are more likely to have a common understanding of the targets you are aiming for and a baseline from which to review progress.

At your University

Many supervisors are concerned about how to have a conversation with staff about the latter's performance goals and their progress in achieving those goals. The supervisor may not be aware that it is their responsibility to ensure that their team is making the best use of its time and resources; it is not true that the supervisor doesn't have the right to provide direction, even if the other colleague is a noted researcher. However, being the leader means ensuring that there are shared understandings of the outcomes and levels of performance expected from the research team. The development of those descriptors should be created collaboratively. If performance indicators are made as explicit as possible then shortfalls, or results that exceed expectations, will be plainly evident and they won't simply be personal opinions.

Good performance objectives (as with project objectives) are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timebound.

For instance, if the communication of a piece of research work is the goal, then an indicator of success could be: *paper on (research topic) prepared for publication in the Journal of xxxx by September 20xx.*

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4.3 Feedback

Giving feedback

Good performance management processes include meeting with your team members regularly to:

- monitor how they are progressing in relation to their objectives
- address issues that are blocking progress
- revise priorities and timeframes if needed.

This is an opportunity to step back from day-to-day issues and for you to give feedback on the individual's work. Your acknowledgement of good work and effective contributions, especially to the work of other people, can encourage them to continue these behaviours.

Explicit descriptions of outputs or behaviour expectations that are not being met give you and your team member the opportunity to discuss any differences in understanding and revise priorities and timeframes if needed. These descriptions could be based on the Key Performance Indicators mentioned in Topic 4.2. At times those situations can feel uncomfortable, either because people tend to defend their perceptions of themselves or because their performance, which may meet the satisfactory standard for the project, does not meet their aspired or 'stretch' target. Yet without feedback the person cannot adjust their behaviour and priorities to meet the goal or better manage their time and expectations.

Giving positive feedback can help to reenergise and sustain a person. Yet Australians tend to have a cultural characteristic of dismissing or minimising praise when it is offered. So how do you provide this feedback? The main principles are to:

- Develop expectations that can be described explicitly early in the project
- Collect information so that you can describe the achievements
- Listen to the person's self-assessment of the situation
- Describe the situation against the goal and standards
- Adopt a positive collaborative problem-solving stance to address any shortfalls.

When giving feedback, you should explicitly describe the behaviour or contribution that you appreciated and its impact. This makes it easier for the recipient to believe and replicate it, if the action was appreciated, or to avoid repeating the behaviour if it was not.

An example of *positive feedback* is the following:

"Developing the humidity controls for the incubators gave us much better control on the experiment. I really appreciated you taking over that task. It is nice to know someone else is looking out for potential problems and guarding against them."

This has more impact (and can be validated), rather than: "Oh, thanks for that. It was good."

The following list gives eight principles for giving reinforcing feedback.

1. Be generous – try to catch people doing something right
2. Be sincere
3. Give the feedback as soon as possible after the desired behaviour occurred
4. Speak privately to avoid embarrassment
5. Speak publicly to send the message to others or amplify the effect by getting the message to "filter back" to the individual
6. Describe their positive impact on the project, the team, you, etc.
7. Avoid sandwiching a piece of feedback aimed at redirecting an aspect of the behaviour in between two slices of reinforcing feedback
8. Remember everyone needs positive reinforcement – including your supervisors.

Constructive feedback

Underperformance can have a number of reasons, such as:

- Inadequate skills to do the job

- Insufficient amount of work or poor work organisation skills
- Personal problems
- Relationship skills.

Constructive conversations can usually identify the main elements that are affecting performance and together you can put plans in place to address them.

The following scenario illustrates the importance of guiding an employee's work focus through constructive feedback.

Supervisor: Mark, you will remember at the beginning of the project we agreed you would prepare a paper on (research topic) for publication in the Journal of xxxx by September 20xx. It's June now. Where is this up to?

Mark: Oh, yeah. I haven't got round to it yet. I can't get access to the net when I'm out bush on field trips.

Supervisor: But the last field trip was in April, wasn't it?

Mark: And then there was the group from Perth that we had to drive out in May.

Supervisor: It seems like there might be some difficulties in setting aside the time to get the information into a fit state to report on. This project has a target of 4 publications and so it's important that this commitment is met.

Mark: Well, the data has been entered and checked. I have a couple of analyses to do and then it can be written up.

Supervisor: So you are about halfway through the process. Remember that editing always takes more time than you think.

Mark: Yeah, well I can see it needs to be done.

Supervisor: Let's look at your commitments and how I can help. Perhaps you could block out some time next week and the week after to start writing. If you talk with Lee now she may be able to put time aside to edit the first cut of your work in 3 weeks. How long will it take to finish the analyses?

Mark: About a week.

Supervisor: How about we set aside half an hour on Thursday week to talk about your first impressions and the direction the paper will take?

Mark: OK, that sounds manageable, but it'll still be a bit fine for the September deadline. Would it be a problem if I aim for the next edition?

Supervisor: Let's keep that as a fall-back position.

Mark: I'll give it a go.

Principles that make this kind of conversation effective include:

- Describe the situation that is of concern and involve the person in solving the problem rather than challenging them or seeking to impose your solution
- Establish the boundary of the issue or conversation. Be specific about the instance or the issue that you want to discuss and don't expand it to other instances in the past
- indicate your interest or commitment to helping the other person achieve the outcome
- Put the issue in context by identifying the research or team needs and explain the impact or consequences of their behaviour on both of you
- Focus on behaviours or skills that can change
- Be timely – don't store up issues and concerns and then dump them on the person. It is difficult to change when the situation was 6 months ago. In addition, if you bottle up concerns you are likely to build up feelings of resentment that will make it difficult to give the feedback in a helpful nonthreatening way
- Minimise defensiveness by focusing on what can be done to improve the outcomes in the future
- Avoid absolutes such as 'never', 'always', and 'must' (Topic 4.7). The section below, 'Providing difficult feedback', gives more specific suggestions for supplying feedback where the situation has a strong emotional component.

Providing difficult feedback

When dealing with people, conflicts and problems inevitably arise. One temptation is to rush into a solution, assuming that you understand all aspects of the problem from the initial brief description that was given. But what is reported is usually only a small segment of the whole – the tip of the iceberg. So it's important to respectfully explore the context and details of the issue before jumping in to suggest and implement solutions. There are a wide range of communication techniques available to assist in working through people-related and task-related problems. Some of the basic techniques are described below. Ground rules for effective communication, which should be established early in the team's formation, constitute the foundation for what is basically a problem-solving conversation. However to fully resolve people problems both the issue and the person's feelings about the issue have to be addressed. Make sure you have put aside sufficient time to get to the bottom of the issue.

Paraphrasing the problem and any related emotions as described by the other person

This basic technique is an invaluable tool for managing interpersonal situations. The intention should be to check you understand the issue from the other person's point of view and to indicate that their point of view is understood. Doing this will often elicit additional information about the situation, or about the individual's feelings, and this will help to deepen your (and their) understanding of the problem; you can then target the key factors underlying it. More specific, accurate information will help both of you to choose the best solution. This establishes empathy, a key aspect of emotional intelligence. A model script might read something like the following.

"When ... happened you felt... YOU feel... because..."

It is important to articulate the feeling state as well as the content if you want the person to engage with you and make changes. By the time the other person confirms that you have understood the situation from their point of view, you will probably be able to identify the preferred outcomes.

The script would change to:

"So, you feel ... because ... and you want ..."

This explicit information then makes it possible to begin to treat the situation as a problem to be resolved rather than a conflict to be won. At this point you could then offer a solution or suggestion. Often, however, the individual themselves will identify the action that needs to be taken.

Example

You: Professor Stupendous, when the community representatives said they wanted to determine which of their youth were employed as guides in the research project you seemed to feel uncomfortable?

Prof. Stupendous: Well yes. I want to get the best and brightest not just an Indigenous Elder's favourite son. I'm not sure if the daughters would stand a chance.

You: So you are concerned that favouritism rather than merit will affect the Indigenous community's decision about who joins your team?

Prof. Stupendous: Too right. It could mean that slight changes in terrain might not be picked up.

You: So you are worried that the quality of the research outcome could be jeopardised?

Prof. Stupendous: You've hit the nail right on the head. On the other hand, the Elders were saying something about having the right initiation for the terrain we would be covering. I guess they didn't want the uninitiated wandering into forbidden areas. And the training for initiation may give their selection a more sensitive knowledge of the area.

You: And they have strongly supported the educational possibilities of MDMT's investment.

Prof. Stupendous: True.

You: When you take all of that into consideration you feel more hopeful that their request may not just be about keeping the opportunities for their families, or to be obstructionist.

Prof. Stupendous: Yes. But I still need the sharpest minds available for this phase.

You: So, you feel more tolerant of their request because there may be some mutual benefit, and they have been proactive in seeking learning opportunities for their young people, and you want them to understand the importance of a sharp eye and sharp mind in the candidate.

Prof. Stupendous: Hmm, perhaps they can pick out possible candidates and I can check out their ability to learn the processes we need.

Negotiating differences between people

This is a complex area that cannot be adequately covered here. However, some guidelines can be offered. A common response to conflict is to treat the person as the problem and blame them. This in turn forces the other person onto the defensive, closing off open communication.

One solution is to describe the problem as clearly as possible without blaming either person and get agreement that all the elements of the issue have been described. The paraphrasing techniques described above can be used to draw out relevant information from each party. Next, you should focus on the points of agreement between the two people to reduce the point of conflict to an explicit, concrete description. It may be helpful to write it down. The next step is to apply problem-solving techniques to resolve the issue. By being 'hard' on the problem but 'soft' on the person you are more likely to motivate them to address the problem and if necessary to change their behaviour.

Unsatisfactory performance

Although rare, persistent unsatisfactory performance needs to be addressed in a formal manner. The same principles of clear communication about the problem apply, but if the informal methods have not led to improvements you need to contact your human resources section for advice on how to manage the exit of such a staff member. It seems like such a drastic step that you may want to avoid it, but leaving situations like this to fester will increase the workload for everyone else, deplete your research budget, and possibly result in expensive ongoing problems (if this is a tenured staff member). Because they have legal standing it's important to keep dated records of conversations and actions and to follow university procedures.

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4.4 Developing the individual

Successful research work depends not only on knowledge and conceptual skills but also on capabilities such as teamwork, self-management, political nous, and an understanding of the systems and processes that support the delivery of research. The lack of these capabilities can make a major difference to your project's success.

If you used an open selection process to recruit staff, their curriculum vitae will give you a good idea of their knowledge and skills. In the early stages of a project time spent getting to know other staff may reveal unexpected capabilities or deficits. It's prudent to check your assumptions about what skills and knowledge the project requires and plan for training and development well in advance. Discussions about training, often held as part of the university's performance management process, could give you information that might enable you to create learning opportunities between members of the team. If there's an expert who moves in and out of the group, tapping into their skills and knowledge and structuring their involvement should be made a priority as it will stimulate thinking and build networks.

Building opportunities for the team to benefit from any available expertise also helps emerging researchers to deepen their knowledge. A significant number of staff working in positions funded through fixed-term grants or short-term commercial contracts continue to be university employees for many years, so making use of them should be seen as an investment in that person's ability to contribute to future research projects and to development of the discipline in general.

Networking

Through all phases of a researcher's career, networking is a major tool for professional development. Networking enables a researcher's contribution to be recognised among their peers, and also establishes links that connects them with the newest theories in their discipline. Budgeting for staff attendance at conferences is wise: it can help inject new ideas into a project and how to interpret results; it can also assist staff in making connections that might further their career. Email and professional chat rooms make maintaining that initial contact easier. Networking also provides an opportunity to identify people who, should a position become available, can complement your school or department's expertise. Retaining business cards of other academics and noting their areas of expertise in a database may be useful.

Career planning for researchers

Whether research staff are on short-term fixed contracts or are continuing university staff members, understanding the different phases of a research career will assist you in supporting their career aspirations. The phases are described in the '*Settling In*' module. You can foster a staff member's career aspirations by talking with them about how the current short-term project could help them grow their skills, knowledge, and connections for the future. The performance review and development process provides a good opportunity to ask them about where they would like to see their career in 3-5 years' time, the capabilities they already have, and those they would like to develop.

Progression within academia involves developing a portfolio of research, contributing to the discipline, and raising the profile of the university. However, some individuals look for progression into industry or other opportunities. You should look for opportunities in which the project's goals and the future aspirations of the research converge. For instance, by giving a researcher with an interest in industry the opportunity to undertake a liaison role with a commercial sponsor, you will provide them with the opportunity to explore that career path while meeting your project's goals. It's good to recognise that a research leader can play an active role in sponsoring and guiding research team members in further development.

When a mature researcher's current field ceases to provide fresh insights, it is a significant challenge to decide that they need to explore new fields. The creativity cycle from 'blue sky' or strategic research to developmental research tends to last about 7-9 years. So it's no surprise that there's a continuing need to reinvent one's career direction. As a research leader you are in a position to model and respectfully challenge that researcher who may have plateaued in their current speciality and who needs to identify the next area for exploration. Special studies programs or sabbaticals provide the context for tenured academics to build up a body of knowledge in a new speciality. Opportunities to collaborate in a multidisciplinary program, or to work closely with a commercial sponsor, can open up new issues, approaches, and opportunities both for the project and the person.

Those staff who are contracted to an external agency (and placed in your team because, for instance, they have specialist skills) also have needs and long-term aspirations. Although the university does not have an obligation to them, if you are aware of those interests and make them feel part of the team, then you can provide opportunities from which they can benefit. Be aware of their obligations to their agency and of your obligations. For instance, prompt signing of time-sheets means their pay can be administered

efficiently.

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4.5 Developing yourself as a leader

As an emerging leader it is important for you to take time to reflect on your own research goals and the development plans you have in place. It may be helpful to keep a journal and regularly reflect on what you have learned about yourself in the intervening period. Note your insights, new ideas, and changed goals. If possible, seek out a mentor to help guide your development. You can also seek feedback from your colleagues and supervisor through 360-degree feedback questionnaires to get useful insight into your leadership style and areas for development.

In Topic 3.4 we looked at how you can assess your capabilities as a research team leader, and this is a good starting point for development. The results of this assessment, and your understanding of your personality style, will provide guidance on opportunities for self-development.

However, there are other aspects that can be developed in ourselves, including:

- Intellectual stimulation
- Handling stress
- Cultural sensitivity
- Personal values
- Physical capability

Intellectual stimulation

As a research leader you need to renew yourself regularly to avoid lethargy setting in? the shakeup of renewal can be called positive turbulence. By shaking up your experiences you will be renewed. You can create positive turbulence for yourself by:

- Reading outside your field, especially fringe publications
- Attending conferences outside your field
- Joining professional and external networks
- Participating in travel, especially to other countries
- Making role changes and job changes within the research team
- Taking periods of renewal such as sabbaticals
- Taking retreats

Personal values

The values modelled by the leader's actions are often adopted by the group. While each of us strives to live by our higher ideals, we sometimes fall short. In your journal, take time to identify and appreciate where you have been demonstrating these values, and where you would like to improve in the future.

When things go wrong

If you feel you are not coping as a research leader or your team is not flourishing, you should seek assistance from your human resources services or perhaps a management coach.

Cultural sensitivity

Many of us can improve our understanding of people from other cultures. To do this we need to learn the basics of other cultures.

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4.6 Caring for your staff as individuals

With deadlines to meet, problems to analyse, and competing demands on your time it is easy to overlook that the person who is late getting the data to you is also a person with their own life, feelings, and problems beyond the library or laboratory. Those parts of their life impact on their ability to work well. A new baby in the household, death of a loved one, or just confusion about their job prospects can all cause stress which undermines performance.

As research leader you should be aware of the changes in context of your staff, and take steps to help where possible. Some times that may just be a word of reassurance or support. But at other times you can use the university's policies to encourage staff to take a break or to change their working pattern so they can more easily balance their work and home pressures.

Sometimes such adjustments will have an impact on other members of the group – for instance, the communication process has to become more formalised so that information is still available to people who are not all in the same place at the same time. Other helpful practical steps could be scheduling meetings for the day that everyone is in, starting at a family-friendly time, and placing reports and updates on a website so staff can choose when they look at them. By looking after yourself (see Topic 4.5) you provide a sustainable model as a good researcher.

At your University

Handling stress

Stress is the body's physiological response to threatening events. If it's allowed to persist for too long it progresses to a stage of mental and physical exhaustion. Be conscious about how increased and dysfunctional stress affects you and your relationship with your team. If you allow the stress to continue without addressing it then you may find you become irritable and short-tempered, and your judgement is affected. You need to take the same care of yourself as you do of the other individuals in the team (see Topic 4.6.).

Stress in the workplace can be damaging to researchers. At the extreme, stress can also lead to unsafe behaviours, such as alcoholism and drug-taking. There are two main variables relevant to how much stress researchers experience: the research environment and the researcher's personality type. Type A personalities are competitive, hard driving, impatient, and can be inflexible in their approach. By comparison, if you are a Type B personality you will have a more laid-back attitude to life and its challenges. Recognising your staff (and your own) personality style can help you to identify the stressors that are likely to affect them and coach them into more balanced behaviours.

The research environment can be made less stressful in a number of ways:

- Shorten working hours
- Grant or take special leave
- Assist staff to consider retirement if applicable
- Encourage an exercise program
- Clearly define the researchers' jobs.

Researchers themselves can contribute to managing their own stress by:

- Not creating artificial deadlines
- Don't personalise issues
- Inject changes in your life, such as listing the things you have to do, prioritising them, and completing them in order of importance
- Inject other changes such as regular entertainment or sport
- Discuss problems with others
- Perform emotional audits regularly and identify the pressure points in your life
- Relax away from the job
- Take up meditation.

In order to reduce stress you need to reduce the urgent things. This can be done by:

- Planning so the number of crises is reduced
- Have others review your work so that problem areas can be identified early and corrective action taken
- Build relationships with key people – these may provide assistance in the future

- If you are perpetually short of time analyse how you spend your time (if it's in unwanted conversations maybe you need to eliminate a visitor's chair from your space and always hold meetings in a room you can walk out of).

Most universities offer a free and confidential employee assistance program so that staff can receive personalised counselling to assist stress management. As a leader you need to be aware of the services available.

Physical capability

It is commonly accepted that people will perform better, have fewer illnesses, and live longer if they:

- Don't smoke
- Indulge in only moderate drinking (NHMRC guidelines state no more than two standard drinks a day)
- Exercise for approximately 30 minutes at least 3 times a week
- Eat a minimum of saturated fats and cholesterol.

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Module 7: Leading and Managing People in a Research Context

Frequently asked questions

1. Why is the culture of research teams so important?

Whether it's in a large organisation, or a two-person relationship, culture underpins how people work together and relate to each other. It has a major impact on the productivity and wellbeing of the team. It establishes the standards and expectations that guide people's decisions about what is acceptable.

2. Is all leadership primarily about vision?

No. Leaders should also focus on consistent outcomes and the processes that can achieve them.

3. Is delegation a good form of leadership?

Yes. It can be useful if accountability for the delegation can be transferred with the responsibility. Some weak leaders delegate when they are actually abdicating leadership.

4. Is observing appropriate OH&S standards the laboratory manager's responsibility?

Occupational health and safety is everyone's responsibility, and the research team leader is responsible for making sure that team members are using safe work practices in accordance with legislation and the university's occupational health and safety policy and guidelines.

5. Should research team members be counselled if they work too hard?

Yes. Overwork produces people without resilience and lacking in motivation. To maintain a sustainable pool of active researchers the university needs to encourage staff to balance their activities and demands.

6. Why should I bother addressing poor performance if the person will only be involved in the project for a short period?

As a research leader you should be getting the best from your team members and those who report to you. If performance lower than you expect is addressed as soon as it becomes apparent, the individual has the opportunity to change their behaviour or to consider other work directions. If you ignore it, other members of the team have to carry the extra load, and the university can waste resources over many years.

Addressing poor performance is easier if you and the staff member have developed clear expectations by describing the objectives with performance indicators, and are in the habit of sharing feedback on how their work is going. The gap between what is expected and outcomes will provide the basis for assessment. Document your discussions which aim to address the problem and its results. Your university has a formal process to address performance that cannot be improved to an acceptable level.

7. What is succession planning?

Some roles are particularly critical for the success of a team, so back-up people need to be arranged and skills transferred.

8. How is creativity in research teams enhanced?

This is done by:

- Organisational encouragement
- Supervisory encouragement
- Sufficient resources
- Challenging work.

9. How is creativity eroded?

By workload pressures such as:

- Extreme time pressures
- Unrealistic expectations for productivity

- Distractions from creative work
 - Low expectations of success
 - Poor project management
 - Poor communication between team members and the team leader
 - Organisational impediments, such as:
 - o Internal political problems
 - o Harsh criticism
 - o Destructive internal competition
 - o An avoidance of risk
 - o Overemphasis on the status quo.
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