

# Five tips to make the most of your academic collaborations

 [elsevier.com/connect/authors-update/five-tips-to-make-the-most-of-your-academic-collaborations](https://elsevier.com/connect/authors-update/five-tips-to-make-the-most-of-your-academic-collaborations)



Research collaborations offer solutions to many unanswered questions in academia. Other than furthering science, collaborations are highly desirable for researchers in order for them to develop a healthy and productive collaborative network, share new research ideas and develop a diverse set of skills, all resulting in an increase in publication output. Yet, given the multiple parties, goals and expectations, collaborative projects are more susceptible to failure when compared to individual undertakings.

## Getting the basics right

To help prevent disappointment and increase the efficiency of such partnerships, Researcher Academy invited [Dr. Aijaz Shaikh](#), a marketing specialist and an all-around collaboration expert, to discuss [the key to successful academic collaborations](#) in a live webinar. In a step-by-step manner, he explained the five basic components of successful research collaboration:

1. **Diligently follow the schedule:** As fruitful as collaborations can be, their effectiveness depends on formalizing a firm and effective schedule that works for all parties. Once established, it is vital to follow this schedule implicitly to ensure efficient working on all accounts.

*Tip:* Create (and use!) a shared calendar and to-do lists. This way, not only will you be able to manage your tasks whilst keeping your partner(s) aware of your progress and timeline, it will also keep your research partner(s) on track.

2. **Agree the division of responsibilities:** One of the main reasons for failed collaborations is misaligned expectations. To avoid this, tackle the issue early in the overall process. It might help to formalize responsibilities through a written record of who is doing what.  
*Tip:* After discussing the expectations and responsibilities informally, write them down like a memorandum of understanding to make sure that all parties are clear on what is expected of them.
3. **Demonstrate a responsible attitude:** The next step to establishing responsibilities is to follow up on your own part. Do this by making sure that you are responsive, proactive and take care of your tasks. In doing so, you contribute to an effective collaborative relationship and increase your publication chances.  
*Tip:* Have regular catch-ups. Since in-person meetings are too time consuming and expensive, use online tools like Skype to connect virtually. Or why not create a private Mendeley group?
4. **Agree on the deliverables:** Just like a clear division of responsibilities, the project deliverables should also be clarified and confirmed early on. Achieving this entails establishing comprehensive details on when these expectations are to be met and how they contribute to the overarching project.  
*Tip:* As well as a shared calendar, consider using collaboration-enhancing web tools like Slack and Trello to enhance communication and sharing of timelines, statuses and output.
5. **Keep it a formal relationship:** While having a friendly rapport with your collaborators is to be encouraged, migrating into an informal relationship can be counterproductive towards the achievement of your research goals. Collaborations that lack a formal work setup can impact the schedule, responsibilities and expected deliverables.  
*Tip:* Before every meeting (virtual or in-person), send an agenda in advance and ask the other parties if they want to change/add anything. Don't merge work and social meetings with your partners.
6. **Be patient!** The final tip is that patience goes a long way in overcoming the hurdles that will inevitably affect your project. Especially when you are working as part of a (potentially) large team, spread out all over the globe, it's easy to become frustrated and disillusioned. Combat this with an open mind and a patient approach to things. (NB this is good advice for much of life, of course!)

## Learn more

---

The tips presented here are just a short preview of a truly enlightening 60 minutes with collaboration expert Aijaz Shaikh. You can watch the full webinar recording, entirely free, at the [Elsevier Researcher Academy](#).

*Final tip of the day:* You can add questions to the [Researcher Academy Mendeley](#) group that you feel were not answered in the webinar and we will endeavour to find expert answers for you.