

Social Learning Communities

Tips and tools for independent professional learning



Undertaking further study such as a PhD or EdD or independent professional learning e.g. CMALT, SFHEA, FSEDA can be an isolating experience. You may be juggling full-time work and studying part-time; have caring responsibilities; studying in person or as a distance learner.

However there are a variety of ways you can develop a social learning community. We share some of the things that have worked for us as students.

SPACES PLACES

Spaces can be described as the physical or virtual location where you may choose to be. Places are what give spaces meaning and where meaningful social connections can be made. These can take place in person or virtually.



1 In person meetings



On campus in the corridor, during seminars and guest lectures, or coffee breaks and over lunch.

External conferences, seminars and workshops provide opportunities to meet new people beyond your own university.

Find out 'what's on' and try to attend a variety of different events.

Tip Exchange emails and reach out to connect on your chosen professional social networks e.g. LinkedIn and Twitter. This is a great way to extend your personal learning network.

2 Chat apps



WhatsApp has become a popular space to create private groups where peers can engage in those 'coffee break' type conversations, missed when unable to meet in person.



Other examples include Snapchat groups, Twitter group DMs, Telgraph and Discord. All accessible via apps to use on your phone.

Tip

When sharing links to resources it can be easier to use the web version!

<https://web.whatsapp.com/>

3 Online meetings

The next best thing to in person meetings is the ability to see each other online. Spaces like Zoom, MS Teams, Skype and Blackboard Collaborate can provide a place to meet and interact.



4 Twitter



Begin by following others with shared interests. Ask friends for suggestions.



@ThomsonPat @thesiswhisperer
@researchwhisperer @PhDStudents
@PhDForum @thoughtsofaphd
@GetThePhTea @ithinkwellHugh
@WriteThatPhD @firstphdchat



Take part in tweet chats and discussions e.g. #PhDchat #LTHEchat #CMALT #advanceHE_chat #SFHEA #PFHEA

Tip

If you follow someone interesting check out who they follow as way to extend your network.

5 Blogs



There are a growing collection of blogs sharing experiences about everything from wellbeing, study and writing tips to detailed information about undertaking research and professional accreditation. Here are some useful ones to start with:

- <https://thesiswhisperer.com/>
- <https://pattthomson.net/>
- <https://drkriukow.com/>
- <https://www.phdstudent.com/>
- <https://www.thephdforum.com/>
- <https://www.alt.ac.uk/category/topic/cmalt>
- <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/fellowship>
- <https://aldinhe.ac.uk/aldinhe-professional-accreditation/>
- <https://www.seda.ac.uk/professional-development-opportunities/fellowships-scheme/fellowship/>

6 Video tutorials



Tips on 'isms' and 'ologies' and more!

Some examples:

- <https://www.youtube.com/c/HelenKaraWriter>
- <https://www.youtube.com/c/QualitativeResearcher/videos>

Tip

Create your own playlist of videos by clicking on the + SAVE icon. Then 'create a new playlist' and give it a name.

7 Visual aids

To unpack new information have a go at creating a sketchnote.



Further examples:

<https://padlet.com/Debbaff/sketchnotes>

Created by:

Sue Beckingham @suebecks
Deb Baff @debbaff
Suzanne Faulkner @SFaulknerPandO
Dawne Irving-Bell @belld17
Sarah Hallam @Sarah_Hallam
Rachelle O'Brien @rachelleobrien

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