

## **Building support networks**

Strong networks can be a valuable resource, both when you are undertaking your doctoral research and when it comes to thinking through career decisions and establishing yourself in your chosen area of work.

## **Support for you as a researcher**

Be aware of the support available to you, whether through your Institution, funding body or national support bodies, so that you know where to turn if you need help.

- Your supervisory team (often a main and secondary supervisor and sometimes a designated mentor) should be your main source of support in terms of completing your research project, and should be able to advise on further sources of support
- Postdocs and other staff can be good additional sources of support
- If your Institution has a graduate school, this is likely to be a first port of call for support your supervisory team cannot provide
- The University you are registered with are likely to have a Director of PG study, PG Tutor or Dean, as well as a service who can advise on deadlines and procedures (e.g. an Academic Office)
- Your peer group including other postgrads should not be underestimated as a source of support, especially if you tend to work alone: join or start face-to-face or online communities based on research field, socialise with others from your Institution, or go on a GRADschool
- Take advantage of training programmes, counselling services, and services for groups with specific needs
- The NUS or NPC might be able to help with specific queries or advice
- If you have a support need unrelated to your status as a postgrad (e.g. as an overseas researcher in the UK), look for relevant support groups or start one!

## **Support for kick-starting your career**

Web-based research and responding to adverts can produce results, but people are the best sources of information whether you are looking for a job or wish to find out more about a particular area of work or company.

- Keep in touch with people such as past colleagues and friends of friends (without becoming a nuisance!) so they remember you if any opportunities arise. Even if time has passed, don't be afraid to make contact again
- Use your supervisor – particularly if you want a job in your research field. You never know how far their connections reach!
- Make the most of networking opportunities such as conferences, cross-departmental or wide interest seminars or professional society events
- Use insider knowledge gleaned from informal conversations to find out about vacancies
- Speculative applications work best when they are supported by the name of someone in the organisation – for example someone you met through work shadowing, at a company presentation or who has agreed to help you to find out more about the sector. Keep a note of who you meet and what they might be able to help with
- Use resources (including people!) available through your university careers service or alumni office, while you still can
- Attend a GRADschool and talk to tutors: they have all taken time out of their normal employment to deliver your course
- Read more about building networks and find ideas for getting the information you need at [www.grad.ac.uk/networking](http://www.grad.ac.uk/networking)

Remember that

- Organisations, like people, are risk averse and would far rather recruit someone based on reputation or a connection with someone they trust to reduce the risk of making a bad match
- A majority of vacancies are never advertised
- *'It's not who you know, but who knows you'*

### **2007 GRADschools**

GRADschools offer you the opportunity to identify ways to develop yourself, to see the relevance of your skills in different environments and aim to support you in keeping your research on track. Details of the 2007 GRADschools can be found on our website so visit [www.grad.ac.uk/courselist](http://www.grad.ac.uk/courselist) to book a place!