



# NTNU

Norwegian University of  
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## **TS5: Negotiation Skills and Conflict Resolution for MSCA Supervisors and Mentors**

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- 2. Negotiation strategies and techniques**
- 3. Conflict resolution in academic supervision**
- 4. Interactive role-playing and case studies**
- 5. Best practices and takeaways**



# 1 Introduction to negotiation and conflict resolution

- **Understanding the importance of negotiation in academia and research collaborations**
- **Identifying common sources of conflict in PhD supervision and research partnerships**
- **Key principles of effective negotiation and conflict resolution**



# Why negotiation matters in academia

- Collaborative research relies on shared goals and mutual understanding
- Diverse academic backgrounds = diverse expectations
- Prevents escalation of misunderstandings into long-term conflict
- Builds professional networks and long-term career success





# Common conflict areas in academia

## PhD Supervision:

- Mismatched expectations on workload, authorship, timelines
- Differences in communication style or feedback quality
- Power dynamics and autonomy issues

## Research Collaborations:

- Intellectual property and authorship disputes
- Unequal effort and credit sharing
- Funding allocation and decision-making disagreements



# Principles of effective negotiation

- 1) Preparation is key: The first principle of negotiation is preparation.
- 2) Active listening and effective communication: Successful negotiation requires effective communication skills, and a key aspect of this is active listening.
- 3) Focus on interests, not positions: When negotiating, it is important to focus on the underlying interests and needs of both parties rather than getting stuck on rigid positions.
- 4) Seek mutually beneficial solutions: Negotiation should aim to create value and find mutually beneficial solutions.
- 5) Flexibility and adaptability: Negotiation often requires flexibility and adaptability.

<https://fastercapital.com/topics/key-principles-of-negotiation.html>

# Discussions

- **Any other conflict areas in academia?**
  - **Personal issues, personalities between PhDs,**
  - **Different behaviors, for example: use of lab, collaboration styles**
  - **Habits of PhDs**
  - **Personal goals other than initial goals**
- **Any other principles of effective negotiation?**
  - **Set ground rules**
  - **Try different ways targeting PhD's expectation**
  - **Group meeting**

## 2. Negotiation strategies and techniques

- **The fundamentals of interest-based negotiation (win-win approach)**
- **Key negotiation styles: competitive vs. collaborative approaches**
- **Effective communication techniques for negotiation (active listening, framing, and persuasion)**
- **Practical case studies: Negotiating project scope, expectations, and authorship in research collaborations**





## 2. Negotiation strategies and techniques

- 1) Conduct research and gather information
- 2) Understand the other party's priorities
- 3) Define goals and desired outcomes
- 4) Identify potential concessions

<https://www.vistage.com/research-center/business-growth-strategy/six-successful-strategies-for-negotiation/>





# Interest-Based Negotiation (The Win-Win Approach)

- Focus on interests, not rigid positions
- Seek mutual gains over zero-sum outcomes
- Emphasize collaboration, transparency, and shared value
- Examples: shared authorship, flexible timelines, joint funding strategies



# Negotiation Styles: Competitive vs. Collaborative

Style	Description	When Useful	Risks
<b>Competitive</b>	Win-lose mindset; assertive	Tight deadlines, budget disputes	Damaged relationships
<b>Collaborative</b>	Win-win mindset; cooperative	Long-term partnerships	Time-consuming

# Effective Communication in Negotiation

- Active Listening
  - Show empathy and reflect back what you hear
  - Builds trust and clarifies misunderstandings
- Framing
  - Present issues in ways that highlight shared interests
  - Example: "Let's co-lead this paper" vs. "I must be first author"
- Persuasion
  - Use data, logic, and values alignment
  - Tailor arguments to the audience's priorities

# Case Study 1 – Negotiating Project Scope

- Situation: Multi-partner grant proposal with differing priorities, for example, one partner focuses on thermal comfort, another focuses on IAQ, another prioritize energy efficiency.
- Conflict: Disagreement on division of work and project timeline
- Strategy: Joint planning workshop → clearly defined roles, written agreement
- Outcome: Unified scope, on-time submission, stronger partnership



## Case Study 2 – Negotiating Authorship

- Situation: PhD student, supervisor, and external collaborator on a joint paper
- Conflict: Disagreement over first authorship and contributions
- Strategy: Refer to journal/discipline guidelines, map actual contributions, early agreement
- Outcome: Co-first authorship with a clear footnote + improved collaboration



## Summary and Takeaways

- Understand and align on interests, not just demands
- Adapt negotiation style to situation and relationship goals
- Practice active listening, smart framing, and persuasive communication
- Real-world negotiation success = preparation + empathy + clarity



# Discussions



- Any other negotiation styles?
  - Establish a fast and effective communication channel
  - Show PhDs a regular meeting schedule





### 3. Conflict resolution in academic supervision

- **Recognizing early signs of conflict between students and research partners**
- **Strategies for addressing conflicts constructively**
- **Mediation techniques for supervisors: facilitating dialogue and finding common ground**
- **Handling difficult conversations with students and partners**



# 3. Conflict resolution in academic supervision

- 1) Early Warning Signs of Conflict
- 2) Strategies to Address Conflict Constructively
- 3) Mediation Techniques for Supervisors
- 4) Handling Difficult Conversations





# Early Warning Signs of Conflict

- Persistent delays or missed deadlines
- Avoidance or withdrawal from meetings
- Breakdown in communication or passive-aggressive behavior
- Disagreements over roles, feedback, or expectations
- Emotional cues: frustration, defensiveness, silence



# Strategies to Address Conflict Constructively

- Act Early: Address tensions before they escalate
- Clarify Expectations: Revisit roles, goals, and timelines
- Use Neutral Language: Focus on issues, not personalities
- Create Psychological Safety: Encourage open, respectful expression
- Document Agreements: Keep records to avoid future misunderstandings

# Mediation Techniques for Supervisors

- Stay Neutral: Avoid taking sides
- Set Ground Rules: Respectful tone, active participation, time limits
- Facilitate Dialogue: Let each party speak without interruption
- Reframe Issues: Help identify shared goals or misunderstandings
- Propose Options: Co-develop solutions with input from all parties

# Handling Difficult Conversations

- Prepare in Advance: Know your facts and desired outcomes
- Choose the Right Setting: Private, neutral, and undisturbed
- Be Direct but Compassionate: Use “I” statements and specific examples
- Acknowledge Emotions: Recognize frustration or stress, but stay solution-focused
- End with Clarity: Summarize outcomes, responsibilities, and next steps

# Summary and Best Practices

- Early recognition and response prevent escalation
- Supervisors play a key role as facilitators of dialogue
- Conflict is natural—handling it well builds stronger relationships
- Cultivate a culture of trust, transparency, and mutual respect

# Discussions

- Which strategy have you used to address conflict constructively?
  - Help PhDs to figure out what are their situation, inform meetings, find out what's going on, what can do better, adapt PhDs requirement, make them comfortable, have separated meeting regarding careers and development
- How do you handle difficult conversations?
  - Actively listening with patient
  - Try to find solutions



## 4. Interactive role-playing and case studies

- **Simulated conflict resolution scenarios (e.g., disagreements on project direction, supervision expectations, or publication disputes)**



# Group exercises and feedback discussions

- **Group 1**  
**disagreements on**  
**project direction**
- **Group 2**  
**disagreements**  
**on supervision**  
**expectations**
- **Group 3**  
**disagreements**  
**on publication**  
**disputes)**



## **5. Best Practices and Takeaways**

**Establishing clear communication and expectations from the start**

**Developing a proactive conflict management approach**

**Recognize earlier signs of possible conflict and try to solve it before it takes place**

**The 5 C's of conflict resolution are: Calmness, Communication, Collaboration, Compromise, and Closure**

**Through the lens of the 5 R's: Relationship, Respect, Responsibility, Repair, and Reintegration**



# How to Control Your Emotions During a Difficult Conversation

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OntE3tCaUR0>**





# Q&A session and discussion on participants' real-life challenges





## Reference:

How to Control Your Emotions During a Difficult Conversation: The Harvard Business Review Guide

Sonia Gill, How to handle difficult conversations in school

<https://fastercapital.com/topics/key-principles-of-negotiation.html>

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