



Interdisciplinary Co-Authoring and Publication – Collaboration, Challenges and Culture

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Background

- Interdisciplinary research (IDR) a key focus for many universities, including UoM
 - Our Research Culture strategy includes a focus on “building collaboration & interdisciplinarity”
- Funders increasingly promoting IDR through calls & strategy
- Many researchers want to work in interdisciplinary ways
- *So... why isn't there more IDR?*

Two UoM-funded projects:

- *FORGE* – “what are the barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration at UoM?”
 - Found a mismatch between stated strategy and practice
 - Led to...
- *Open Research Fellowship* - “what are the barriers to the open publication of IDR?”
 - Emerging themes: *peer review* and *co-authoring*

The study

- Qual/quant survey of 164 self-identified ID researchers at the University of Manchester – a large, research-intensive university with a stated strategic emphasis on IDR
 - 80 reported on experiences of co-authoring
- Questions focused on experiences of co-authoring and peer review
 - Wide range of career stages and ‘home’ disciplines
 - Experiences as authors, reviewers and editors
- Follow-up interviews with 12 respondents

Interdisciplinary co-authoring – a Research Culture issue

How would you characterise your experience of interdisciplinary co-authoring?

(-5 entirely negative; 0 neutral; +5 entirely positive)

	Number of responses	High	Low	Mean	Mode	Median
Total	80	+5	-5	+2.9	+3	+4
Disciplinary 'base'						
Biomedical Sciences	15	+5	-5	+2.9	+4	+4
Social Sciences & Humanities	56	+5	-3	+2.7	+3	+3
Physical Sciences & Engineering	9	+5	+3	+4	N/A	+4
Self-reported Career Stage						
PhD	3	+5	-5	0	N/A	0
Early Career	21	+5	-3	+2.9	+3	+3
Mid-career	18	+5	-2	+2.6	+3	+3
Established researcher	37	+5	-2	+3.2	+5	+4
Gender						
Male	42	+5	-2	+3.4	+3	+4
Female	35	+5	-5	+2.2	+4	+3
Other/Prefer not to say	3	+3	+2	+2.7	+3	+3



UoM Researchers say...

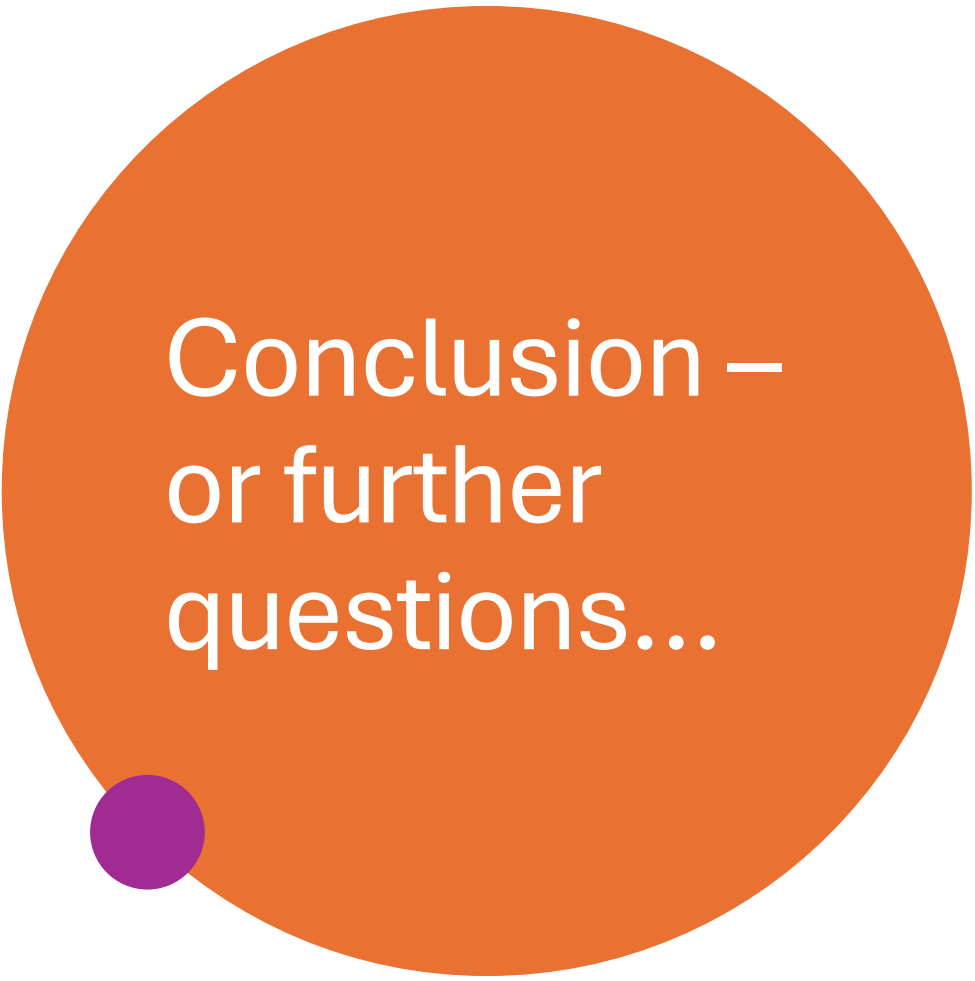
	Enabler	Barrier
Disciplinary cultures/norms	“finding ways to agree on epistemological issues”	“Different methodological/theoretical standards”
Communication/language	“Clarifying standards (e.g., structure, writing style) across disciplines”	“Differing disciplinary terminologies and approaches”
Collaborative practices	“Regular, structured meetings”	“A piecemeal approach, divided up by discipline”
Reviewer/journal practices	“Clarity about the right places to publish”	“Academic journals can be very conservative”
Issues of authorship/contribution	“Establishing authorship roles early on”	“Exploitation (senior authors take the credit but do not do the work)”
Personality matters	“willingness to learn and be open minded”	“Being conflictive and individualistic”
Time, resource & institutional buy-in	“Having extra time to read articles from other disciplines”	“concerns about REF”
Team makeup/leadership	“Someone taking the lead so it all comes together in a single voice”	“Lack of leadership, leading to buck-passing”

Our strategic ambitions include to build on our record of path-breaking interdisciplinary research and to **bring the world's best people together**, combining expertise from across disciplines to understand and find new solutions to society's biggest questions. This means our priorities include **accelerating interdisciplinary research**.

UoM Research Culture
Hub says...

Enablers and barriers to successful co-authoring

	Enabler	Barrier	Total
Disciplinary cultures/norms	7	25	32
Communication/language	39	18	57
Collaborative practices	24	7	31
Reviewer/journal practices	10	21	31
Issues of authorship/contribution	5	12	17
Personality matters	46 	19	65
Time, resource & institutional buy-in	19	43 	62
Team makeup/leadership	30	18	48



Conclusion – or further questions...

- We already know that impactful interdisciplinary research emerges from supportive research culture
 - Are institutions putting their money where their mouth is?
- Support for interdisciplinarity often focuses on the research stage with authors expected to write up without time/support/resource
 - But writing up IDR takes longer, requires more negotiation and communication
 - Junior and marginalised researchers report more negative experiences – **this is a research culture issue**
- How can institutions facilitate end-to-end support for IDR collaborations?