

Welcome! (a)

Welcome to mmmAcademia, a card game to stimulate reflection, conversation and hopefully progress in how we Recognize and Reward (R&R) academic work.

This game is not about winning, nor about strictly following rules. It is about having meaningful conversations about how working in academia currently is, and how it could and should be. In its most basic shape, you could view the cards as elaborate questions on the labels of tea bags.

We hope this game indeed sparks conversation between you and your colleagues. More personally, we hope you (will) find appreciation in your academic work. Know at least that we appreciate you for trying this game.

Welcome! (b)

Meet Maca!

Maca, short for Macademia, represents ourselves and our dear academic colleagues. Maca tries to build an academic career, but is confronted with many different experiences which makes them wonder "mmm...Academia?".

Maca encounters situations many of us have experienced, heard or thought about, and even discussed with friends or peers. Now the game invites us to discuss these questions more openly with colleagues of all levels. Maca holds up a mirror for us to reflect on whether what currently happens in academia, commonly or exceptionally, is how it should stay or whether it should change.

66 Before playing (a)

How many players?

The game can be played with one or more players. By yourself, it becomes a reflection tool; with others, a conversation tool. Three or four players is optimal. The more players, the more important it is to put a time limit on answers, just to make sure it stays interesting.

With whom to play?

mmmAcademia can be played with anyone working in academia. Some cards expect specific experience (e.g. teaching); these can be removed beforehand or skipped when encountered. Playing with colleagues who are in the same team or department, ideally from different academic positions, gives the most insightful experience.

Before playing (b)

Any preparation needed?

No, even reading these rules is optional (thanks though!). Just find a nice place, for example the department coffee table, and play away.

One important note: the game does require a safe space for players to open up. Especially when playing with different ranks, we suggest to create this safe zone explicitly by indicating that:

- 1. Hierarchy plays no role; all are equal.
- 2. There is no right or wrong, just perspectives, and those are respected.
- 3. Anyone can choose to skip a question or quit the game at any time.
- 4. Anything shared in the game will only be used to improve R&R of academic work.



Topics (a)

Aspects of Recognition & Rewards

Four aspects are covered by the cards:



(How to stimulate collaboration?

How to allow for diverse careers?

(ii) How to uphold the human dimension?

Academic tasks

Each card has one or more associated tasks:

Education

Research

Management

Societal impact



Topics (b)

Topics & Illustrations

The topics have been selected to highlight aspects of the R&R debate that are regarded sensitive or on which perspectives often differ. By opening them up for exchange, we hope that the associated reflection (and sometimes friction) will help to stimulate change in the R&R of academic work. The accompanying illustrations attempt to visualize the topics in an inclusive way by depicting a minimalistic humanoid macadamia nut.

Sources

The example situations are *based on* real world examples from academic daily life. That means that many have an actual source. Others are combinations of perspectives and experiences, to describe a potential situation in academia.

How to play (a)

Select cards

Optionally, select cards based on:

- Task, e.g. only education.
- Aspect of R&R, e.g. only collaboration.
- A specific subset based on the group's interests, experience and safety.

Choose style of play

- By aspect: Split set by color into stacks.
- Random: Shuffle set, make four stacks.

Setup

- 1. Place the stacks with the image up on the table
- Place this card and the Topics card on the table for reference.
- 3. Choose who starts.
- 4. Flip this card.

How to play (b)

One turn

- 1. Choose a card based on the image.
- 2. Draw the chosen card and read it aloud.
- 3. Answer one or both questions.
- 4. Conversation opens: others ask questions and share experiences and perspectives.
- 5. When done, discard the card with the text up next to the draw stack(s).

Next player's turn. Keep playing as long as you and the group like and have time for.

Variations

The game is about reflection and conversation, not about rules or winning. So feel free to adapt the rules. See also the "Roles" and "Sorting" cards, plus the website for additional play modes.



Conversation (a)

Opening questions



What are the player's experiences; How do they *feel* about it?



What is the player's alternative; How do they *think* it should change?

Follow-up questions

As implemented in Sorting mode (see VII):



What is the *priority* of the change?



What is *needed* to make the change reality?

Choosing & interpreting questions

A group or player can choose to play with one or more question types. Interpret questions in such a way that it sparks the most valuable conversation.

Conversation (b)

Define context

The questions do *not* define the context for which to answer the question. That is, a question can be answered about a group, department, faculty or university. Let the active player choose the most relevant context themselves, possibly primed by a context set at the start of play (e.g., for a group retreat, the primary context is probably the group).

Responses by other players

After the active player, other players, e.g.:

- Ask for example experiences.
- Share their own experiences.
- Ask for clarification.
- Give an alternative perspective.

All with the goal to learn from each other's perspectives.

Roles (a)

Perspective roles

Seven "Perspective role"-cards are included, which can help to stimulate players to take a different perspective. E.g., when perspectives in a group:

- are homogeneous, bringing more variety to the group to foster discussion.
- conflict strongly due to position, inviting players to take the perspective of another player.

Focus group roles

Seven "Focus group role"-cards are included, which can help structure the conversation and increase safety. E.g. when a group is:

- 1. large, to limit round duration.
- 2. diverse in dominance, to give all players an equal chance to contribute.

VI a

Roles (b)

How to use

Choose either of the two types of role cards, depending on the group, and:

- 1. Distribute the role cards either randomly or let players pick.
- 2. Play the game, using the given role.
- 3. Roles can stay with a player or change, e.g. by passing them to the left.

Role extensions

As there are too few role cards of each type, especially for large groups:

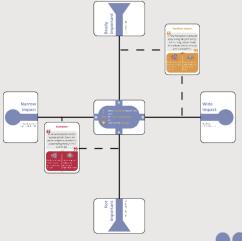
- Focus group: only distribute the nonobserver cards and designate all other players "Observer".
- Perspectives: do not hesitate to add extra cards & roles.



Sorting (a)

Setup

Place the central question and axis cards text up on the table with sufficient space for sorting. Use the shapes (e.g., circle, star) as guide (see below).



VII a

Sorting (b)

How to Play

Play as described, except after answering one or both questions::

- Read and answer the centre question.
- Place the card in the square described by the axes, corresponding to the answer.
- Discuss and move the card if needed.

It is also possible to play with one axis instead of two axes. The back of the question and axis cards can be used to make custom axes.

Voting mode

The axes can also be used for *voting* by asking all players to place a token, or a perspective card, in the square. This also make it possible to use both sorting modes simultaneously.



Background (a)

Need or want to give support?

Find the local Recognition & Rewards committee for information about R&R. For anything related to mmmAcademia, check the website or contact the designer directly. If you have concerns related to your personal safety and well-being in academia, reach out to a confidential advisor for support.

Want your own (custom) copy?

Information about available copies and how to print your own sets can be found at the website. There you can also find instructions how you can edit the source files for your own custom sets.

Websites

- Game: http://www.mmmacademia.nl
- R&R: https://recognitionrewards.nl/

Background (b)

Embedding & Support

The Radboud University's

- Teaching and Learning Centre
- Recognition & Rewards program

Credits

- Design & Development: Frank Leoné
- Art: Daan van den Nieuwenhof (ARC brands)

A big thanks to all the colleagues who shared their stories and helped test and shape the game.

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Land of the blind



Our vision on education? I don't know. Never thought about that actually...

99



How do you feel about



What do you think should be our educational vision?



Flexi-quality

Director: "Too many students are failing your course." I: "My course did not change much over the years, students seem to start less prepared or spend less time."

Director: "Still, adapt your course."

WWW...



What do you feel are the current criteria for the quality of education?



What do you think should be the criteria for the quality of education?



Target practice

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I received my first teaching evaluation. I was ripped to shreds, without any real argumentation. Nice welcoming...

99



How do you feel about your teaching evaluations; are they useful to you?



How do you think teaching should be evaluated?



Free gifts

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The teacher qualification? Don't worry, as long as you do well on research, you'll get it for free.

99



How do you feel about how you were or are trained and certified to



How do you think that teacher training and certification should be organized?



Rich get richer

66

"Even though it is your idea and you do most of the work, let him be the main applicant. The fact that he already has many grants will increase our chances.

99



How do you feel abou how earlier success influences future chances?





How do you think that previous success should influence chances for future success?



Externalized costs

Successful academics have many externalized costs: only the output counts, but costs like neglecting supervision, teaching, management and personal life are ignored.

WWW.



the influence of your research on other tasks and your private life?

How do you think that we should stimulate a balanced drive for research excellence?



Divide & Conquer



This is too much content for one paper.

Let's split it in two papers. The impact of each paper will be only slightly less and it will increase your publication count.

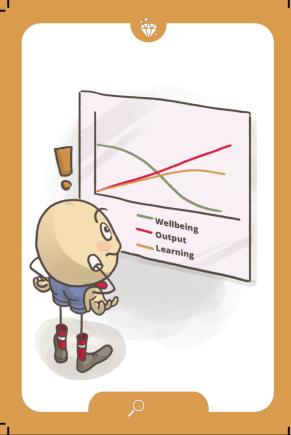
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How do you feel about the way the quality of your research is judged?



How do you think research quality should be judged?



Progress?

1: "I feel bad: I didn't read a paper or sit down to learn something in ages. I just don't have the time." Colleague: "Me neither. I am surprised you still feel bad. Your output is good, right?"

99



How do you feel output and learning are currently balanced in your research activities?



How do you think we should stimulate a balance between output and learning?



No leaders needed

Director: "Over my career, I never felt the need to have someone 'above' me organizing our department. So in all honesty I don't know why management would be needed at all."

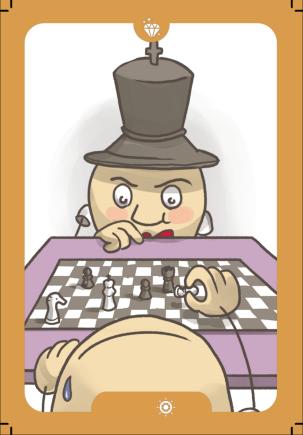


What do you feel currently is regarded to be "good leadership"?

WWW...



What do you think should constitute good leadership?



Skin in the game

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I: "How come he is still director? He does not do anything." Colleague: "Do you really think his performance is tracked and if so, that it would have consequences?"

99



What do you feel would be the consequences of mismanagement?



What do you think should be the consequences of mismanagement?



Judgement

And again I was not promoted. The decision seemed to be taken by my superior individually, without consultation or clear argumentation; just gut feeling and moving targets.

MMM.



How do you feel about the procedures to judge the quality of your work?

How and by whom do you think the quality of someones work should be judged?



Brain drain

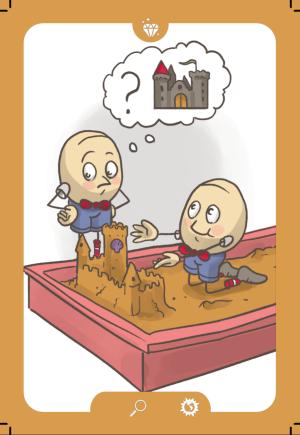
He was the only one to become dean. We really should train and select staff better for these positions. But it is unpopular: new deans receive just as many condolences as congratulations.

MAG



the appreciation you receive for organisational qualities?

How do you think we should appreciate and train organisational qualities?



Sandbox impact

We check all the impact boxes for the grant agency, including development of an app and a nice closing conference. The app isn't used however and there were mainly scientists at the conference.



How do you feel about how the societal impact of your work is stimulated?



How do you think we should stimulate and measure societal impact?



Our real output

I am doing my PhD, but I feel I am failing everyone, including myself. I am not making progress on my project, but I also don't know which skills I learn are useful in the outside world.

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How do you feel about the value of the skills you learn for jobs outside academia?

How do you think we should stimulate skill development valuable outside academia?



Coverage

66

Even internal communication is mainly aimed at individual success, research, and money. As if teams, other tasks and actual content don't matter...

99



how do you feel about how internal media portray your and other's work?



How do you think internal media should cover your and other's work?



Sheet says no



I asked a colleague whether they could help me with a course. The colleague declined: the course was not part of their task load.

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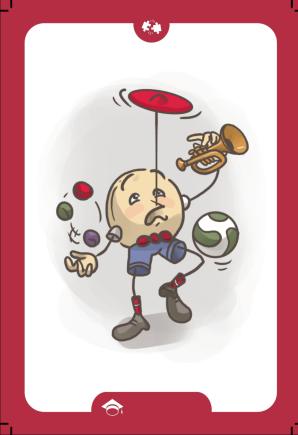


How do you feel your work and collaborations are influenced by how tasks are distributed?





How do you think that tasks should be distributed to stimulate collaboration & quality?



One-person show

Why don't we more often give lectures with two teachers? That would also have the added benefit that lectures become more interactive; a good one-person-show is actually really hard to pull off.

MWW.



How do you feel about the opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in courses?



How do you think collaboration and ownership should be balanced in courses?



Just parts, no whole



I was asked to setup and teach a new course. I did not receive any information about the curriculum, related courses, end goals or the target audience.

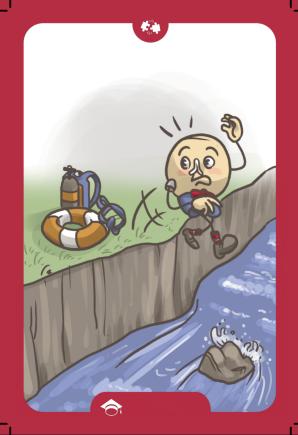
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How do you feel about the integration of your course(s) in the curriculum?



How do you think we should stimulate a well-connected curriculum?



Deep end



I started teaching for the first time. I did not get any instructions, help or support. But I really wanted to do well. Wow, that was a really tough time...

99



How do you feel about the way you were supported when you taught for the first time?



How do you think we should support staff teaching for the first time?



BUILD THE HIGHEST TOWER!



Competition



No, don't discuss or share our grant application with others; they could steal our ideas. I had that happen to me before, we need to protect our ideas.

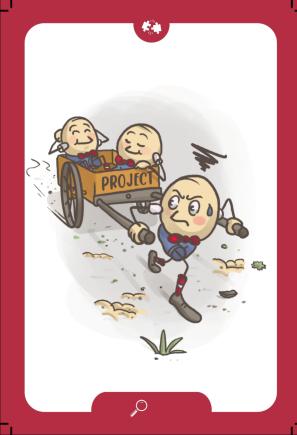
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How do you feel about the degree of competition in your research?



How do you think we should (dis-)incentivize competition in research?



Free riding

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Superior: "Okay, then I will be co-author".

I: "But we only talked about it for five minutes". Superior: "Yes, but I gave feedback once and I run the lab."

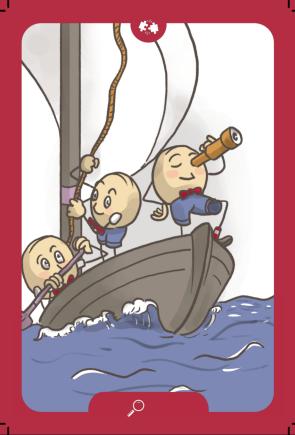
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How do you feel about the way credit is given in your research collaborations?



How do you think we should stimulate giving appropriate credit?



In the same boat

PhD supervisor: "A PhD is like a joint boat trip. We are all in the same boat and you are navigating". Me thinking: "Am I? Are we in the boat together? Is there even a boat?"

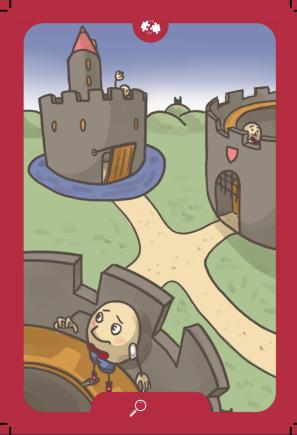
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How do you feel about how collaboration works in (your) PhDproject(s)?



How do you think collaboration in a PhD should work?



Little kingdoms

I am part of her group and on a project from her grant. However, based on content and personal connection I would better fit in the other group, or at least collaborate.

But she does not let me.

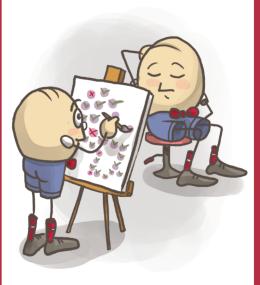
MMM.



How do you feel about your opportunities to collaborate outside your research group?

How do you think we should organize research to stimulate collaboration?







Development

In my contact with my superior, little attention is paid to my personal development. It is more about us both checking boxes: me for grants and papers, she for doing yearly appraissals.





How do you feel personal development is stimulated by your superior?



How do you think we should stimulate personal development?



The commons



Committee work? Joining department meetings? Not worth my time, I rather focus on papers and grants.

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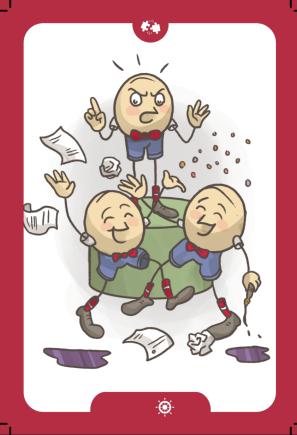


How do you feel about the appreciation you receive for "academic citizenship"?





How do you think that academic citizenship should be appreciated?



Freedom!

Yes, it would be really good to introduce supervision guidelines. However, most experienced staff are too attached to their autonomy to change their ways. It is not worth the effort.

MMM.



How do you feel about how your and others' autonomy influences your work?

How do you think we should balance autonomy and organisational learning?



Balance of power

We could organize staff questionnaires.

However, most staff will expect that management will do nothing with the results. Hence they will not fill it in. It is no use.

99



How do you feel about the room for bottom-up initiatives and feedback?



How do you think we should value bottom-up initiatives and feedback?



Out of the ivory tower



I also work in the professional workfield and have a large network there. However, this is hardly appreciated for my career prospects.

99



How do you feel about how outside-academia roles and connections are appreciated?





How do you think we should value outside-academia roles and connections?



Closed science

No, you should not spend time on releasing the code of your analysis pipeline. No, also sharing educational material is not worth the time. Focus on your publications.

MMW.



How do you feel about the appreciation for sharing research and teaching material?



How do you think we should stimulate Open Science for research and education?



Hobby time

Research seems a hobby, costing no time at all. For example, there is no support for my PhD students during maternity leave.

Also, if I acquire a grant, I just get more work in the same time

MMM.

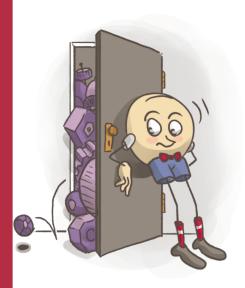


How do you feel your research time is appreciated and supported?



How do you think we should support research time of individuals and groups?













Wheel reinvention

Why is there no standard procedure for this? At my previous university we had this all standardized, saves a lot of time. Let's look it up there, rather than reinventing the wheel.

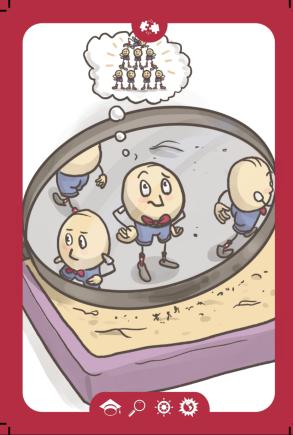
MMM.



How do you feel about how your work is influenced by standardization?



How do you think we should balance autonomy and standardization?



Grains of sand

In our selection process, we should focus on individual research excellence only.

Organisational, teaching and teamwork skills do not matter. If we have the best people together, we are the best.

MMM



How do you feel about how individual and team contributions are appreciated?

How do you think we should appreciate individual and team contributions?



Circling the drain



My grant application just didn't make it.
This meant I needed to do more teaching.
Which implied I had less time for grant
applications. Rinse & repeat.

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How do you feel your performance influences your task division?



How do you think performance should influence task division?



Dead end

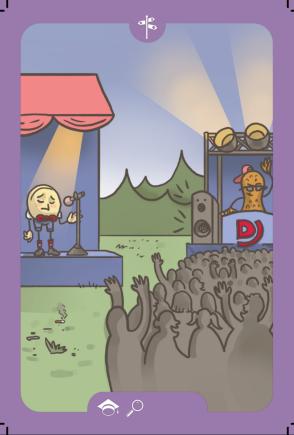
I score really well on teaching; I even have a few rewards for teaching excellence. But no career prospects whatsoever, while others, who almost neglect their teaching, are being promoted!



How do you feel about the importance of teaching for your career prospects?



How do you think success in education should influence career prospects?



Sideshow



Don't spend too much time on your teaching, let alone learning to teach! Your research work is the only thing that really counts for your PhD.

99



How do you feel teaching and education is appreciated in a PhD trajectory?





How do you think teaching and education should have a place in PhD trajectories?



Invisible force

I regret I helped everyone so much during my PhD, both with their science and socially. Yes, I helped those colleagues, and also the center, but I only hindered my own career.





How do you feel about the appreciation for supporting colleagues professionally?



How do you think supporting colleagues professionally should be appreciated?



Expect the impossible

"Should she not receive promotion by now? She fulfills all the official requirements". Other: "Yes, we are just waiting for her to land a large grant. Then we can give it to her".



How do you feel about what is expected of you for promotion?

WWW...



What do you think the criteria for promotion should be?



Copy machine



Our professor again hired some copies of himself. And the earlier hire left already, she didn't fit the mold. Truly a pity, she did great work and was refreshingly different.

99



How do you feel about how selection criteria and procedures work?



How do you think we should organize selection criteria and procedures?



Reverse inference

And then he became educational director.

He didn't want to, didn't have the time, nor any interest or exceptional skills in education. He was basically the only full professor available...

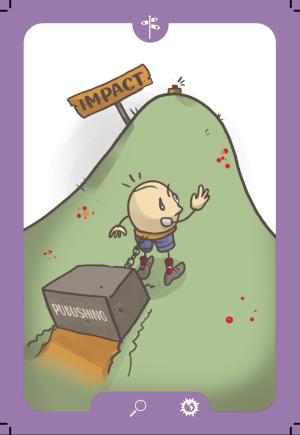


How do you feel about how management positions are filled?

MMM.



How do you think we should select staff to fulfil management positions?



Ready for impact

She is really into applied research and societal impact. However, we focus on fundamental research and scientific publications, so I don't think her contract will be extended.



How do you feel that societal outreach and impact influences your career prospects?

MMM.



How do you think that we should take into account societal impact in career prospects?



Switch now!

It feels like I need to leave to finally get promoted. You would think loyalty to the organisation is rewarded, but no, they rather take you for granted and instead lure new hires with benefits.

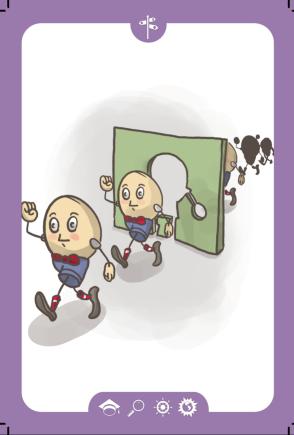


How do you feel about how your loyalty influences the options offered to you?

AMM...



How do you think loyalty should influence options offered?



One size fits all



I am passionate about teaching and management. She really cares about her research. Yet we both have the same tasks and in the same ratio.

99



How do you feel about the way tasks are divided?



How do you think personal preferences and qualities should influence task division?



Compliments

66

That one time, after the last lecture, when a queue of students waited to thank me.

Unforgettable!

99



How do you feel about how (often) appreciation for good work is voiced?



How (often) do you think that appreciation for good work should be voiced?



Getting personal

Those were really tough times; I was close to a burn-out. And still, I was teaching a lecture. Afterwards, two students approached me and gave me a hug.

Exactly what I needed.

WWW.



How do you feel about the personal support you receive within

How do you think we should appreciate personal support withir academia?



Inequality

When distributing the offices, teachers were placed all together in one crowded office, without any consultation. While teachers actually have the most walk-ins and appointments...





How do you feel about the way that rooms and other facilities are



How do you think that rooms and facilities should be distributed?



Sisyphus' curse

And there I was, hopping from temporary contract to temporary contract. Each time I was teaching the unpopular courses, under a lot of work pressure, without any prospects.





How do you feel about the current appreciation and support for temporary staff?



How do you think we should appreciate and support temporary staff?



Safe space

In the forty years that I have worked at university, I never felt genuinely safe to show my emotions or speak up. This was largely due to the alpha males running the show.





How safe do you feel to freely speak your mind or show your emotions at work?



How do you think we should create safety for openness and emotions?



Better, faster, harder



I just feel my work is neverending. Always there is more to do, never it is enough or good enough. And no one sets limits or helps me set limits, AAAARGGGHH!

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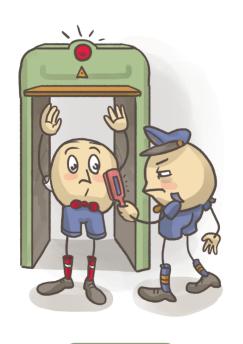


How do you feel about your work pressure?



How do you think we should handle collective and individual work pressure?











Trust me

66

For each little payment I need to do a lot of admin, as if they don't trust me.

99



How do you feel about the balance between trust and checks & balances in your work?



How do you think we should balance trust and checks & balances over our range of tasks?



Feedback-beat-back

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I: "I think your input in the project is of low quality." Superior: "How do you dare to give me feedback, while I have so many grants and papers?"

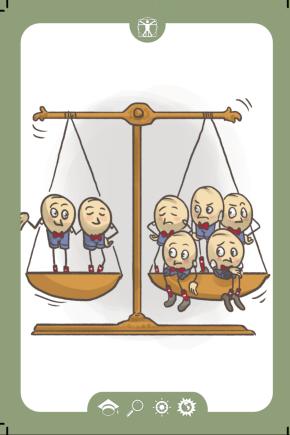
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How do you feel about giving feedback bottom-



How do you think giving feedback from bottomup should be appreciated?



All equal

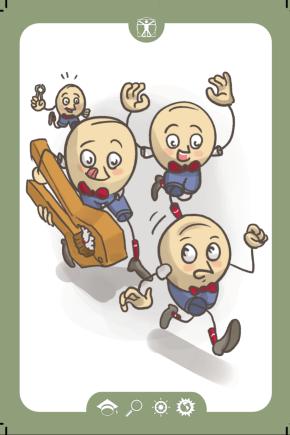
Earlier, two white males gave a seminar and only got constructive questions. Today, a woman and an international colleague; it was close to bashing. Many say this is common in our field.



How do you feel gender, nationality & appearance influence components treatment?



How do you think gender, nationality & appearance should influence treatment?



Thick skin

All this criticism, that was one of the reasons why I left academia. Especially at talks. I was maybe too easily impressed, but I cannot imagine that no one else had anything positive to say.



How do you feel about the way we give feedback to each other?



How do you think we should give each other feedback?



Roasted nuts

Almost all PhD students in that group have or had a burn-out. Still it appears to be seen as the fault of the PhD students; they need to cope better, while the supervisor continues to supervise.

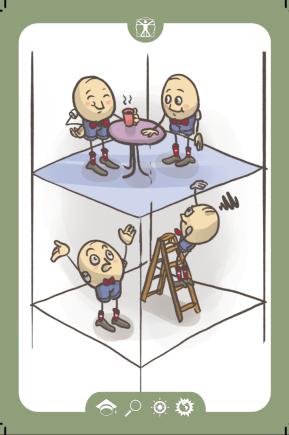


How do you feel about how staff is supported and protected when





How do you think we should support and protect staff in need?



Two worlds

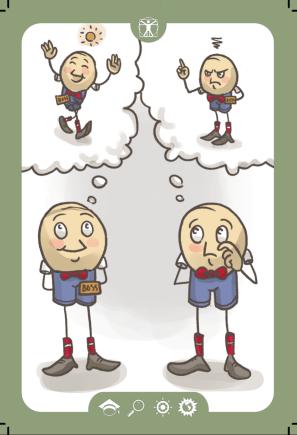
I was a research policy officer, a supportive function. This one professor did not even look me in the eyes! Until he heard I have a PhD title. All of a sudden I was worthy of his attention.



How do you feel about the way acadamic and support staff relate to each other?



How to you think acadamic and support staff should relate to each other?



Lonely at the top

I am now full professor, but still the same person. However everyone treats me differently. I asked for feedback from my secretaries for a leadership course, and they seemed afraid of me.

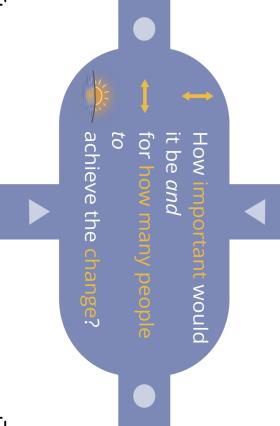


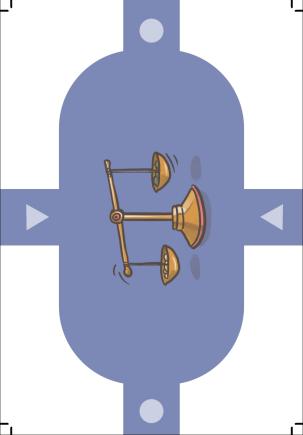
How do you feel your position influences the social connection you have with colleagues?

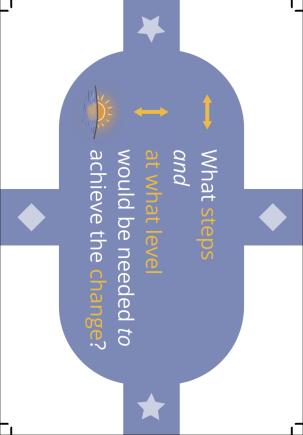


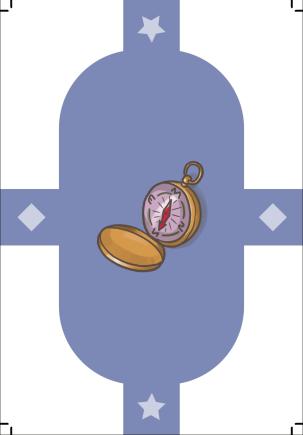


How do you think that academic position should influence socia connection?



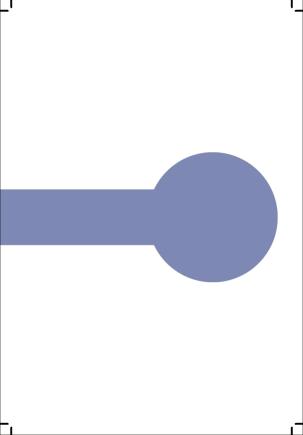






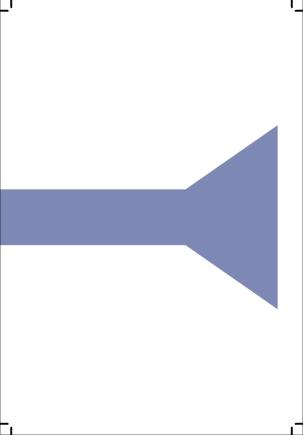


Has an impact on some people or departments only.



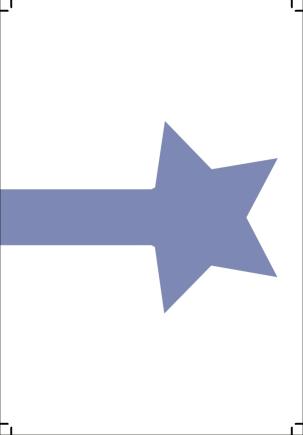
Not important

No need to change anything.



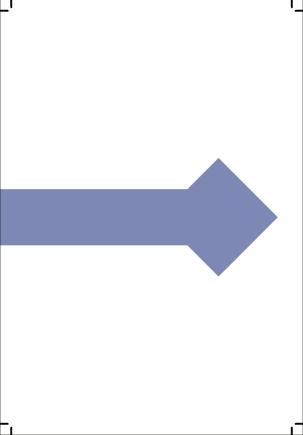


Only needs small changes in rules and procedures.



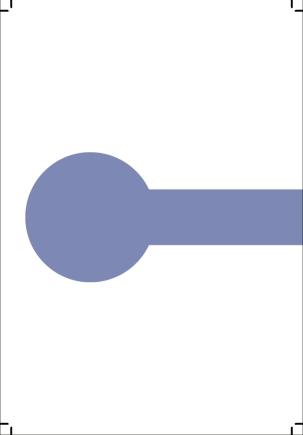
Individual

Can be solved by individuals or small units independently.



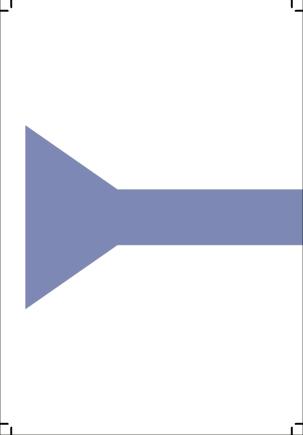


Has an impact on the whole university!



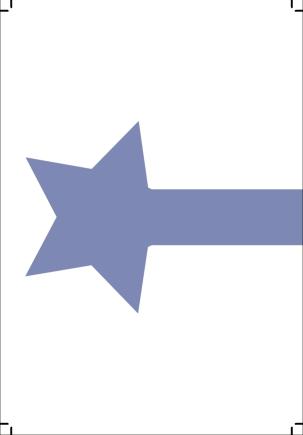
Really important

Really needs to change!



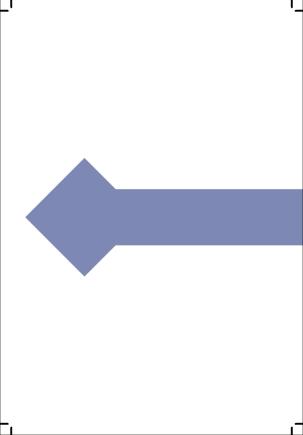


Requires systematic changes in culture, rules and procedures.



Academia

Only solvable by the entire university or (inter)nationally.





a full professor

Try to take the perspective of a full professor. You can imagine one or try to take the perspective of one you know. Do so with the goal to learn from the perspective.



Facilitator

- Read the question(s) and hand the participant(s) the card.
- Ask follow-up questions.
- Make sure all stick to their role.

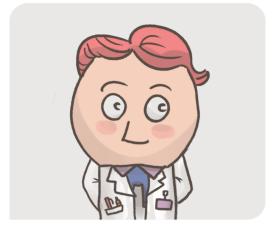


an assistant professor

Try to take the perspective of an assistant professor. You can imagine one or try to take the perspective of one you know. Do so with the goal to learn from the perspective.



- Choose the card.
- Without a facilitator: read the card.
- Answer the guestions.
- Have the follow-up conversation.



a PhD candidate

Try to take the perspective of a PhD candidate. You can imagine one or try to take the perspective of one you know. Do so with the goal to learn from the perspective.



- Choose the card.
- Without a facilitator: read the card.
- Answer the guestions.
- Have the follow-up conversation.



a teacher

Try to take the perspective of a teacher. You can imagine one or try to take the perspective of one you know. Do so with the goal to learn from the perspective.



- Choose the card.
- Without a facilitator: read the card.
 - Answer the questions.
- Have the follow-up conversation.



a secretary

Try to take the perspective of a secretary. You can imagine one or try to take the perspective of one you know. Do so with the goal to learn from the perspective.



- Choose the card.
- Without a facilitator: read the card.
 - Answer the guestions.
- Have the follow-up conversation.



a student

Try to take the perspective of a Bachelor or Master student. You can imagine one or try to take the perspective of one you know. Do so with the goal to learn from the perspective.



Recorder

- Write (anonymized) minutes of the conversation.
- Do not join in the conversation, unless for clarification for the minutes.



an external

Try to take the perspective of someone not in academia. You can imagine one or try to take the perspective of someone you know. Do so with the goal to learn from the perspective.



Observer

- Observe and reflect on the responses and experiences of the participant(s).
- Do not join in the conversation in any way.