The challenges of the future are complex and will require collaboration internationally, interdisciplinary and between different sectors of society. As an early-career researcher of the 21st century, collaboration is therefore more important than ever. During one week in Edinburgh in the summer of 2019, I had the opportunity to live and breathe collaboration in an international context with other PhD students from different European universities and from a wide range of disciplines.

The LERU Doctoral Summer School is aiming to provide doctoral candidates with a professional and personal development opportunity, beyond what we are generally exposed to in our regular PhD education. Further, the summer school is on a topic that is relevant for all disciplines. For this summer school, we all prepared by conducting interviews with established researchers in our respective discipline. During the week, we contributed to the process by extracting key messages from presentations given by experts in a variety of fields and by bringing our own experiences into the lively discussions. Enjoying a very creative way of working, we showed that when bringing a group of motivated PhD students together, it is possible to author a research skills guide in less than a week.

Collaborating with PhD students from different disciplines has rewarded me with new perspectives. I strongly believe that in order for a collaboration to be successful, we need to have an open mind; we need to try to understand our differences and value what each person can contribute with in terms of skills, knowledge and perspective. Even though there are differences in how people in different disciplines approach problems, there are still more things that we have in common as we are all researchers trying to make sense of the world.

The summer school is over, but with me, I have the valuable experiences that I gained; these I will bring into the continuation of my career. Furthermore, my professional and personal network has expanded, now including the participants from the summer school. You never know who in your network will be the one to provide you with the next interesting career opportunity, who will be able to bring complementary expertise to the table in a future project, or who will be influencing the agendas of tomorrow. As early-career researchers in a rapidly changing world, we will all contribute to this, in one way or another.

At the core of research education, the focus is to advance our depth of skills within our discipline. Moreover, developing our in-depth skills and extending our knowledge within our specific research areas, will allow us to make valuable contributions to the collaborations where we participate. However, this week the focus changed to broaden our set of skills, exploring the world of interdisciplinary collaborations. Due to our discussions during the week, both my understanding, enthusiasm and curiosity for other disciplines has increased. Developing both the depth and breadth of our skills will give us, the early-career researchers, a great start for solving the complex challenges of the future.