LERU Doctoral Summer School 2019
“Building Research Capacity and a Collaborative Global Community”

The League of European Research Universities (LERU) is a network of 23 research-intensive universities across Europe. Each year LERU organises a summer school for doctoral students with a central theme that has strong relevance to society, this year the focus was on collaboration.

When I first applied I was unsure of what to expect, I was a little sceptical about how the organisers would engage students from such a wide variety of disciplines to work together for an entire week. On the first day we were asked to introduce ourselves and explain our PhD project. This really highlighted how different our experiences and backgrounds were and also made me aware of my own preconceptions and bias around research. Our very enthusiastic organisers then explained that our challenge was not only to write a guide for research collaborations (in just a week), but that we would be doing this as a collaborative process.

In order to cover all the sections of the guide, we knew that we would have to be very efficient with the time limit we had. For this reason, we divided up the workload and then discussed the most important aspects in smaller groups. However, each time we were working with different individuals in the group. I found this really interesting as each group had extremely different dynamics based on a range of factors, including personality and research experience. This, in itself, taught me a lot about how I engage and work within a group and made me evaluate my own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to collaboration.

Alongside producing the guide, we were encouraged to spend time networking and building connections with each other, for me this was one of the most valuable parts of the summer school. Although our research projects were so different, it was so easy to find common
interests and make genuine friendships. Also it definitely made for some of the most interesting discussions as we always had such variety of perspectives.

I would highly recommend the LERU doctoral summer school, it was such an engaging experience and allowed me to develop my ‘soft skills’ and really challenge my own views and opinions about the nature of research and benefits of collaboration.

For more information and a link to the collaboration guide for early career researchers visit: https://global.ed.ac.uk/features/leru-guide-to-research-collaboration.