

## Thinking Spaces

To develop our work, we need space—space to reflect, try out ideas, receive critical feedback, and simply explore how things are progressing. As leaders in fast-moving, competitive environments such as research, we might be expected to provide such a space for others, but we rarely offer ourselves the same opportunity. Thinking Spaces is designed to provide a dedicated, confidential space in which leaders can explore all aspects of their work. In some fields, particularly psychotherapy and counselling, professionals take advantage of such a space in *supervision*. Although the term implies monitoring and oversight, supervision is primarily a space in which to explore anything that might be impacting our work. Thinking Spaces combines a background in psychotherapy and counselling with long experience in working with researchers at all levels.

Thinking Spaces are offered at a frequency that suits each individual according to their current needs, which can often change over time. Some like to have a regular space, often every two weeks. Others choose to meet more frequently whilst they focus on a particular aspect of their work. Many take both approaches, with more frequent meetings to work on a particular issue followed by a regular space in which to reflect, plan and review.

### *Thinking Spaces for research group leaders*

To be entrusted with the task of leading a research group, you must demonstrate your capacity as a researcher. Your success, however, depends almost entirely on your skill in guiding others and creating conducive conditions in which less-experienced researchers can implement a shared vision. Your ability to inspire others and guide their development is also critical to your own professional recognition. Yet none of these things will matter if you fail to develop an insightful and creative research vision reflected in your ability to attract funding and publish your work in high-ranking journals. Thinking Spaces is a way in which you can protect time to take a step back and reflect on the progress of your group, your work with a particular student or postdoc, the direction of a research story, or even the focus of your entire research program. It can also be used to develop important research articles or grant proposals.

### *Thinking Spaces for service and facility leaders*

Services and facilities play a key role in many leading research institutes. For their expertise to be exploited to its full potential, they must communicate effectively with research groups, including helping them to design and implement research strategies. Service and facility leaders must therefore pay careful attention to the interpersonal aspects of their role, not only within their group but also in their interaction with the researchers who use their services. Just as for research group leaders, Thinking Spaces can be used to explore anything that impacts on the work of service and facility leaders.

### *Thinking Spaces for groups*

Dr. Patten extends the principle of Thinking Spaces to whole groups in facilitated retreats. Groups come together for 3 to 4 days to look critically at their work and see

how they can move forward most effectively to implement their vision. Many research groups use this as a starting point to develop their vision and strategy before meeting periodically with Dr Patten to discuss the progress of specific projects and to receive input on converting the research into publication output.

### Cost

Thinking Spaces are offered at a cost of €150 per session (1.5 hours). Workshops designed to introduce the principles of reflective practice for research group leaders can also be provided at a cost of €1200 per day (plus expenses for onsite training). The cost of a 3.5-day group retreat is €4200 (plus expenses).

### About Dr. Iain Patten

Dr. Patten has worked for over 20 years with researchers and other professionals to help them develop their thinking. His approach draws heavily on experience in psychotherapy and counselling, particularly the concept of supervision. His work with researchers takes into account research strategy and implementation while identifying concrete steps to ensure that data and thinking are converted into clearly presented research stories that have the highest chance of making an impact. By working closely with Dr. Patten not only on the output of their work but also on the process of generating it, researchers have found lasting benefit that enhances the work done at all levels in their groups. Testimonials from researchers who have worked with him can be found on his website at [www.iainpatten.com](http://www.iainpatten.com) & [www.thinkingaboutresearch.com](http://www.thinkingaboutresearch.com)

