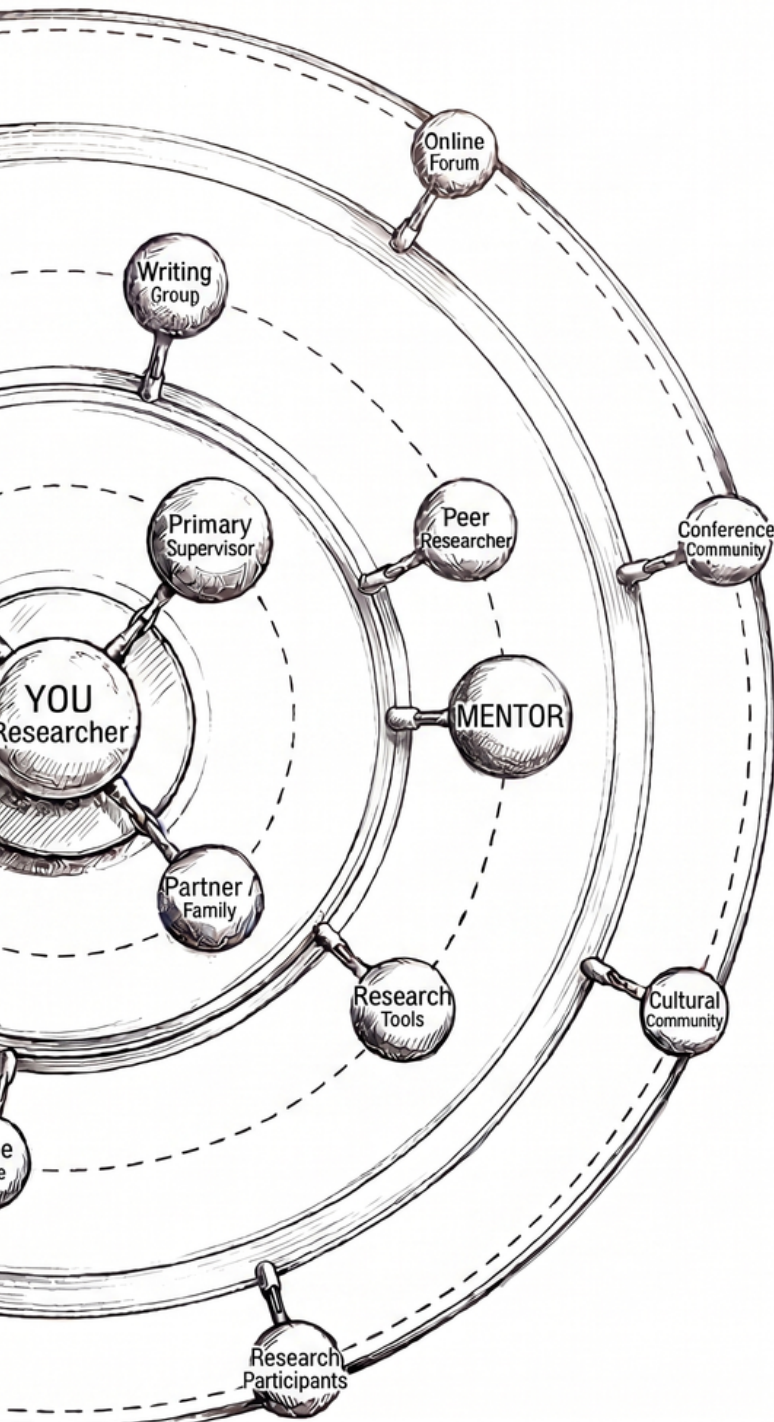


It takes a Village

Village Formation Tool (VFT)



You may already have more support than you see. This tool helps you see it, shape it, and lead it.

Village Formation Tool (VFT)

'It Takes a Village to Raise a Graduate Research Candidate'

University of Otago Graduate Research School
CQUniversity School of Graduate Research

This reflective tool invites you to take ownership of the community supporting your research journey. Position yourself as the active steward of your village — identify who and what supports you, recognise gaps, and intentionally shape and strengthen your network.

Start with
Questions 'A'

Explore further
with Questions
'B'

Consider further
change with
Question 'C'

Draw as you explore
the questions or after

Create Your Village

The People of Your Village

- A** Who is in your village? Think of supervisors, staff, family, friends, peers, wellbeing supporters, counsellors, communities, or research participants – those who support your academic journey, wellbeing, or personal growth. Ask yourself: how and why?
- B** What are the obligations (the give and take) between you and the identified others in your village?
- B** Are there gaps or concerns within your village? Who could fill those gaps or help address those concerns?
- B** Do you need to improve any relationships? (e.g., showing gratitude and respect, being mindful of cultural expectations, keeping people informed.)

The Environment of Your Village

- A** What are the tools, services and places that form your village environment? (e.g., personal space, office, field, labs, home, gym, technology, research tools, transport, places to work or rest.)
- B** How do your tools, services and places enable your journey of becoming a researcher?
- B** Are there gaps or concerns within your village environment? What could address those gaps or concerns?
- B** If your relationships with tools, services or places inhibit your journey, what actions can you take?

C

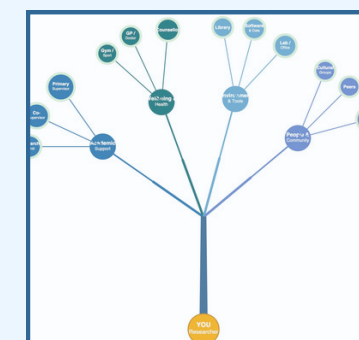
As you progress, the people, environment, and your goals and focus will change. Please revisit this map at the mid and final phases of your research journey. Reflecting on what's changed and what your village needs next will help you find the support to carry you through to the finish line and beyond.

Your village can take any form there is no right way. Use the questions on the left as your guide, then create your map in whatever medium works best for you.

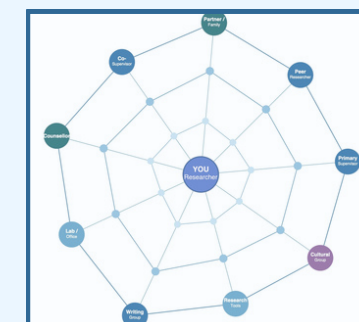
Some starting points for inspiration:



Concentric Rings



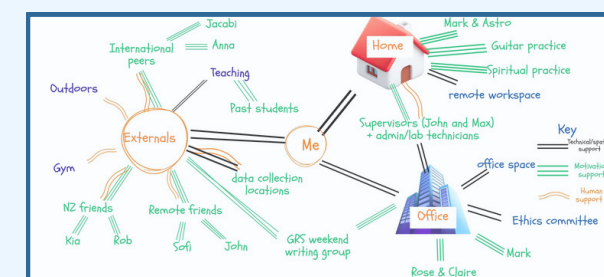
Tree Design



Spiderweb



A Village



A Network

Ways to bring your village to life:

- Paper & pen**
Sketch, draw or write freely - no tools needed.
- PowerPoint / Keynote / Google Slides**
Drag shapes, text boxes and connectors to build your map.
- Digital whiteboard**
Miro, Mural, Mermaid, Jamboard or any online canvas.
- Drawing or design app**
Canva, Procreate, your phone or tablet - anything digital.
- Any creative medium**
Collage, photography, 3D objects, hand-crafted — your village, your rules.

Don't map alone

Village Formation Tool (VFT)

You can deepen your insights when you share your map e.g., a peer may ask an unexpected question, or a supervisor notices what wasn't there.

So when your map feels finished, share it with someone you can trust. Start with the following prompts.

With a peer

Compare maps. Your gaps may be each other's supports, and the conversation will reveal both.

With a supervisor

Show them your map. Ask what they would add, not what they would change. The map belongs to you.

Revisit your map at your mid-candidature and final phases. The people and environments that supported your start may not be the ones that carry you through.

