



Co-funded by
the European Union



arQus
European University Alliance

FIASCO FEST

THE PEDAGOGY PLAYBOOK

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Published: October 2, 2025

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doi: 10.5281/zenodo.17249210

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About the project

'Fiasco Fest Goes Arqus'

'Fiasco Fest goes Arqus' is an activity made possible through the Arqus Innovation Fund and was implemented from 01.10.2024 to 15.09.2026 with the following partners: University of Granada, University of Graz, Leipzig University, University of Lyon 1, Maynooth University, University of Minho, Padua University, Vilnius University and University of Wrocław . The partners who brought this project to life are Carole Allouche, Laura Bousquet, Dominika Bukowska, Marian Crowley Henry, Katarzyna Kajdanek, Katriona O'Sullivan, Sara Raponi, Stéphanie Thillet, and Matteo Volpin. Their backgrounds are diverse, bringing insights from psychological research, PhD career development, as well as empowerment of female scholars. The authors of this text are Johanna Stadlbauer and Sabine Bergner. We thank Fliss Badge for editing and Alma Kovačević for research help.

The project centres around changing attitudes towards failure in academia and fostering a supportive community among researchers. It consists of three components. The first and main component is a party-workshop called 'Fiasco Fest'. The Fiasco Fest is a two-plus hour experience lab, designed to provide a safe space where researchers can share as much or as little as they want of their stories on setbacks and failures. A facilitator offers psychological insights and tools that can assist researchers in coping with challenges, enabling them to approach their next setback with care (and perhaps even humour). The party-workshop's main aim is to maintain the creativity, motivation, and commitment necessary for success in the work and careers of young researchers. The second component is this Pedagogy Playbook, which summarises the main aspects of the Fiasco Fest workshop. The final component is a train-the-trainer session, which provides training to facilitators of future Fiasco Fests.

TO DATE, RUNNING THE WORKSHOP HAS PROVIDED PARTICIPANTS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

- share their vocational setbacks in an environment characterised by kindness, support, and encouragement
- become better at appraising setbacks and reacting appropriately
- develop more awareness of personal resources to handle setbacks
- become aware that what is perceived as a fiasco is often the result of systemic failures, not personal inadequacy
- create supportive, self-organized peer networks.

The Fiasco Fest workshop and the project 'Fiasco Fest Goes Arqus' were developed at the University of Graz in 2022 by Sabine Bergner and Johanna Stadlbauer.

Sabine Bergner is an associate professor at the Department of Psychology at the University of Graz. She specialises in the topics leadership and entrepreneurship, combining insights from her background in psychology and business administration. Her research is published in international journals and books and is presented at worldwide conferences. By transferring research insights to workshops, she bridges the gap between the world inside academia and beyond.

Johanna Stadlbauer is an expert in supporting the career development of researchers (from PhD candidate to tenure-track professor, with a special focus on postdocs). She leads the Research Careers Campus at the University of Graz, has a PhD in cultural anthropology and is internationally engaged in research culture change towards a more fun and kinder academia.



This Pedagogy Playbook was written to spread the concept of the Fiasco Fest beyond the Arqus Alliance. Its aim is to enable the competent delivery of the Fiasco Fest content, regardless of the person who is leading it or the group which is taking part. It also encourages adaptation for different audiences and different settings so that the Fiasco Fest can be fruitfully implemented in various settings.

Approaching the topic of failure in academia



What do we mean by 'fiascos'?

In the context of this Pedagogy Playbook, a 'fiasco' refers to an event that occurs in a researcher's professional life and elicits a strong negative emotional response, either in the moment or upon reflection. The workshop's focus is on the subjective; on the individual perception of a life event as a fiasco (or as a setback, mishap, failure, mistake, waste of time, frustration, embarrassment, or even threat to their livelihood and future).

Fiascos in the professional realm can occur due to chance, limited resources, because a person had or was given wrong information, was hindered by a person or an institutional barrier, wasn't trained properly, due to a mismatch of skills, interests, and tasks, because of higher-level developments and many more factors. They can be huge and spectacular or they can be tiny – but their objective 'size' doesn't always align with the perception of their impact on the affected person.

Is there something specific about fiascos in academia?

Fiascos are a core element of research. To find creative solutions and make new discoveries, researchers frequently try out things without knowing whether they will work. To a certain extent, fiascos are an inbuilt part of academic careers: every researcher encounters rejections for fellowships, jobs, or papers along their path. While failure and rejection are common in (academic) life, most people would very much prefer not to experience them personally. This attitude is mirrored in the wider research culture, and so there remains a scarcity of open spaces for discussing failure.

Does a fiasco in academia have to be handled privately?

In some corners of academia, personal experiences of 'things that went wrong' are handled as a community. For example, you may have heard of the shared spreadsheet that logs rejections, used by research teams or whole departments. Everyone who has been rejected for a grant (or anything else they want to keep track of as a community) logs it into a spreadsheet, and when the entries hit a certain number, the group hosts a celebration (or buys a pot plant for the office!). In case you would like to implement such a spreadsheet on fiascos or are looking for other ways to support an error-friendly research culture, check out this link: <https://research-careers-campus.uni-graz.at/de/fiasco-repository/>. The 'Fiasco Fest Goes Arqus' project is a contribution to this movement for a more failure-friendly academic culture.

Are there risks to promoting the public sharing of fiascos?

Academia is currently highly competitive and often hierarchical. Researchers never know who their next peer reviewer or competitor for a job opening will be, as these individuals often turn out to be valued colleagues. Furthermore, good leadership skills are not evenly distributed, resulting in frequent reports of professional neglect and power abuse. Early career researchers are sometimes excluded from circles in which they could contribute, or from opportunities for career progression. As a result, individuals tend to be cautious about the impressions they create, in whom they confide, and the information they share.



Both the experience of failure and the public sharing of it are associated with different risks depending on personal circumstances. The implications of failure differ significantly for a tenured professor or a PhD candidate, and the public sharing of failures may feel more manageable for those with notable accomplishments. To an international scholar on a temporary contract, failure to secure more funding can jeopardise their right to remain in their country of residence and result in a loss of income. Despite their achievements, scholars from underrepresented backgrounds may have valid reasons for hesitating to publicly share the full spectrum of their academic experiences, including their failures.



Why should you organise a Fiasco Fest?

Existing inequalities make it more likely for some to succeed, while others are actually failed by the system. To enable researchers to benefit from vulnerability and community, it is essential to create conditions that make the academic environment safer for the public sharing of professional setbacks. As outlined above, activities like the Fiasco Fest are placed in a complex environment and can only play a small part in changing research culture. But organising a Fiasco Fest is still worthwhile, because central tenets of good research, such as risk-taking, courage, a spirit of innovation, and learning from mistakes should be equally accessible to all and should be carefully fostered.

How can you explore this topic in more depth?

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- University of Leeds (2024) 'Navigating failure in academia', Research Culture Uncovered, Episode 97 [Podcast], 11 December. Available at: <https://player.captivate.fm/episode/63e171a2-5439-4bb1-8f68-5b6cc766130a/> (Accessed: 12 Aug 2025).

Administrative instructions for hosting a Fiasco Fest

This section contains information on how to prepare a Fiasco Fest. It is a guideline based on what has worked in the past and can be adapted to local requirements.

Who are the intended participants?

- Up to 20 researchers
- Interdisciplinary and ideally brought together from different schools or universities
- At least one shared characteristic, such as having a temporary employment contract, being early-career, being a female scholar, having an interest in exploring careers beyond academia, etc

What should the setting look like?

- Festive atmosphere in an unusual location (examples of what has worked previously: glasshouses in Botanic Gardens; a local bar that was entirely reserved for the Fiasco Fest)
- Drinks and snacks provided from the start; if possible: music, joyful decoration
- Chair circle, flip chart holder or a creative way to attach chart to the wall
- Some surfaces for participants to write on during the exercises
- Exhibition space that ideally allows for a double-sided view, such as glass partition walls
- Space for going outside and mingling (can encourage participants to exchange phone numbers and form support groups)

What materials are needed?

- Metal bucket for burning little papers, lighter or matches
- Flip chart paper with instructions/lecture bullet points
- 20 felt-tip pens
- Sticky tape for exhibition
- 20 pieces of colourful paper for Top & Flop CVs
- 20 pieces of white paper
- 20 participant handouts with your local internal and external psychosocial support contact points
- Food and drink
- Optional: music and decoration

How do you advertise the Fiasco Fest?

Since this is an entirely novel concept, researchers might initially be hesitant to register. Therefore, approaching them individually about this opportunity can be helpful in addition to your usual ways of advertising an event. Below are some short and longer texts that can be used for the purpose of advertisement. They can also be adapted to local requirements.

shorter text version 1

The Fiasco Fest provides an open, festive environment in which participants talk about highlights and failures of their careers so far. They subsequently analyse what they have experienced as 'professional fiascos' and why. Together, the participants then explore which resources they have already used to overcome inevitable setbacks and they receive psychological insights and more tools for personal development from professional trainers. The Fiasco Fest concludes with an exercise in letting go and an opportunity to mingle and exchange further.

Facilitator:
Target group:
Location:

shorter text version 2

Rejection is a common part of academia – and we aim to make it fun! The Fiasco Fest is a night where career misfortunes in academia are shared, snacks and drinks are served, laughs are had, and we celebrate each other as the excellent researchers we are, resiliently moving towards our best professional selves.

Facilitator:
Target group:
Location:

Failure in academia is often perceived as shameful and is rarely discussed openly. But failure is a core element of research, because in order to find creative solutions, we have to try out new things without knowing whether they will work.

To change attitudes towards failure, and to foster a supportive community among researchers, we have come up with the idea of a party-workshop: the Fiasco Fest.

The Fiasco Fest is a three-hour experience lab, designed to provide a brave space for researchers to share – as much or as little as they want – their stories on setbacks and failures, with a facilitator providing psychological insights and tools that help with coping, enabling researchers to handle their next fiasco with care (and maybe even humour), with the goal of experiencing peer support, and keeping up the creativity, motivation, and commitment needed to thrive in their work.

It's important to understand that no one is forced to share anything – experiences are shared voluntarily, and written anonymously on paper.

There will also be the opportunity to share and discuss contributions in a plenary setting. The important end point to the event is the move outside to the 'fire pit' (any metal bowl). Everyone gets to set light to their worst fiascos – those they want to let go.

There will be food and drink.

Facilitator:

Target group:

Location:

Dear colleague,

We have a special invitation for you (reason why you reach out to them specifically)

(Date, time, location): Fiasco Fest: How to handle rejection and failure happily

Rejection is a normal part of academia – and we aim to make it fun! The Fiasco Fest is a night where career misfortunes in academia are shared, snacks and drinks are served, laughs are had, and we celebrate each other as the excellent researchers we are.

What happens at the Fiasco Fest? In a festive environment, researchers 1) record moments of pride and 'fiascos' in their career so far and share them in a 'twilight exhibition', 2) move on to analysing and exploring together what makes one's experiences a 'fiasco', 3) are provided with psychological insights and tools that help in coping with setbacks, enabling them to 'handle their next fiasco with care', and 4) take part in an exercise in letting go.

It's open to (target group)

How to register (link to registration)

How do you follow up the Fiasco Fest?

If you want to continue to work with the community that has formed during the Fiasco Fest, after the event you can follow up with those who took part. Below is an example for a follow-up email to the participants.

Follow-up email text:

Dear participants in the Fiasco Fest!

We hope you had a good night's sleep after yesterday's festivities. Attached you will find a photo of the burning fiascos as a memory. Kindly let us have your feedback on the event by Friday **(date)**.

You can dive deeper into fiascos with these suggestions:

- Jaremka, L. M., et al. (2020) 'Common academic experiences no one talks about: repeated rejection, impostor syndrome, and burnout', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 15(3), pp. 519–543. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1745691619898848?journalCode=ppsa> (Accessed: 12 Aug 2025).
- Kelsky, K. (2020) 'Dealing with rejection', Episode 6, [The Professor Is In Podcast], 11 February. Available at: <https://theprofessorisin.com/podcast/episode-6-dealing-with-rejection/> (Accessed: 12 Aug 2025).
- University of Leeds (2024) 'From setback to success: supporting researchers after unsuccessful funding applications with Anna Pilz', *Research Culture Uncovered*, Episode 6 [Podcast], 27 March. Available at: <https://player.captivate.fm/episode/63af4f69-5575-479a-9e27-5ecad10b8693> (Accessed: 12 Aug 2025).

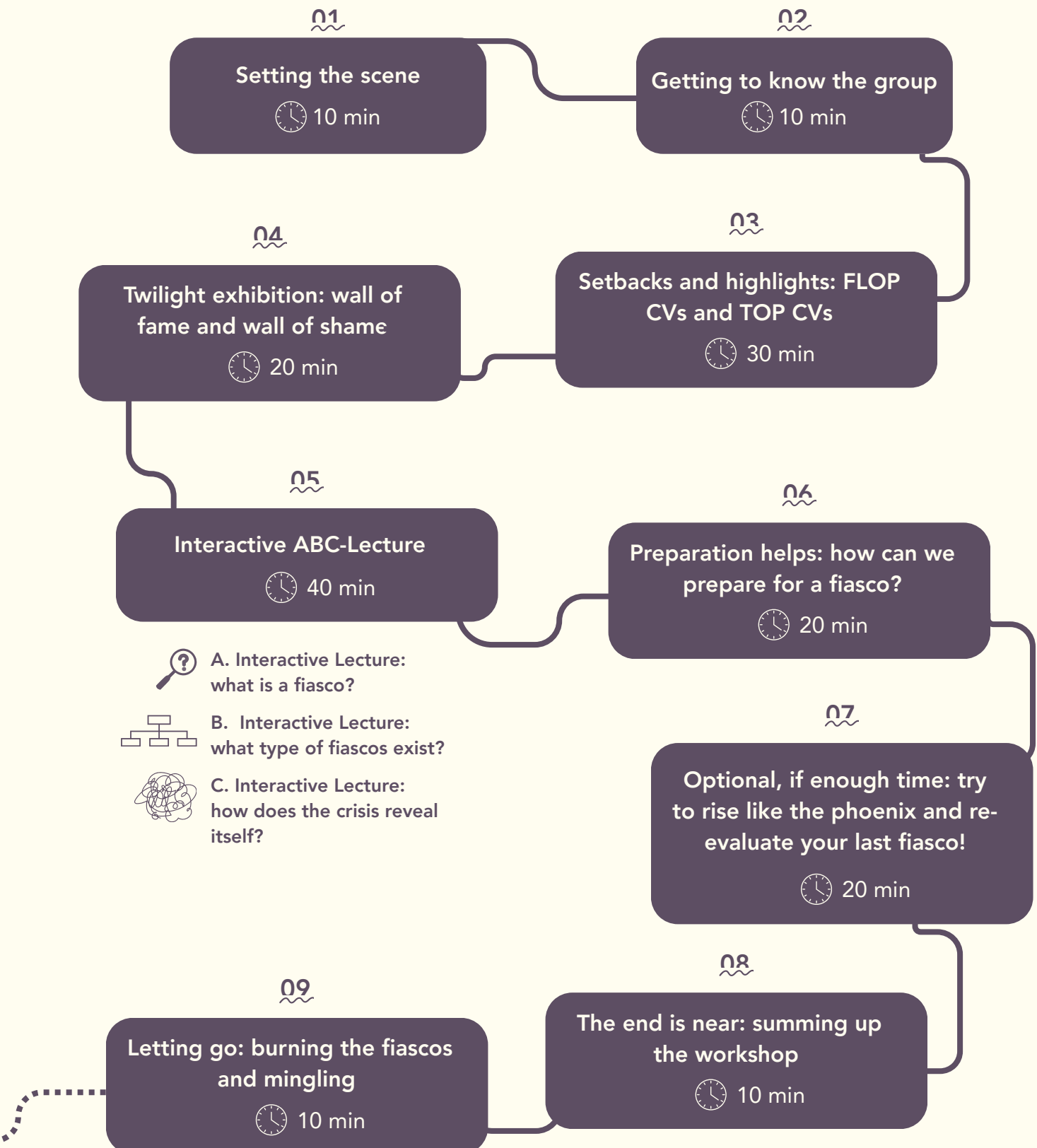
For more opportunities to meet up with other researchers check out our event programme here **[insert URL]**. We would be very happy to meet you again at one of our events.

Attached is also the handout with helpful contact points.

Thank you for being part of this!

MacBook Pro

Step-by-step guide for facilitating a Fiasco Fest workshop



This is the choreography of a Fiasco Fest workshop – further down, there is a script for a lecture to be held and flip charts to be used during the workshop. Furthermore, the introductory chapter above on handling failure in academia can also be used to introduce the topic to the participants. Of course, timings depend on how the interaction among the participants plays out.

1. Setting the scene: 10'

Dedicated focus: Create an atmosphere in which respectful sharing of fiascos and setbacks is possible

The facilitator briefly outlines their background and their own connection to the topic, explaining why they think it's good to discuss fiascos as a community. The facilitator also encourages participants to keep in touch afterwards or to seek out existing networks and to practise this kind of sharing.

They explain that their wish is to create a space for respectful sharing an space in which participants recognise that any contributions represent individual perspectives on the topic.

They emphasise that discussions are confidential and encourage individuals to prioritise their well-being by only sharing what they feel comfortable disclosing. They give participants a heads-up that there will be a discussion of personal examples of failure, but that this is voluntary, and can be as anonymous as the participants want.

The facilitator makes a statement on the limits of peer support and the limits of this workshop, stating clearly that there are instances in which participants should consult a GP or external experts in psychosocial counselling. A handout with relevant contact details is provided (given out now or after the workshop, or placed next to the door to take as needed).

2. Getting to know the group: 10'

Dedicated focus: to get to know the group and break the ice

Participants are asked to introduce themselves and briefly share information on a) their role in academia, b) their professional background and c) the level of fiascos they currently have to deal with in their (academic) life. Applying a sociometric technique, the facilitator asks the participants to stand up and position themselves in the room to express their answers to the questions. With respect to question c (level of fiasco), for example, the facilitator draws an imaginary line on the floor and marks each end with a tennis ball. The facilitator can use the following instruction: Imagine a line on the floor between these tennis balls. One end stands for 'there is not a single fiasco going on in my life right now' and the other stands for 'I am currently overwhelmed by fiascos in my life'. Position yourself on this line to represent what's currently going on in your life.

3. Setbacks and highlights: FLOP CVs and TOP CVs: 30'

Dedicated focus: to visualise personal setbacks and share them among peers

The facilitator explains that now, the aim is to identify the range of work-related fiascos one can experience in academia, and to see them in relation to the achievements that researchers might be more used to listing (as part of an application, for example). Therefore, the first exercise will be to create an exhibition of the participants' 'TOP and FLOP' CVs.



Participants are given colourful pieces of paper and pens and are tasked to write down in seven minutes all their career-related 'FLOPs'. Thus, they are asked to summarise their fiascos and setbacks. Subsequently, they are tasked with writing down all their career-related 'TOPs' in seven minutes. The FLOP and TOP CV should be no longer than one page long.

The main questions asked are the following:

- What work-related fiascos did I experience over the years?
- What work-related successes am I proud of?

They are given an example outline of a CV that includes

- education (school, uni)
- additional training
- academic position applications
- books, papers, project proposal
- prizes, awards
- teaching
- cooperation



This list can be extended if needed.

Next, participants are asked to form groups of three to four people and introduce themselves to each other with the highlights from their FLOP CVs. They are given roughly 15 minutes to do so.

To bring this small group work to an end, the facilitator asks everyone to give themselves a pat on the back and to congratulate their peers for being brave enough to share setbacks. Participants are now asked to get up, take a piece of sticky tape, and attach their TOP and FLOP CVs to the wall so that they can be seen by everybody.

4. Twilight exhibition: wall of fame and wall of shame: 20'

Dedicated focus: to obtain an overview of setbacks that happen to everyone but no one talks about

With the FLOP and TOP CVs taped to the wall, the participants are invited to the so-called 'twilight exhibition'. Here they can experience wandering around in the room and browsing all the career successes and fiascos that can occur in academia. The facilitator invites the participants to take a drink and stroll through the exhibition, reading the exhibits (i.e. FLOP and TOP CVs). They are invited to comment on the CVs by putting stickers on them. Importantly, they are asked to answer two questions while strolling through the twilight exhibition:

- 1) What kinds/types of fiascos can you find on the CVs? Try to group them for yourself!
- 2) What turns a common event or happening into a personal fiasco?

Once they feel that they have seen and read everything that is of interest to them, the participants leave the twilight exhibition and return to their seats. When everybody is seated, the next part begins.

5. Interactive ABC-Lecture: what is a fiasco and how do we navigate it and subsequently grow from it ? 40'

Dedicated focus: to provide theoretical input on fiascos and clarify how they affect us

Back in the circle, the two questions – 1) What kinds/types of fiascos can you find on the CVs? and 2) What turns a common event or happening into a personal fiasco? – are openly discussed. The facilitator asks questions so that, in the end, the participants come up with the main theoretical points themselves. The participants' answers are noted on the flip chart.



A. Interactive Lecture: what is a fiasco?

From a psychological point of view, the type of fiasco addressed in the Fiasco Fest workshop refers to a crisis. A personal crisis is defined as 'a situation [...] that produces significant cognitive or emotional stress in those involved in it' (APA, 2018). The main characteristics that turn a common event or happening into a personal crisis are the following (Rosenthal and Boin, 2001):

- It is triggered by an external event or an event subjectively interpreted as being external,
- which is experienced as a threat (e.g. to core values) and thus evokes emotional pain,
- requiring critical decisions under time pressure and uncertain circumstances, and
- leads to an imbalance between personal resources and demands.



B. Interactive Lecture: what type of fiascos exist?

Various types of crises exist. The fiascos addressed at the Fiasco Fest workshop are considered as a maturing crisis. The following types can be discussed with the participants:

1. Maturing crisis (a crisis that forces us to learn and adopt new strategies to overcome the crisis)
2. Situational crisis (a crisis that is strongly tied to a specific situation that we cannot handle well)
3. Extraordinary crisis (a crisis that jeopardises our lives like being in a war zone)



C. Interactive Lecture: how does the crisis reveal itself?

There follows an interactive lecture (see templates further down), in which the facilitator draws on the previous exercise and resulting discussions, and makes the following points:

A crisis reveals itself on several levels. It shows on a ...

- physiological level (e.g. sleeplessness, muscle tension, heart rate, pulse, menstruation cycle)
- cognitive level (e.g. circular thoughts, negative voices in head, memory loss, reduced concentration)
- psychological level (e.g. shattered sense of self, feeling of being disconnected, sadness, fear)

A crisis reveals itself differently over time. It follows a time logic (Cullbers, 1987; Kast, 1989):

- It starts with a shock phase in which we feel paralysed, down, and depressed.
- In the subsequent chaos phase, we tend to react to the event in a disorganised and chaotic manner.
- Third, in the working phase we start accepting the situation and search for potential solutions.
- Finally, in the new orientation phase, we reframe what happened and start working with the new situation.

6. Preparation helps: how can we prepare for a fiasco? 20'

Dedicated focus: to produce a list of resources that can be used to deal with the next fiasco

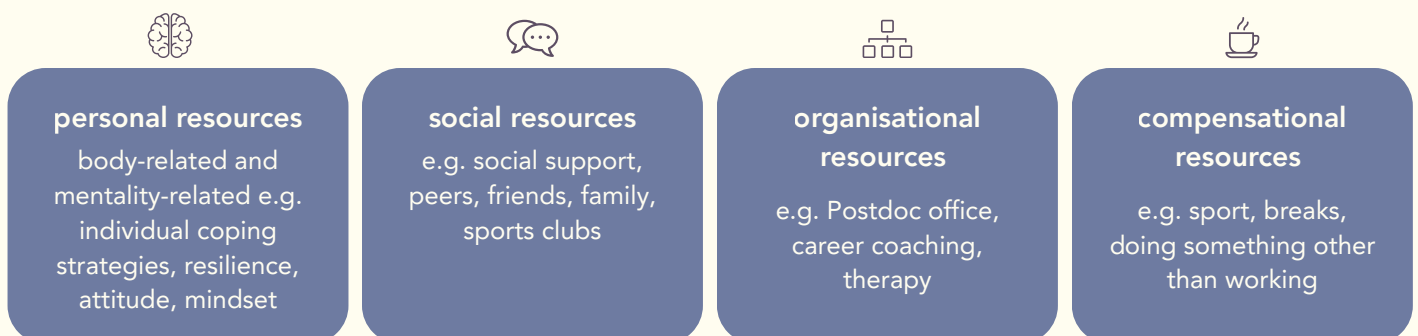
Still in the circle, the facilitator poses the question 'What can be done to prepare for a fiasco?' This question is again openly discussed. The facilitator asks questions in such a way that, in the end, the participants have a number of potential resources they know about and can start building towards being better prepared to handle the next fiasco. The participants' answers are again noted on the flip chart.

The brainstorming regarding the resources is supposed to result in the stress model developed by Lazarus (1970). Its main idea is the following:

The Lazarus stress model suggests that the stress associated with a fiasco/crisis is not just about the event itself, but also about how we perceive and interpret that event. When faced with a fiasco, we first assess whether it is a threat or a challenge, which is called the primary appraisal. Next, we evaluate our ability to cope with the fiasco, known as the secondary appraisal. In the case where we feel we have enough resources to deal with the fiasco, we are safe. However, if we feel that we do not have enough resources to handle the fiasco, it becomes a (severe) crisis.

Ergo: To deal with a fiasco we can a) reinterpret the event (primary appraisal) or b) build up as many resources as possible to cope with it.

The following groups of resources clarify which resources we have to build up:



This model on stress and resources highlights that our emotional responses to stress depend on our perceptions and coping resources, meaning that two people can react very differently to the same situation based on their individual views and resources.

7. Optional, if enough time: try to rise like the phoenix and re-evaluate your last fiasco! 20'

The facilitator says: "Be aware: *fiascos and setbacks cannot be avoided! But you can prepare for them.*" They state that the next step is for participants to sit down by themselves for seven minutes, select one of their fiascos and work on it by

- a. reframing it (primary appraisal) and
- b. brainstorming available resources to handle similar situations in the future (secondary appraisal)

Participants are handed white paper to make notes.

Instructions:

- Please look at this fiasco from a different perspective and answer this: why was this experience needed and useful, how did it enrich your life?
- Next, please try to remember: what resources (personal, social, organisational, compensational) did you have and use to cope with the fiasco back then?

After giving them seven minutes for their work, participants are asked – if they feel comfortable in doing so – to share how the exercise went. The facilitator sums up the participants' answers, trying to draw out the learning and development component, and lists some of the coping mechanisms mentioned by the group members.

8. The end is near: summing up the workshop 10'

The facilitator sums up briefly what has taken place during the whole workshop, what they hope the learning outcomes of the workshop were, and points out that while what will stay in people's minds most today will be the misfortunes discussed, they should also reserve some time to dwell on the things they are proud of.

The facilitator draws attention to the TOP side of the CVs, and all the things listed there, and suggests that participants find time in their everyday life to celebrate their achievements – both big and small. By way of closing, the facilitator can say thanks to the group or share their own personal impressions of the workshop.

9. Letting go: burning the fiascos and mingling 10' (open-ended)

The facilitator announces the last step: 'Burn the fiasco(s) that you want to let go!

White paper is passed around, and participants have a few minutes to note down something that they want to burn. Meanwhile, the facilitator sets up the fire pit or metal bowl and a lighter and waits for the participants to come to where the burning will happen. Participants set their fiascos on fire and drop them into the bowl.

Now (more) drinks can be served, and participants are encouraged to mingle.



Suggestions for participant handout, interactive lecture script, flip charts



The below should be understood as suggestions, to inspire the creating of individual facilitators' workshop materials based on what concepts they are comfortable working with and what they think their audience can benefit from the most.

Handout with contact points

A handout with contact points is good to have because it showcases the supportive environment available to researchers. The message with the handout is that it is good to be prepared in case one experiences setbacks, and that it is good to seek professional support, both preventatively and in a crisis. The contacts on this handout should be tailored to fit the audience and their needs. Among useful contacts in the context of fiascos are:

- Employee or student counselling and psychosocial advice facilities/offices
- Ombudspersons, conflict resolution and anti-bullying services
- Anti-discrimination and gender equality contact points
- Research career development office
- Staff development unit
- Union representatives
- External (outside university) contacts for mental well-being and crisis support
- Relevant self-organised networks and representations of scholars and students

Lecture script suggestion and source literature

Below you will find a template for a script and references for the research articles from which the concepts used during the Fiasco Fest originate. Please feel free to adapt the script with concepts you are familiar with, and which serve the same purpose.

1) There is a relationship between what happens in the workplace and what happens in our bodies

From your responses, we see that despite our fiascos being work-related, and not in the physical realm like a car accident, a fire that burns down a house, or an armed conflict, we feel them very strongly in our body.

Career misfortunes affect us on many levels: physiologically, we might experience sleeplessness, our heart rate changes, weight fluctuates, our behaviour is temporarily out of order; psychologically, they may affect our self-confidence, we might feel hopeless, there is tension; cognitively, we may experience memory loss, circular thoughts, difficulty in concentrating.

Of course, you are all aware of this relationship between what happens in the social world – like in our jobs, in our research teams – and what happens inside us. This has also been described in research by developmental and social/behavioural scientists: the fact that society and the body are in an interplay. Happenings 'outside' the body impact the developing brain and body of an individual throughout their life. Similarly, how our health is, how our body and brain work influence how we interact and handle the world around us. In summary, social, cultural, economic, and biological factors are widely recognised as critical determinants of well-being by scholars such as occupational psychologists.

2) Our fiascos follow a pattern that we can try to analyse.

When we look at our fiascos, initially they are:

- surprising,
- have an emotional component,
- cause an inner conflict,
- there is a moment when an obstacle presents itself that cannot be managed with resources that are immediately available,
- there occurs a narrowing down of our perception,
- there is a perceived threat to our balance in life.

And as we also saw in our walk-through, we go through stages when fiascos occur. In the models of many psychologists, people who are confronted with a misfortune are said to move through several stages. Usually, these start with the exposure to stressors and attempts to restore homeostasis; failure to restore homeostasis; and then it goes from there. As many of you have described

1. in the beginning there is shock, you might feel paralysed, you feel down, you are in bed crying,
2. you react, which can at first feel chaotic and emotional,
3. you become active by accepting and searching for resources to handle the crisis,
4. here comes a new orientation, a way forward, a reframing.

So we can see, crises aren't just one single moment. And in them is the potential for personal development.

3) Crises can lead to growth.

Maybe you have heard of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross who describes the stages people go through when handling grief. One author who looks at the psychology of crisis in a similar manner to Kübler-Ross is Verena Kast, who describes a specific type of crisis, one that leads to growth.

- a. This kind of crisis starts with a state of 'not wanting to accept it' (this may include a feeling of emptiness, as if petrified, the impression that one is dreaming and the loss is not real, a shock reaction, a denial of the problem).
- b. Then comes a phase of emerging, chaotic emotions (such as anger, rage, guilt, searching for someone to blame, the feeling of having to pull yourself together, restlessness, doubts about self-worth and competence).
- c. There follows a phase in which one begins to understand the meaning of the misfortune, experiencing the beginnings of an acceptance of what has happened, starting to take personal responsibility for one's life and beginning to feel joy and relief.
- d. This all ends with a new relationship with oneself and the world, which can include the emergence of new values, the development of new relationships, new insights are tested, and new ways of behaving and experiencing are tried out.

But what do we need to make it more likely that we can learn and move on from our fiascos?

4) In order for our fiasco to be an opportunity for growth, we need resources.

Short answer: We need a balance between stressors and resources. In a model from the 1980s by psychologists Lazarus and Folkman, stress occurs when individuals perceive a discrepancy between the demands of a situation and what they feel they can cope with. Similarly, the so-called Job–Demands–Resources–Model from occupational psychology describes how well-being in the work context can be upheld. It looks at the balance between demands and resources and what is needed so that job demands do not result in burnout. Among these resources are things like autonomy, support, and feedback, which lead to higher engagement and better performance at work. These resources can reduce the impact of negative factors present in your work life – such as our fiascos.

And there is a practical component to the Lazarus model, which we will use now. According to Lazarus and Folkman, individuals engage in primary appraisal (assessing the significance of the difficult situation) and secondary appraisal (evaluating their resources for coping with what is happening). These can be :



For our purposes, how does that work? Primary appraisal means we assess what is happening and try to understand if the situation holds more meaning than we see at first – that can allow moving on from our initial assessment of it as a fiasco. We might realise that we can reframe it as something that holds potential for our development, that has given something to our life.

Secondary appraisal means you look at the resources available to handle fiascos well and integrate them into your life. We will do that now.

Literature on the Biosocial Model of Health

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Literature on stress and coping

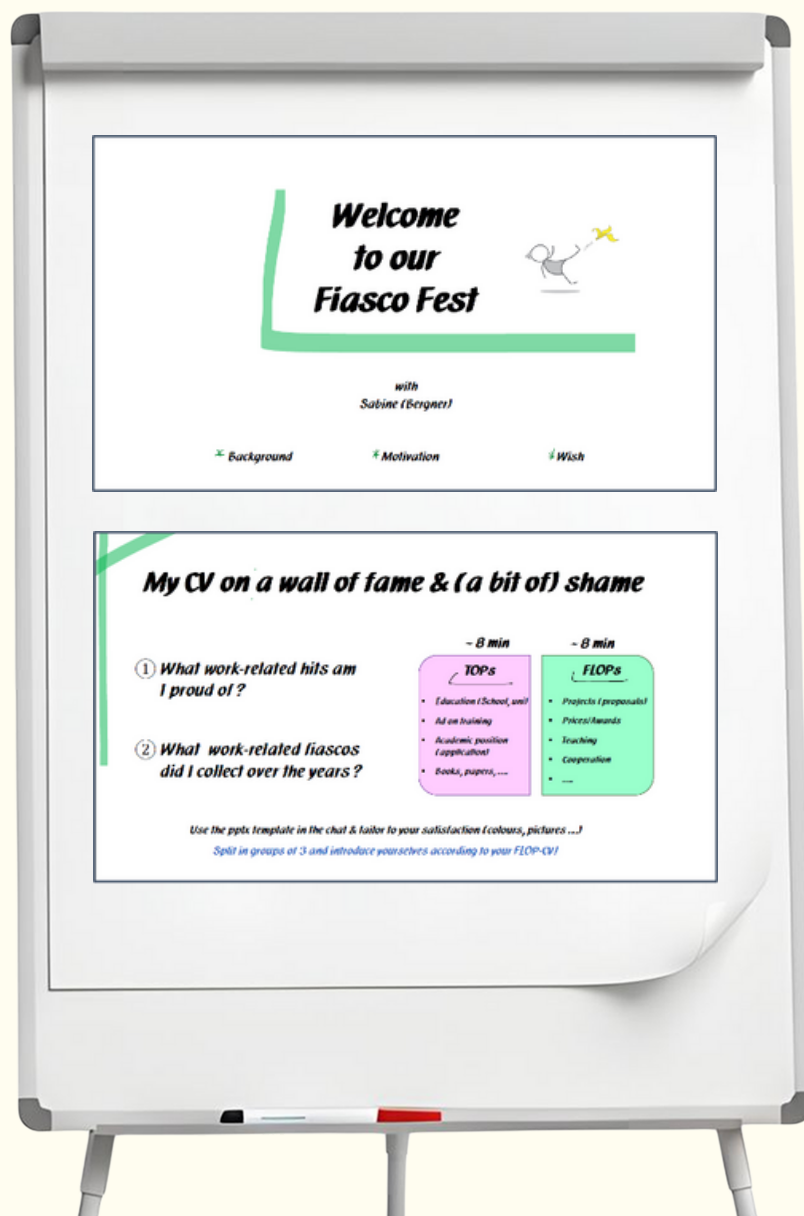
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Literature on the Job Demands Resources Model

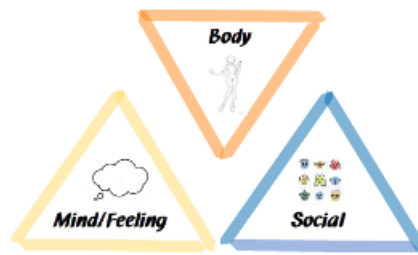
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Flip chart templates and more resources

These are original flipcharts used in the workshops, created by Sabine Bergner. A broader selection of flip charts, which have been created and used by Sabine Bergner and other facilitators during the Fiasco Fest, is available on our website: <https://postdoc.uni-graz.at/de/fiasco-fest-goes-arqus/>. They can be used as inspiration and adapted as needed.

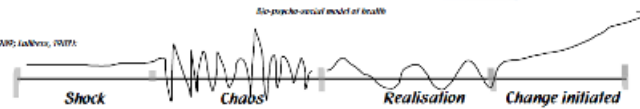


How did my fiascos dress up?



Bio-psychosocial model of trouble

Rhythm of crisis (Katz, 1985; Gellert, 1987)



The twilight exhibition - what is a fiasco?

- ① *Post your TOP/FLOP CV in the chat !*
- ② *Comment if you want using smiles/stickynotes ...*
- ③ *Walk through the exhibits and ask yourself "what are main characteristics of a fiasco anyway"?*



Let's collect a fiasco's characteristics on the whiteboard!

Psychology can land a hand !

How to cope with stress ? (Lazarus, 1979)

- ① Evaluate the situation (primary appraisal)!
- ② Check your resources (secondary appraisal)



Endowed resources (physiological)
Mentally-related resources (psychological)
Social resources
Material resources



Balance between stressors & resources

Handle your next fiasco with care !

Be aware: fiascos & setbacks cannot be avoided!
- But you can prepare !



- ① Chose one of your fiascos from the CV !
- ② Retraming & primary appraisal: Try to answer "why did I need this fiasco and how did it enrich my life"?
- ③ Resources & secondary appraisals: Try to answer: "What resources helped me to deal with it & in which area do I see a personal lack of resources"?



Don't forget that fiascos & setbacks are chances for personal development !

Take them and rise from the ashes - like a phoenix !



Co-funded by
the European Union



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European University Alliance

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This is an Arqus Innovation Fund bottom-up initiative (duration: 01.10.2024 to 15.09.2026). Five Arqus European University Alliance partner universities are taking part: University of Lyon 1, University of Graz, Maynooth University, Padua University, and University of Wrocław.

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The Arqus European University Alliance is co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

