

The Better Conversations Foundation

The Better Conversations Foundation

Mar 10, 2025

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OPEN THE DOOR TO BETTER COMMUNICATION

Nice to meet you. We are the Better Conversations Foundation. We help people connect on a human level.

The BCF is dedicated to helping people around the world have Better Conversations in their professional and private lives. It doesn't take much to make a big difference in the quality of your life.

We have created the Better Conversations course which trainers, coaches, managers, and L&D professionals can freely download and incorporate into their work.

You can [download the flight plans for the course here](#) and use them under the Creative Commons license.

If you are a member of the Foundation, you can see the [Course documentation here](#), and access the [private community here](#).

JOINING THE FOUNDATION

Our community of fellow professionals support each other delivering the course, and also the use of Clean Language and Emergent Knowledge in business settings.

If you would like to be considered for membership, please either:

- Ask an existing member to sponsor you. They can do that in the bettercourses.org application.
- [Arrange a call here](#), so we can have a conversation and decide if we're a good fit for each other

ATTENDING A COURSE

If you would like to attend Better Conversations, there are many people providing both private and public courses. We also work in partnership with other nonprofits whose members can attend the course for free and are pre-approved for membership. You'll have a referral link via those organisations, if you can't find it get in touch with us using the little support icon at the bottom right of this screen.

If you want to know more, or if you want to get involved, please get in touch with us.

[Get in touch](#)

About Us

The Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation, founded by Simon Coles and Chandima Dutton, to help people have better conversations at work and beyond. We believe that better conversations lead to better relationships, better decisions, and better outcomes. We want to help people to be their unique selves, and to connect with others in a way that is meaningful and fulfilling.



Simon Coles, Co-Founder, Board Member

Simon is the CEO of a successful privately owned tech company. He built the company from start-up to a mature business, based on the principles of open and honest communication. That 20-year journey led to the creation of the Foundation, to share the lessons learned and to help people be more effective at work.



Chandima Dutton, Co-Founder, Board Member

Chandima is Head of People at Simon's company, supporting people to be their unique selves at work. With a background in STEM, and extensive corporate experience, Chandima is passionate about enabling resilient teams, and sparking creativity and innovation through the power of human connection.

Our Appreciation

This has been a multi-year project involving many people.

We would like to particularly thank the following who have made significant contributions to the course content, and/or the overall project (listed in alphabetical order):

Allison Coles

Amanda Greenwood

Alex Coles

Joshua Coles

Simon Coles

Lyndsay Conklin
Mathew Cooke
Catherine Daley
Chandima Dutton
Mike Haber
Johanna Hagen
Emma Humphrey
Shaun Hotchkiss
Beth Hughes
Nkosi Khumalo
James Lawley
Christian Mejer Knudsen
Kyoko Kusama
Jackie Lawlor
Sara-Amina Mbegu
Steve McCann
Dr Virginia McKendry
Matthew Michaelsen
Dr Robyn Odegaard
Michael Oskam
Dan Parsons
Shivani Patel
Christine Pavlina
Kevin Pearcey
Sarah Scarratt
Hester Sher
Christine Stief
Jacqueline Ann Surin
Judy Rees
Penny Tompkins
Dr Caitlin Walker
Cheryl Winter

We would also like to acknowledge the late David Grove, developer of Clean Language, upon which Better Conversations and so much else is built on.

Faculty and Ambassadors

Faculty

Faculty members are trusted to deliver the course to a consistently high standard. They often deliver the course on behalf of the Foundation on a voluntary basis in our “Experience Courses” as well as in their own private work.

We could never have achieved what we have without the support of our Faculty, who have generously given their time and expertise to help us create our content. We are grateful for their support and are proud to work with them in our community and in our commercial work.

Our current Faculty includes:

Lyndsay Conklin

Evelina De Lain

Steve McCann

Christian Mejer Knudsen

Sara-Amina Mbegu

Virginia McKendry, Ph.D.

Matthew Michaelsen

Johan Nordin

Dr Robyn Odegaard

Judy Rees

Christine Stief

Kathryn Vere

Ambassadors

The Better Conversations Foundation has a number of Ambassadors who are trusted to be ambassadors for the Foundation and to help us spread the word about the Foundation and the course.

There’s no specific criteria for being an Ambassador. It’s more Chandima and Simon realising someone “gets it”, is passionate about the Foundation’s mission, and can communicate it effectively.

Ideally there’s an Ambassador present for every Experience Course, to provide the Foundation’s context and quality control.

Current Ambassadors include:

Lyndsay Conklin

Evelina De Lain

Virginia McKendry, Ph.D.

Matthew Michaelsen

Dr Robyn Odegaard

Dan Parsons

Our Commercial Arm

If you want to engage with an entity that is ISO 9001 certified, B-Corp certified, is VAT registered, and has a long history then we're happy to work with you through Amphora Solutions Ltd.

The Foundation is a non-profit and is not set up to do business in the same way.

In addition - we're here for our partners. Nothing is more important to us than the relationships we have with our partners.

Amphora Solutions will happily engage with organisations who want Better Conversations at scale. We'll provide the reassurance of a long-standing, well-regarded company that has been in business for over 15 years.

We'll rely on our existing partners and faculty to help us deliver the course, and we'll be working with them to ensure that the course is delivered to the highest standards.

For smaller engagements, we'll strongly encourage you to work with our partners, who are all experts in their field.

Contact Us

You can contact our support team by clicking the button below.

Email

Alternatively, you can email us at hello@betterconversations.foundation. But the form above is more reliable as it won't get lost in spam filters.

Our Mission

We want to enable people to have better conversations, better relationships and better outcomes. We will do this by bringing the power of Clean Language into organisations, on a global scale.

We have a disruptive model for how we like to work with people to achieve our aims. It's about enabling others, growing organically and challenging norms.

We bring our capabilities, skills and experience and encourage you to bring yours. And we achieve more together that way than we can possibly do alone.

Our Story

This is the story of how the course was developed, and how the Foundation came to be.

Simon Coles of Amphora Research Systems has been working with Clean Language since the late 1990s following a course run by Caitlin Walker at [New Information Paradigms](#). This later became known as "Metaphors at Work" and we ended up being an example for some Open University videos which are still on YouTube: [Open University Video](#).

At NIP Simon pioneered the first commercial Electronic Laboratory Notebook (ELN) system, and in 2003 did a management buyout from NIP to form [Amphora Research Systems](#) as an independent company.

It was evident that Clean Language was a powerful tool for improving conversations in the business, especially in the sales process, and so Simon started to look for ways to train more people in the approach. This proved to be difficult, although Simon managed to find Caitlin Walker again sometime around 2012 and Caitlin ran a series of Clean Language workshops with the sales team.

Around this time, Amphora got interested in neurodiversity and the idea that different people have different ways of processing information. This led to an engagement with Nancy Doyle of [Genius Within](#), where underpinned by Clean Language, the Amphora team started to explore how they could work better together using the more detailed information gained from WAIS assessments.

By this time Clean Language was used across the business, in a light but important way. It was important that new hires were trained in Clean Language, and that the training was delivered in a way that was accessible and repeatable.

It soon became clear that the existing Clean Language training was not meeting the needs of the business. Not only were their logistical challenges, but the “Pure” Clean courses were aimed at Coaches and Therapists, or Facilitators, and not ordinary people working in a business.

In addition there were some dogmatic views about what Clean Language was and was not, and “Systemic Modelling” had grown to incorporate all sorts of things which weren’t Clean Language at all, nor appropriate for the workplace.

Around 2017 Simon started to think about how he could develop a training course that would be more effective.

- It had to be accessible and repeatable
- It had to be online
- It had to be modular, and fit into people’s working day - an hour at a time
- It had to be consistent, so that colleagues who did the course at different times would learn the same things
- It had to be run over a relatively short timescale - the original course was 4 modules over 4 weeks
- It had to be scalable
- It had to be robust and reliable when delivered to diverse participants across cultures and contexts
- It had to support employees with any behaviour change that is needed for better conversations, and be relevant and easy to apply in business situations

Simon tried to various approaches including recording short videos explaining the approach, but these didn’t work. He realised that he needed a course that was interactive and involved practicing the skills, not watching videos.

Thus began a long and winding road of development, with the first experimental course being run externally in 2019, and has been iteratively developed since then.

Working from an approach which is very natural in the software industry, the course has always been “Open Source” and has been developed with the support of a wide community.

Chandima Dutton joined Amphora in 2022 as Head of People and has been instrumental in the development of the course from an internal tool to something that people around the world can rely on to incorporate into their work.

In 2024 Simon and Chandima formalised the Better Conversations Foundation to support people who use the course and make it available to a wider audience.

Under Chandima’s leadership, the Foundation has been able to invest in the development of the course and the detailed documentation we provide on this site.

The Foundation is also able to support the development of new courses and resources, and to support people who want to help the world communicate just a little bit better, every day.

We’re excited for the future and hope you can join us in this great adventure!

Behind the Scenes

Technical Stack

If you’re interested in the technical details of how this website and the Foundation’s content is run...

- The website is built using Sphinx, GitHub repository here <https://github.com/Better-Conversations/betterconversations.foundation>, served by Caddy on one of our servers.
- The course Flight Plans are here <https://github.com/Better-Conversations/flightplan-sources>
- The flight plans use a custom DSL which is here <https://github.com/Better-Conversations/ruby-flightplans>
- The web site bettercourses.org makes everything work. It does all the scheduling, enrolment, delivery console, certificates, etc. This was build in-house by the Better Conversations Foundation in Ruby on Rails.

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- Our community is run on Discourse, <https://community.betterconversations.foundation> with authentication via bettercourses.org
 - Our support is run on Zammad, <https://support.betterconversations.foundation> with authentication via bettercourses.org

Foundation Governance

This is all a bit nerdy, but it's important to be transparent how we are structured and run. (It is also public information you could find bit a bit of digging, so we're not doing anything magnificent sharing this, but it's good to be open about it.)

Structure

The Better Conversations Foundation Ltd is a company registered with Companies House in the UK (company number 15602408). [You can see the registration details here.](#)

As a "Foundation" it is a company limited by guarantee, which means that it has no shareholders and cannot pay dividends - it is a non profit. [The relevant details from companies house are here.](#)

To use this word in your proposed name, the company should normally be limited by guarantee. It should have a pool of money, or a regular source of income to promote its objects. You will need to confirm this when you submit your application.

A non-profit distribution clause should be included in the articles of association. The non-profit clause provides that any profits are used to further the objects of the company and not paid to the members as dividends.

In the case of a business name, the articles or relevant governance document should include similar clauses and you should provide a copy when you submit your application.

Articles of Association

The Board

The Foundation is run by a Board of Directors, who are responsible for the governance of the Foundation.

- Chandima Dutton, CEO and course owner
- Simon Coles, Chairman and CTO

Board members work closely together, but have formal meetings ("a directors' meeting") as needed which are minuted on this page.

This meets the requirement of the articles that "The directors must ensure that the company keeps a record, in writing, for at least 10 years from the date of the decision recorded, of every unanimous or majority decision taken by the directors".

Board Meeting - 27th February 2025

Location: An undisclosed eatery, Thame, England

Attendees: Simon Coles, Chandima Dutton

Chairman: Simon Coles

Minutes

1. Tea was served, and the meeting was called to order at 14:16 PM.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.
3. The board discussed recent events and determined to adopt a Code of Conduct for the Foundation's community. The Code of Conduct can be found [on this site](#).
4. The board noted that involvement in the Foundation's activities is by invitation, which can be withdrawn at any time by the board.
5. It was further noted that selected individuals have disqualified themselves from involvement in the Foundation's activities. The board has withdrawn its invitation to participate in Foundation activities from two individuals. This does not fall within the scope of the Community Code of Conduct.
6. The meeting was adjourned at 14:36 PM.

Company "Members"

A company limited by guarantee has "members", who are the equivalent of shareholders in a company limited by shares.

You'll notice in the Companies House requirements we have to address this "It should have a pool of money, or a regular source of income to promote its objects".

Whilst we hope in time to be able to generate some income to support our work, at the moment we're reliant on the support of Amphora Research Systems Ltd, who have provided the initial funding to get us started. They are also providing the infrastructure and support for the Foundation to operate.

So the "Member" of the Foundation is Pithos Ltd, which is the holding company that owns Amphora Research Systems Ltd. The Foundation can't pay dividends, so any profits it makes will be used to further its objectives.

Note that generally when we talk about "members" we are referring to the members of the [Better Conversations community](#). It is only in the legal articles that the word "member" is used where you might normally expect "shareholder" in a for-profit company.

Intellectual Property Policy

As a general rule we release our IP under either a Creative Commons license or an Open Source license depending on the nature of the work¹. We believe that the best way to get our work out there is to make it available under the most permissive terms possible.

The Better Conversations Community

You might think Better Conversations is a course, perhaps even a set of flight plans. In fact, all of that comes from our community.

The Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to support the community.

This page documents how the community is governed.

Note that this Code of Conduct is for the Better Conversations community, not the Better Conversations Foundation. Employees of the Foundation are subject to the Foundation's Employee Handbook and disciplinary process which may be more stringent than the Code of Conduct, have different processes, and have more severe penalties.

¹ "Creative Commons" is appropriate for works that are copyrighted but where we want to allow people to use our work under certain conditions. "Open Source" is appropriate for software.

Code of Conduct

Introduction

This document outlines the Code of Conduct for the Better Conversations community. Following a [consultation with the community](#), the following Code of Conduct was adopted by the Board of Directors of the Foundation at their meeting of 27th February 2025.

The Better Conversations team and community is made up of a mixture of professionals and volunteers from all over the world, working on every aspect of the mission - including mentorship, teaching, and connecting people.

Diversity is one of our huge strengths, but it can also lead to communication issues and unhappiness. To that end, we have a few ground rules that we ask people to adhere to. This code applies equally to founders, mentors and those seeking help and guidance.

This isn't an exhaustive list of things that you can't do. Rather, take it in the spirit in which it's intended - a guide to make it easier to enrich all of us and the technical communities in which we participate.

This code of conduct applies to all spaces managed by the Better Conversations Foundation. This includes the [Community](#), Foundation events, and any other forums created by the project team which the community uses for communication. In addition, violations of this code outside these spaces may affect a person's ability to participate within them.

If you believe someone is violating the code of conduct, we ask that you report it by emailing [contacting us here](#). For more details please see our [Reporting Guidelines](#).

- Be friendly and patient.
- Be welcoming. We strive to be a community that welcomes and supports people of all backgrounds and identities. This includes, but is not limited to members of any race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, colour, immigration status, social and economic class, educational level, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, size, family status, political belief, religion, and mental and physical ability.
- Be considerate. Your work will be used by other people, and you in turn will depend on the work of others. Any decision you take will affect users and colleagues, and you should take those consequences into account when making decisions. Remember that we're a world-wide community, so you might not be communicating in someone else's primary language.
- Be respectful. Not all of us will agree all the time, but disagreement is no excuse for poor behavior and poor manners. We might all experience some frustration now and then, but we cannot allow that frustration to turn into a personal attack. It's important to remember that a community where people feel uncomfortable or threatened is not a productive one. Members of the Better Conversations community should be respectful when dealing with other members as well as with people outside the Better Conversations community.
- Be careful in the words that you choose. We are a community of professionals, and we conduct ourselves professionally. Be kind to others. Do not insult or put down other participants. Harassment, bullying, and other exclusionary behavior aren't acceptable. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Violent threats or language directed against another person.
 - Discriminatory jokes and language.
 - Posting sexually explicit or violent material.
 - Posting (or threatening to post) other people's personally identifying information ("doxing").
 - Personal insults, especially those using racist or sexist terms.
 - Unwelcome sexual attention.
 - Advocating for, or encouraging, any of the above behavior.
 - Repeated harassment of others. In general, if someone asks you to stop, then stop.
- Bullying is any pattern of behavior—whether verbal, written, electronic, or physical—that is hostile, intimidating, or demeaning, and is intended to (or can reasonably be expected to) harm, intimidate, humiliate, belittle, or isolate another person or group. Such behavior can be repeated or singular if sufficiently severe,

and may exploit real or perceived imbalances of power, status, or ability. Examples include persistent harassment, purposeful exclusion, public or private ridicule, threats, or any acts that create a hostile environment or discourage an individual from participating fully within the community.

- When we disagree, try to understand why. Disagreements, both social and technical, happen all the time and Django is no exception. It is important that we resolve disagreements and differing views constructively. Remember that we're different. The strength of Django comes from its varied community, people from a wide range of backgrounds. Different people have different perspectives on issues. Being unable to understand why someone holds a viewpoint doesn't mean that they're wrong. Don't forget that it is human to err and blaming each other doesn't get us anywhere. Instead, focus on helping to resolve issues and learning from mistakes.

Original text courtesy of the [Django Code of Conduct](#) and in their turn, the [Speak Up!](#) project.

License of this Material

We've taken inspiration from the *Django Code of Conduct* <<https://www.djangoproject.com/conduct/>> which we acknowledge as a good example use under their Creative Commons license. We've adjusted it to meet our needs but the content here remains under the same license.

So this page is unusual on this site in that the underlying Copyright is not held by the Foundation, but by the Django Software Foundation and made available under a [Creative Commons license](#).

Code of Conduct - Reporting Guide

If you believe someone is violating the code of conduct we ask that you report it to the Foundation by [contacting us here](#). All reports will be kept confidential. In some cases we may determine that a public statement will need to be made. If that's the case, the identities of all victims and reporters will remain confidential unless those individuals instruct us otherwise.

If you believe anyone is in physical danger, please notify appropriate law enforcement first. If you are unsure what law enforcement agency is appropriate, please include this in your report and we will attempt to notify them.

If you are unsure whether the incident is a violation, or whether the space where it happened is covered by this Code of Conduct, we encourage you to still report it. We would much rather have a few extra reports where we decide to take no action, rather than miss a report of an actual violation. We do not look negatively on you if we find the incident is not a violation. And knowing about incidents that are not violations, or happen outside our spaces, can also help us to improve the Code of Conduct or the processes surrounding it.

In your report please include:

- Your contact info (so we can get in touch with you if we need to follow up)
- Names (real, nicknames, or pseudonyms) of any individuals involved. If there were other witnesses besides you, please try to include them as well.
- When and where the incident occurred. Please be as specific as possible.
- Your account of what occurred. If there is a publicly available record (e.g. a forum post) please include a link.
- Any extra context you believe existed for the incident.
- If you believe this incident is ongoing.
- Any other information you believe we should have.

What happens after you file a report?

You will receive an email from the Board acknowledging receipt as soon as possible. We promise to acknowledge receipt within 24 hours (and will aim for much quicker than that).

The Board will immediately meet to review the incident and determine:

- What happened.
- Whether this event constitutes a code of conduct violation.
- Who the individual responsible was.
- Whether this is an ongoing situation, or if there is a threat to anyone's physical safety.

If this is determined to be an ongoing incident or a threat to physical safety, the Board's immediate priority will be to protect everyone involved. This means we may delay an "official" response until we believe that the situation has ended and that everyone is physically safe.

Once the Board has a complete account of the events they will make a decision as to how to respond. Responses may include:

- Nothing (if we determine no violation occurred).
- A private reprimand from the Board to the individual(s) involved.
- A public reprimand.
- An imposed vacation (i.e. asking someone to "take a week off" from the forum).
- A permanent or temporary ban from some or all Better Conversations Foundation spaces (the Community, experience courses, etc.)
- A request for a public or private apology.

We'll respond within one week to the person who filed the report with either a resolution or an explanation of why the situation is not yet resolved.

Once we've determined our final action, we'll contact the original reporter to let them know what action (if any) we'll be taking. We'll take into account feedback from the reporter on the appropriateness of our response, but we don't guarantee we'll act on it.

Finally, the Board may choose to issue a public report or statement about the incident if it deems this necessary for transparency or community safety.

What if your report concerns a possible violation by a Board member?

If your report concerns a current member of the Board, you may not feel comfortable sending your report to the Board, as all members will see the report.

In that case, you can make a report directly to any or all of the Board members. Board members will follow the usual enforcement process with the other members, but will exclude the member(s) that the report concerns from any discussion or decision making.

Reconsideration

Any of the parties directly involved or affected can request reconsideration of the Board's decision. To make such a request, [contact the Board](#) with your request and motivation and the Board will review the case.

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So this page is unusual on this site in that the underlying Copyright is not held by the Foundation, but by the Django Software Foundation and made available under a [Creative Commons license](#).

The Course

[Better Conversations](#) is at its heart, a course to teach people to have better conversations in everyday contexts using Clean Language.

The course was initially developed through 15 pilots over 3 years, and through training contracts with organisations such as government agencies, including our sister software company, Amphora Research Systems and evolved it so that any trainer can deliver it effectively straight off the bat.

We now have a network of trainers across the world who have delivered the course to hundreds of people. We continue to observe and learn from their experiences and feedback. We have also developed resources to support the course, including a handbook, a set of emails to send to attendees before and after the course, module plans and facilitator guides.

The Foundation provides support to trainers and facilitators to help them deliver the course. This includes a community of practice, tailored support with marketing materials and advice on how to deliver the course effectively. We run our own 'Experience Courses' and peer support sessions to help trainers develop their skills and confidence. These Experience Courses are designed to help trainers understand the course from the perspective of an attendee, and to help them develop their own style of delivery. These are run by experienced trainers and are a great way to learn from others. We do this to provide a high quality experience for those learning to deliver the course. Our courses are invite-only as we want to ensure our Partners are able to offer their own public and bespoke courses on a commercial basis.

The course uses Clean Language principles and practical applications to prime attendees to achieve better conversations, with peers, family and friends. It's been designed for online delivery but works well in person too.

It's a project that has evolved through collaboration, continual innovation and applied playfulness. Our friends and fellow travellers on this journey are the main reason we have got this far. And we hope, as you are reading this, you might decide to join us.

The Better Conversations Foundation owns the Copyright to this material and is making it available under a [Creative Commons license \(Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International\)](#) which means other people can make use of this material and build their own work on top of it.

The Foundation undertakes a number of activities to support people in delivering the course that are outlined in the [Work with Us](#) section.

Note that accessing the course content requires you to log in with your email address.

High Level Overview

As with anything that you are learning from scratch, it takes some time to understand the structure of what's there and the reasons behind the design choices made. We've written a high level overview of the course which includes a summary of each module. You can download the latest version of the course overview [here](#)

Module 1: State

Aim of this module

Learners will be able to:

- Explain the Traffic Light Model
- Describe how they know when they are in red, amber, or green state
- Discuss some of the causes for them being in red, amber, and green state

What's taught

- To understand how state can impact the way you work or a conversation you are having
- Be aware of your own state
- What happens to let you know you are in a red, amber or green state
- Unpack what helps you go from a red/amber state back to green

Structure

- Welcome introduction
- Introduction to the state model
- Motivation/Learning outcomes
- Present Traffic Light Model
- Group Exercise
- Breakout 1
- Unpack learnings
- Breakout 2
- Unpack learnings
- Reflect on learning
- Fieldwork
- End of session

Module 2: Assumptions

Aim of this module

Learners will be able to:

- Explain how assumptions affect behaviour
- Describe the link between feelings and assumptions

What's taught

- How to make use of clean questions to avoid assumptions
- Different ways to hold assumptions lightly
- The link between State and Assumptions - how this can impact conversations and actions

Structure

- Welcome back
- State check-in
- Recap on fieldwork
- Introduce/present the Assumptions Model
- Demonstration
- Breakout 1
- Unpack learnings
- Breakout 2
- Unpack learnings
- Link between State and Assumptions
- Reflect on learnings
- Fieldwork
- End of session

Module 3: Context

Aim of this module

Learners will be able to:

- Describe the elements of context in conversations
- Link context, assumptions and state

What's taught

- The importance of understanding context
- Impact of knowing the context on conversations and outcomes
- Ways to find out about context

Structure

- Welcome back
- State Check-in
- Questions?
- Recap the fieldwork from last session
- Present Conext Model
- Breakout 1
- Unpack learnings
- Breakout 2
- Unpack learnings
- Link Context, Assumptions and State
- Reflect on learning
- Fieldwork
- End of session

Module 4: Listening

Aim of this module

Learners will be able to:

- Demonstrate listening without interruption
- Demonstrate use of Clean Language Questions to accept and extend understanding of the other person

What's taught

- The impact listening without interruption has on you and the person you are speaking/listening to
- Listening to prevent assumptions
- Impact of listening to accept and extend

Structure

- Welcome back
- State check-in
- Questions?
- Recap fieldwork on Context
- Present Conversation Model
- Breakout 1
- Unpack learnings
- Demonstrate listening
- Breakout 2
- Unpack learnings
- Reflect on learnings
- Fieldwork
- End of session

Module 5: Intentional Conversations

Aim of this module

Learners will be able to:

- Describe why intention is different to impact
- Practice preparing for an intentional conversation

What's taught

- Describe why intention is different to impact
- Practice a way of thinking about and preparing for an intentional conversation

Structure

- Welcome back
- Questions and insights
- State check-in
- Recap fieldwork on Listening with Curiosity
- Discuss intention vs impact
- Demonstrate intention vs impact on Conversation Model
- Breakout 1
- Unpack learnings
- Demonstrate preparing for an intentional conversation
- Breakout 2
- Unpack learnings
- Reflect on learning

-
- End of course

Handbook and Emails

Course Handbook

We have prepared a handbook for participants which you can download as a PDF [here](#) It contains information about the course and also the material that's taught.

Email Templates

We have prepared a set of email templates that you can use to invite participants and followup after each module [here](#)

We recognise that people want to customise the handbook, with their own branding, contact information, etc. People have also taken individual sections and e.g. on State and used them in other circumstances like coaching. Please get in touch if you would like to do this.

Versioning

Why Versions Matter

We hope Better Conversations is a simple to deliver and delightful to attend.

One reason for this is that we've done a lot of work to figure out what works and write it down in great detail. This leads to something that can be delivered reliably ensuring a quality experience for everyone involved.

We want to keep improving; the course has changed a lot over the years thanks to the contributions of many people. All those suggestions and observations really do help make the course better.

However, people are building their business on this and we owe them a consistent, stable platform to work from. If we just changed stuff randomly it would cause a lot of anxiety and frustration.

So we're going to be very clear about the versions of the course. This approach is well proven in other areas and we hope it'll help us both improve and innovate whilst also allowing others to build on what we've done.

Versioning Policy

Everything we publish on this site will have a version number in the filename. This number takes the form X.Y.Z e.g.

- "BCO Master Flight Plan v1.0 Module 1.2.3 docx"
- "BCO Handbook v1.4.pdf"

The *major* version in this case is version 1. This represents significant changes to the file. Any file with the same major version number is compatible with any other. So you could use a v1.2.3 flight plan with a v1.4 handbook.

We'll also make minor improvements to things such as formatting, readability, diagrams etc. These changes will be released as minor versions where the *minor* version is the Y in vX.Y.Z.

Some changes might only require small adjustments, for example fixing typos. There's no need to change the major or minor version for this. These will be released as a patch where the *patch* version is the Z in vX.Y.Z.

Occasionally we might need to issue a new version not because the course content has changed but because we're working on the flightplan tooling or course delivery system. In which case we'll add a letter at the end e.g. v3.0.1a. This indicates there's no change to the content. You should use the latest version available and generally we'll withdraw earlier versions of that specific version.

Testing new material

If you are working with us on testing new material, you may also come across a *pre-release* version. These will be marked with a -alpha or -beta suffix, e.g. v1.2.3-alpha. We will not be publishing these versions as they are only for testing.

Translations

We are developing translated versions of the course. These will be marked with a suffix indicating the language code and country code, e.g. v1.2.3-en-GB indicates that the file is in English with British spellings, v1.2.3-nl-NL indicates that the file is in Dutch (nl) as used in The Netherlands (NL).

You don't have to move to the latest versions of things but you might want to.

Support Policy

Currently we're on version 3 of Better Conversations.

Our policy is:

- We will release new major versions every 6 months or so
- We will support a major version for 12 months after release
- We will release minor versions as needed

What this means is if you want to stay current with the Foundation's support of Better Conversations, you will need to update what you do every 6 - 12 months.

If you are an Associate, you can do what you want but all the material on this site, and discussion forums will be focused on the past 2 versions of the course, e.g. what's happened in the past year.

If you are a Partner we expect you to be delivering the current or last major version.

Resources

If you're reading this, you're probably interested in learning how to deliver the Better Conversations course. You'll find a lot of information here, and we hope it's helpful. We've tried to keep it simple and easy to refer back to.

Please note that:

- We do add content to this site regularly, so please check back often.
- You may need to sign in with your email address for some content.
- There are some technical terms and concepts in the course. We've tried to explain them as clearly as we can. If you're not sure about something, or can't find what you're looking for, please ask us or post a question in the [Community forum](#).
- If you're new to the course, we recommend that you start with the [Course Overview](#). This will give you a good idea of what the course is about and how it's structured.
- For those of you who have been on the course, you might want to go straight to the [Flight Plans](#). These are the detailed plans for each session, and they include all the information you need to deliver each module, along with the Course Handbook.

Using the course materials

We recommend that you attend the course before you start using these materials.

You don't need to be a professional facilitator to use these materials, but you do need to be comfortable with the idea of facilitating a group of people.

You don't need to be a technical whizz either, but you do need to be comfortable using a computer and the internet, and using software like Zoom and Microsoft Office.

We've described the course as we have developed and delivered it. For example, we use Zoom for the online sessions and our own proprietary software for the flight plans. You might want to use different tools, and that's fine. We've tried to make the materials as flexible as we can, so you can adapt them to your own needs.

We usually deliver the course in English, but you might want to deliver it in another language. Again, that's fine. We've tried to explain things in a way that's easy to translate.

We usually deliver the course over five 1-hour online modules (with an optional 6th module) across several weeks, but you might want to deliver it in a different way.

LinkedIn Certifications/Badges

The Foundation is able to issue badges to participants who have completed the course.

You can see an example on [Chandima's LinkedIn profile](#) which looks like this:

Badges we issue

Currently we issue two badges:

- Better Conversations Attendee
- Better Conversations Faculty

The Attendee badge is issued to participants who have completed the course with the Foundation or an approved partner.

The Faculty badge is issued to facilitators who have completed the course with the Foundation and have delivered the course to an acceptable standard on behalf of the Foundation in the past 6 months.

Who can issue badges

Attendee badges can be issued by:

- The Foundation
- Foundation Faculty approved by the Foundation
- Faculty members of government-recognised or accredited institutions, as approved by the Foundation

Note that the Foundation reserves the right to withdraw approval for any of the above at any time.

Whilst we don't mind what you call your course, you must give "Better Conversations" as defined [here](#) which includes following the flight plans, and delivering at least modules 1-5.

Badge Issuance

We have automated the issuance of badges to attendees and facilitators. If you are an approved issuer, you can issue badges via the Badge Issuance System in the coordinator. You will get a URL which you can share with participants:

- They will be asked to confirm that they have completed the course
- They will be asked to complete a brief survey
- They will be asked to provide their name and email address (preferably the same as their LinkedIn profile)
- And finally they agree to the terms of use (which is basically they give us their permission to issue the badge)

The proposer will then get a confirmation email, once they've confirmed they've attended the course, we'll issue the badge. They will then get an email from Open Badge Factory with instructions on how to claim their badge.

PDF Certificates

We use [Open Badge Factory](#) to issue the badges, and they also offer a PDF download for people who would like to print their badge and frame it.

Stable Links

Sometimes you need to link to a page that is not going to change, perhaps to send out to your course participants or post in forums. No one likes a broken link!

This is a list of links that are stable and will not change, and will redirect the user to the current correct page. So as we issue new flight plans reorganise the site, <https://betterconversations.foundation/l/flightplans> will always take you to the current list of flight plans.

Some material on this site is public, some requires a login, and that's also indicated in the table below.

URL	Purpose	Public
https://betterconversations.foundation/l/flightplans	The master flight plans	Public
https://betterconversations.foundation/l/handbook	The current course handbook, as a PDF	Public
https://betterconversations.foundation/l/license	The definitive copyright page for the course material	Public
https://betterconversations.foundation/l/attribution	People often ask when and how they should reference us	Public
https://betterconversations.foundation/l/masters	The master flight plans	Public
https://betterconversations.foundation/l/support	Details of how you can get support for the material here	Public
https://betterconversations.foundation/l/zoombor	Our advice on how to do breakout rooms, and why	Needs login
https://betterconversations.foundation/l/overview	The current course overview, as a PDF	Public

Course Design

Design is a term that can mean different things, such as:

- The **purpose, intention, or goal** of something
- The **creation, planning, or arrangement** of an object, a process, or a

system, according to a specific purpose, function, or context. - The **plan behind** an action, fact, or object. - A **pattern** or a **style** of something.

Design is about finding better ways to do things. It's both a science and an art, a blend of logic, analysis, and utility, as well as intuition, imagination, and creativity.

Design principles guide our decisions

We've also developed a set of design principles that guide our decisions. These principles are based on our understanding of how adults learn, and on our experience of designing and delivering other courses. The principles are:

Separate information from learning: We've designed the course to separate information from learning, so that participants can learn by doing, and by reflecting on what they've done. We've designed the course to be delivered in a way that encourages participants to engage with the material, with each other, and with the facilitator.

The magic happens in the conversations: We've designed the course to focus on the conversations that participants have with each other, and with the facilitator. We've designed the course to be delivered in a way that encourages participants to engage with the material, with each other, and with the facilitator.

Keep it simple: We've designed the course to explain the models and concepts in 5 minutes or less, so that participants can understand and remember what they've learned.

Think systemically: We've always tried to think a few steps ahead, to dare to dream big and to think about our overall mission. Some of the decisions we've may seem odd or unnecessary at first, but they are all part of a longer-term plan. You can always ask us if you're not sure why we've done something a particular way!

Always be learning: We have a tight learning loop, where we gather feedback, reflect on it, and make changes. We're always looking for ways to improve the course, and we're always learning from our experiences.

Know when to be systematic Whilst learning and adaptation requires an ability to hold many things in play at once, there are times when it is helpful to standardise and introduce consistency. We've built systems, processes and tools that help us to deliver the course in a reliable and scalable way.

Design constraints

We've decided to work within certain constraints. It may seem counterintuitive, but these constraints actually help us to be more creative and to make better decisions. For example:

We deliver the course online: This means that we can reach a global audience, and also reach people who might be working remotely or who might not be able to travel to a training course.

We deliver the course in 6 modules: This means that we have to be selective about what we include in the course. It also means there are opportunities for people who want to go deeper to do so, by adding extra modules that are tailored to their audience.

Each module is delivered in one hour: This means that we have to be concise and focused in the way we deliver the course. It's led to a repeatable pattern of delivery that we can rely on.

We limit 'teaching' time: This means that we have to be clear in the way we explain the models and concepts, remove any unnecessary detail, and simplify the material as much as possible (which is harder than it looks!). It also means we maximise the time for participants to practice and reflect.

Design features

We've developed this course over hundreds of hours of design, development, and delivery. We've iterated and improved it based on feedback from participants and facilitators. We've also drawn on our experience of designing and delivering other courses, and our understanding of how adults learn. The output of all that work is a course that is designed to be:

Accessible and flexible: We want a wide range of people to enjoy this course and for it to be useful in different contexts. We've designed it to be delivered online, in English, and in a modular format. We've also designed it to be flexible, so that you can adapt it to your own needs, for example by using different tools, delivering it in another language, or delivering it in a different way. We encourage you to adapt the course to your own needs, and to share your experiences with us.

Interactive and experiential: Participants can learn by doing, and by reflecting on what they've done. We've designed it to be delivered in a way that encourages participants to engage with the material, with each other, and with the facilitator.

Consistent and scalable: Colleagues who do the course at different times will learn the same things. We've designed it to be scalable, so that it can be delivered to diverse participants across cultures and contexts.

Robust and reliable: It's important to use that the material works with diverse participants across cultures and contexts. We've designed it to support employees with any behaviour change that is needed for better conversations, and to be relevant and easy to apply in business situations.

Relevant and easy to apply: We want the content of the course to be relevant and easy to apply in business situations. We've designed it to support employees with any behaviour change that is needed for better conversations, and to be relevant and easy to apply in business situations.

Engaging and Actionable: We strive to be clear, concise and for the skills to be actionable, so that participants are motivated to use what they've learned immediately. We know people apply new skills when they are relevant to their circumstances.

Course Materials

This section contains the course materials for you to download. These are the documents and communications that you will need to run the course. They are generally in the form of PDFs, Word and PowerPoint documents.

There are public URLs which allow people to download materials without having to log in. These are not versioned, you'll just get the most recent version.

- Course Handbook can be referred to as <https://betterconversations.foundation/l/handbook>

These stable links will need authentication, but will always point to the most recent version.

- Flight plans <https://betterconversations.foundation/l/masters>
- Course overview <https://betterconversations.foundation/l/overview>

Course Overview

We're prepared a detailed overview of the course to explain some of the patterns we use to design the course. You can download the latest version as a PDF [here](#).

Date Released	Changes	Download
07 January 2025	Update for new Module 5	v3.0
24 March 2024	Add Module 6	v2.0
28 October 2022	Initial release	v1.0

Flight Plans

Designed to be used by the course delivery team, our “Flight Plans” are the detailed instructions for running the course. We use them every time we run the course and consider them to be the most important part of the material we are making available.

We are also constantly improving them based on feedback from the course delivery teams. You’ll see that the flight plans are versioned. You can find the change log at the bottom of this page.

Don’t feel you need to update to every version. Check the change notes to see if you want to update your version. Most of the time the changes are small and we hope helpful.

If you’re delivering a course for the Foundation you’ll be using the latest versions of the flight plans.

Using the Flight Plans

We distribute the flight plans as PDFs. If you want to edit them you can just open the PDF in Word.

The Foundation has historically used Word files stored on Sharepoint, which allows the delivery team to all work off the same copy. We are phasing this out and moving to the Delivery Console.

Getting the Flight Plans

To get the latest flight plans, go to <https://bettercourses.org/flightplans> and choose the version, page size, and style you want. You’ll then get an email with the PDFs attached, customised especially for you.

Historic Flight Plans

As of September 2024, we’re no longer updating the change log here.

If you want to know what’s changed, from version 3.0 onwards you can check out the [GitHub repository](#).

If you need a copy of the flight plans before version 3.0, please contact us.

Handbook

We have prepared a handbook for participants which you can download as a PDF [here](#). It contains information about the course and also the material that’s taught.

If you would like this branded with your logos etc. do get in touch. Similarly if you want just a section of this with a specific model we can do this for you.

Date Released	Changes	Download
07 January 2025	Update to state, assumptions and context models	3.1.0
11 September 2024	Major update to match the version 3 course.	3.0.0
13 February 2023	Improved clarity and wording. References added.	1.1.1
10 January 2023	Private client release	1.1.0a
10 January 2023	Moved source to Word, realigned some of the diagrams	1.1.0
18 November 2022	Updated branding	1.0.1
16 Sept 2022	Initial release	1.0.0

Email Templates

When we run our “Experience Courses” our system has some standard email templates. We’ve been asked to share them so here you are. . .

- The Invite Wording for each Module
- The follow up Fieldwork Wording for each Module
- Examples of our Pre- and Post-Session Emails
- Our Welcome Email

Invite Wording

Firstly, we have some standard wording for each module

Module 1 (State)

To help you prepare for this module, think about conversations you would like to be better as a result of this course.

Can you give those conversations a name or a label to remember them easily?

We will also explore a key factor in having Better Conversations - our State.

Module 2 (Assumptions)

We’ll be exploring how quickly and easily we make Assumptions, and the link to State.

Please have a pen and some paper with you as we will be doing some drawing. Don’t worry, there won’t be a competition for best artwork!

Module 3 (Context)

In this module, we will consider Context, and how you bring meaning to a conversation.

To help you prepare, please think about a conversation you’d like to be better. What you would like to have happen in that conversation?

Module 4 (Listening with Curiosity)

In this module, we will practice Listening with Curiosity, and how you can influence a conversation.

To help you prepare, please think about a conversation you’d like to be better. What you would like to have happen in that conversation?

Module 5 (Intentional Conversations)

This module introduces Intentional Conversations, and why our intentions for a conversation are only half the story.

To help you prepare, please think about a conversation you’d like to be better. What you would like to have happen in that conversation?

Fieldwork Wording

After the session we send them an email “As a reminder here’s the suggested fieldwork from the session”

Module 1 (State)

- Notice your state, and how and when it changes for you.
- Try mapping it to the Traffic Light Model.
- What’s your state like, before and after your conversations?

Module 2 (Assumptions)

- Try noticing what you are seeing or hearing when you are interacting with someone.
- What assumptions are you making in your interactions?

- Are your assumptions accurate?

Module 3 (Context)

- Try noticing what context you bring to a conversation
- What do you know about the other person's context?
- What impact does that have on the conversation?"

Module 4 (Listening with Curiosity)

- Try out some of the questions in Section 4 of the handbook in your conversations.
- What kind of listening do you do in a conversation?
- What impact does that have on the conversation?"

Module 5 (Intentional Conversations)

There is no fieldwork for Module 5.

Pre- and Post-Session Emails

These are the emails we slot this text into. As you can see they are very standardised and we've just copy and pasted from the app that runs bettercourses.org so there's still code in there. But hopefully that makes it easier to see how it all fits together.

This is the email we send out before the session. It's a reminder of the session details, and the fieldwork from the session before.

```
Hi <%= @attendance.user.first_name %>,

We hope you are excited for Module <%= @attendance.zoom_session.module_number %> of
↳ Better Conversations today.

<% unless @module_text_prep.empty? %>
<%= @module_text_prep %>
<% end %>

<% unless @module_text_prev_fieldwork.empty? %>
<%= @module_text_prev_fieldwork %>
<% end %>

You can see the session details, join the Zoom meeting, download the
handbook, and more here <%= live_view_attendance_url(uuid:
@attendance.ical_uuid) %>

If you have any problems or concerns on the day, you can contact us via
email at hello@betterconversations.foundation or phone us on +44 118 234
9811.

See you in an hour!

Best wishes,

The Better Conversations Team

(PS You can join the session using the link above, or directly <%=
@attendance.zoom_session.zoom_link %>)
```

This is the email we send after the session.

Hi <%= @attendance.user.first_name %>,

Thank you for attending today's session of Better Conversations, we hope you enjoyed it.

<%= @module_text_fieldwork %>

We look forward to seeing you at the next session. We'll send a reminder before then.

Best wishes,

The Better Conversations Team

The Welcome Email

This is our standard welcome email people get when they sign up.

Hi <%= @user.first_name %>,

Thank you for signing up for Better Conversations. You should have been taken to a page where you can book a course at time convenient to you.

Note that all the times you see in emails from us and on the web site are in your local time zone, which we believe to be <%= @timezone %>. We will send calendar invites for the sessions you have booked with the Zoom meeting details.

If that's wrong, or you have any questions, please do get in touch at hello@betterconversations.foundation.

To make the most of the course, we recommend doing a few things before each session:

- Connect using a laptop or desktop device. Zoom functionality is limited on a mobile devices (such as access to the Chat function in Breakout Rooms)
- Ensure you have the latest version of Zoom on your device
- Join us from a quiet place where you are unlikely to be disturbed
- Make sure that we can see and hear you clearly as this is a interactive class. We can help with this if you join us 5-10 minutes before the session.
- Make use of the automatic captions in Zoom. You can also view live transcriptions in languages supported by Zoom.

We've compiled some tips for online meetings at <https://betterconversations.foundation/documentation/public/Online%20Meeting%20Guidelines.pdf>

If you are unfamiliar with Zoom, you can find guidelines on joining a meeting at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-Zoom-meeting>

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For more info on automated captions and live transcription please visit <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/4403492514829-Viewing-captions-in-a-meeting-or-webinar>

Again, thank you for signing up and we hope you enjoy the course.

Best Wishes,

The Better Conversations Team

Delivery Team Checklists

These are the checklists that the Foundation run before every session. They are specific to how the Foundation run courses and are a collection of lessons learned. We've included it with the flight plans so you can get some idea of what we do and can decide if you want to do something similar.

Abbreviations

BOR = breakout rooms, Fx = facilitator, Px = producer

Attention: These checklists are very BCF-specific. Whilst we hope it is useful, you may want to adapt this to your own needs and then delete this warning.

The Better Conversations Community is a place where you can discuss and learn from others how you use this checklist to reinforce the relevance of the course to your wider context. If you aren't already a member you can join here <https://bettercourses.org/community/signup-from-flightplans>

Pre-session tasks for individual delivery team members

This is what we expect the individual delivery team members to do before they join the session itself. You can do this the day before, or the day of the session.

Type	Activity	Who	By when
Participant info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check participant info (joining instructions, handbook, fieldwork etc.) has been sent out as appropriate for session • Check attendees 	Facilitators/BCF Support as agreed	5 days before session
Supporting Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flight plan updated for session, shared with co-facilitators and producer, and printed out • Participant list 	Facilitators/BCF Support as agreed	Day before
Templates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check flipchart examples from previous sessions 	Facilitators	Day before
Room and audio/visual setup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart in position • Check positioning of computer, desk, seating etc. • Headphones/microphone charged and connected • Zoom – correct account login, correct meeting invite, correct Zoom Team chat channel • Video and audio check (including lighting, flipchart readability) 	Facilitators and Producer	1 hour before
Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart with prepared agenda etc. and 2-3 spare sheets • Flipchart pens (black, blue, red, orange, green) + spares • Post-its if required • Coloured transparent sheets if required • Props if required for breakout room activities 	Facilitators	1 hour before

Delivery Team Pre-Flight Checklist

This is what we expect the delivery team to do once they are all together in the session. You should aim to do this as soon as possible after you've all assembled and ideally have completed it with 15 minutes to spare before the Participants arrive.

Area	Lead	Description
Intros	Sponsor	Welcome Facilitators, Producers and Observers and facilitate short intros if needed.
Context	Sponsor	Clarify nature of session (e.g. Experience course, public course, private course), attendees, and any guidance around these areas
Roles	Sponsor	Clarify roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator 1 (<i>Fx1</i>), Facilitator 2 (<i>Fx2</i>) – lead the content and participant discussion for the training part of the session • Producer – leads on technical matters, breakout room management including adjusting timings, meeting chat messages • Observers – prior course attendees who are learning to deliver or promote the course • Sponsor - sponsors the session and leads the Afterparty discussions at the end of the session
Internet	Producer	Confirm any known internet connection issues and agree mitigations. This may require reallocating roles including running with a single facilitator.
Audio/Video	Producer	Confirm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own audio/video is working as expected and everyone can see and hear producer • Facilitators' microphone input is audible and clear • Each Facilitator has separate headphones and can hear everyone else • Facilitators' video is clear • Facilitator flipcharts are in frame and can be read • Other people's flipcharts are not in frame Mitigations may require reallocating roles, including running with a single facilitator.
Team chat channel	Producer	Confirm delivery team can access the delivery team chat for the session
Flight plans	Producer	Confirm everyone is working from the same live flight plan on the shared collaboration space including trainees.
Host/co-hosts	Producer	Ask for host role if not already host
Resources		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make Facilitators co-hosts • Make Observers co-hosts if staying in the main room during breakouts

Notes

For facilitators:

- For a 2-breakout session, aim for teaching model at ~10 minutes, and breakouts at ~20 and ~40 minutes as concentration levels will start to drop after 20 minutes. We chunk the time to keep people engaged.
- Minimise the number of things to remember – most people can only remember 3-4 things in their working memory.
- Keep instructions and language as simple as you can.
- The questions that will be asked are usually put into the chat by the producer.
- Extend the breakout timings when you have a group of three
- Unpack from each group rather than each person if time is tight. As a rule, allow 1 minute for each person who talks (2 minutes if they are chatty).
- Start on time. The first 5 minutes and last 5 minutes are designed to allow people to be late/leave early.
- Bank as much time as possible in the first 30 minutes.

For producers

- Breakouts for threes will need longer – check with facilitator if three- person groups are expected and what they want to do about timings.
- When running with 2 facilitators, the Foundation will often put a Facilitator into a breakout to avoid having a 3-person breakout
- When running a very small course, still put people into a breakout, with a Facilitator if necessary. There's something important about going into the breakout, having an experience, and then returning to the main room to unpack
- Breakout rooms specification is consistent:
 - Assign manually (create them as soon as possible)
 - Do not allow people to choose room
 - Automatically move participants to breakouts
 - Automatically close rooms
 - Lasting however long is needed
 - Notify when time is up
 - 10 second countdown timer for return
- Set yourself a halfway timer on your (e.g. on your watch for 2 minutes) so you can send the timing reminder exactly on time
- Broadcast message halfway through which is “Halfway through, you have X minutes left”

Content to be pasted into the chat is given in the time plan.

For more information on Breakout Rooms in Better Conversations, see here <https://betterconversations.foundation/l/zoombor>

Design Patterns

As we develop this course, we spot things that are helpful to know. We call these “design patterns”, a term borrowed from the world of software.

You might be wondering why we’re sharing these design patterns. We want to be transparent about how we’ve designed the course, and to help you understand why we have made certain decisions about the way we deliver the course. We also want to encourage you to think about how you might design your own courses. You can reuse these patterns, or adapt them to your own needs.

On first glance, this might seem like unnecessary detail. However, we believe that when you deliver the course yourself, you will be able to make better informed decisions about what suits your audience and your context.

We continue to improve the course; if you have any suggestions for changes or additional patterns, please let us know.

Flight Plans

Flight plans are the key to delivering Better Conversations. We’ve crystallized both the contents and the structure of these over the years, and they reliably deliver a quality outcome for us. Flight plans are effectively a state management tool.

We publish our flight plans so other people can benefit from this work. It also means that, you can see how we work and what we do, and you can see how we are improving over time. Our Experience Courses run to the flight plans we publish or are in the process of testing - which means you know what to expect when you partner with us.

Using this Pattern

Flight plans are used to deliver a consistent Better Conversations experience for all involved. They ensure:

- A common script for the delivery team and Observers to follow and discuss.
- The delivery team is well-prepared and have talked before the session starts about how they are going to work together.
- The learning objectives are met and the session is focused (we have a lot of content to cover in a short time).
- New facilitators or producers are supported in their learning and development.
- A basis for continuous improvement, as we review the flight plan after the

session and see what worked and what didn’t.

The drawbacks are that currently they are time-consuming to create and maintain, and they can be seen as con-straining. We have to be careful to balance the need for consistency with the need for creativity and flexibility.

The alternative is to not use a flight plan, and to rely on the experience and intuition of the delivery team. This can work, but it is less reliable and makes the facilitator and producer roles much harder. It also makes it harder to bring new people into the team. All these things can significantly degrade the participant experience.

Structure

Flight plans contain:

- All the logistical information for the session, such as date and time, the

Zoom link, who is facilitating, who is producing

- Brief notes for the facilitator and producer on how to run the session
- Checklists of the key things to prepare and discuss, individually and as a team
- The learning objectives for the session, and possible extensions

-
- A detailed time plan with activities for each member of the delivery team
 - Information for the producer on breakout rooms, and what to put in Zoom chat
 - A detailed script for the facilitator to follow

The flight plans themselves contain design patterns. We have a design pattern for each of the key components of the flight plan, such as the time plan, the script, the learning objectives, and so on. Each section in the time plan is also a design pattern e.g. the way we facilitate a discussion, the way we check in on state, the way we use a breakout room are all patterns in themselves

This means that we can improve the flight plan by improving the design patterns, and we can use the design patterns in other contexts - which means you can do the same!

Roles and Responsibilities

Currently, there are a number of roles described in the flight plans:

- **Facilitator 1 and 2:** The people who are co-leading the session. Facilitator 2 is a role we can use to develop new facilitators.
- **Producer:** The person who is running the Zoom session, and who is responsible for the technical aspects of the session.
- **Observer:** The person who is observing the session, usually in preparation for delivering the course, and/or training as a facilitator or producer.
- **Participants:** The people who are attending the session. Also referred as “attendees”.
- **Sponsor:** Responsible for the outcomes of the session, in terms of “Why are we doing this?” and “What are we trying to achieve?”.
 - For the Foundation, this is generally one of the directors or a Foundation Ambassador.
 - When a course is delivered in a company it will be the person who commissioned the course, or their delegate.

One thing we have learned is to be very aware of the role(s) we are in, and to be clear about what we are doing in each moment and why.

Of course, not all these roles will apply if you are delivering the session in a different context. For example, if you are delivering a session to a small group, you may not need two facilitators. If you are using the flight plans to coach someone one-to-one, you will not need a producer. If you are delivering a session to a very large group, you may need more than one producer.

Examples

You can find the latest published flight plans [here](#).

Testing

We are on a continual learning and improvement loop every time we run a session. We gather observations and feedback from the delivery team and the participants, and we use this to improve the flight plans.

We test updated flight plans by running live sessions, documenting the results and any feedback from the delivery team. We might run test a completely new module with a small group of participants, one facilitator and one producer and one or two observers.

Implementation

We keep master versions of the flight plans, which only the Foundation team have access to. We make a copy of the master flight plan for each live session. The delivery team all work from the same live flight plan, which is kept in a shared folder.

This is so we have a clear documentation trail between master versions and live flight plans. We can also make changes to the flight plan for that live session without affecting other live sessions or the masters.

This might be overkill for you, but it matters when you are working with different delivery teams, running a lot of sessions and trying to improve the flight plans over time. It also helps when working with different clients, as we can tailor the session to their needs.

Anything else

We used to include the following sections, but have moved these to other documents and tools. Some of these features have been removed for data protection reasons, as we are now working with external clients:

- Participant list to check who is expected to be in the session and who attended
- Copies of the flipcharts used in the session (before and after views)
- Copies of the breakout room groups
- Copies of the chat messages
- Observations we made during the session

PDF of this website

You can download the PDF of this website [here](#). Remember we regularly update the website and the PDF so it is a good idea to check back soon for the latest version.

This is particularly useful if you want to put the site into [Google NotebookLM](#) or another AI tool to ask it questions, perhaps in the context of other material as well.

Unfortunately due to technical limitations the PDF does not contain blog posts.



Work with Us

We work with a wide range of partners to help us achieve our mission. We are always looking for new partners to work with, and we are open to new ideas and ways of working.

We want to help people to help their teams, communities and organisations have better conversations. We believe that the best way to do this is to work with others who share our values and purpose.

We'd especially like to hear from you if you are a non-profit, charity or social enterprise, or you work in a community or public sector organisation. We are also interested in working with businesses who share our values and purpose.

What will BCF provide?

- Free course content including participant materials and session plans. No royalty payment is required for any of this.
- Freedom to adapt the course for your own client work, no questions asked.
- Free community support.

Getting started

- Anyone is welcome to use the materials and plans regardless of your training experience.
- You must have signed up for the course to access the community support, through an invite from us or through one of our Partners.
- You must credit the Foundation and honour the Creative Commons license conditions.

Using this material yourself

If you want to learn how to deliver the course, please [get in touch](#). There's some information that might be helpful to read through first in the sections below.

The Better Conversations Foundation supports the needs of the trainers delivering the Better Conversations course. Specifically, the Foundation does two things:

1. It enables trainers to deliver the Better Conversations course through course development and training support.
2. It provides sales and marketing support to fill the courses that trainers will deliver.

How do we enable trainers?

We have designed the Better Conversations course to enable people with prior training or facilitator experience to deliver it. Our aim is to make this course straightforward to deliver and build on to create something authentic to you, if you'd like to do that. We're also very clear that this means making it possible for you to generate income through delivering the course.

Some of the ways we help you:

- The Foundation provides "flight plans" for each module. A flight plan is a design-and-delivery document which contains everything that a trainer and technical producer will need for a tightly planned hour.
- We provide professionally-produced participant materials so a trainer won't need to do that work. Trainers are welcome to use these materials as a source for their own training handouts.
- We can support you to produce and/or co-deliver your first courses
- Our app makes it easy to collect participant feedback
- Our app also generates a certificate of participation so that's one less thing for a trainer to do

Trainers are welcome to adapt these flight plans for their own use. We'd be delighted if you shared your adaptations and improvements in our community of practitioners so we can learn from each other.

If you don't have any prior experience as a trainer or facilitator and would still like to deliver this course, you would need to co-deliver a minimum of three Better Conversations courses with one of our Partners so you have the training you need to deliver the course well.

What kind of marketing and sales support do we offer?

When we ask people who might deliver the course for us what support and resources they need to do that, we often hear that sales and marketing are the most difficult aspects for people. We are currently evolving the way we deliver marketing and sales support to trainers. Our current thinking is along the lines of providing:

Course listings If you are delivering public courses, we can list them on our websites - for example this one, that describes the course: <https://marketing.betterconversations.foundation>

Marketing engine We can raise the profile of the course through working with our Marketing partners to create generic campaigns for the course. Since we have a global reach, we can help drive potential participants your way by helping them find a course running in their locality and language through a central site of course listings.

Sales or marketing support If you are bidding for private work, and need assistance, you can book a sales/marketing support call with us. We're aware that solo practitioners sometimes have difficulty with approaching companies and meeting procurement criteria and we would like to help.

One thing to note is that if you've renamed Better Conversations and claimed it as your own, that's your right. But we can't then provide you this marketing support.

If there's other support you think might benefit a community of practitioners, please do get in touch with us.

We will update this page with any updates to the support we can provide.

Where can I find out more?

Our intention is to enable others. You can find detailed documentation, guidance and materials in the [Course Documentation](#) section of this site.

Please note that for some of the content you'll need to sign in with your email address.

Controlled Document Details

- **Reference:** what-you-get
- **Last Changed Date:** 9th February 2025
- **Git Version:** `dbd15b6`
- **Last Edited By:** Simon Coles
- **Note:** Document is only valid online at <https://betterconversations.foundation>.

Setting Expectations

What we're trying to do with the Foundation and the course is unusual and will likely be new for most people. To avoid confusion we thought we should be explicit about expectations etc.

If you've got experience of other Open Source projects, you'll recognise a lot of this.

What you can expect from us

You can expect us to:

- Make the course plans and supporting material available to you free of charge.
- To be interested in your experience using this material, and to learn from you.
- To keep improving based on experience and evidence.
- To support you as best we can

What we expect from you

We expect you to:

- Play nice with everyone, using the Better Conversations skills in your interactions
- Help us make our community a safe and welcoming place for everyone
- Be honest and candid with us and others. Say what you mean but please don't be mean in how you say it.
- Respect the conditions of the license under which make this available (easy to comply with, as it's a very liberal license)
- Be responsible in the way you market and use this material.

Controlled Document Details

- **Reference:** expectations
- **Last Changed Date:** 1st December 2024
- **Git Version:** 354468f
- **Last Edited By:** Simon Coles
- **Note:** Document is only valid online at <https://betterconversations.foundation>.

Service Levels

Everything on this site is free. We ask you to respect that and the collective effort that goes into making this material available. If you feel moved to help others as we help you, that would be lovely - we want this to spread as far and wide as possible.

What that means is either individuals are giving of their time freely or they're being paid by our sponsors to help you for free. People who work for our sponsors have a "day job" and whilst they have a percentage of their time allocated to the Foundation, their "day job" takes priority because that's what pays the bills.

The service level we're committing to is "best efforts". If you need more we're happy to engage with you on a commercial basis. We can do proper Enterprise-level support contracts if people are interested.

Generally it all works out fine because you don't need our active attention to use this work. Sometimes people get grumpy because we're all supportive and they slip into thinking they're a customer and we're a supplier who have committed to a certain level of service. This is a misunderstanding of the situation. Please don't take us for granted just because we're nicer and more generous than most.

Yes, this has happened - but we're ok with it, we're just learning how to set expectations better. Also we're not naming names, but we'd rather be this side of the fence than taking advantage of our "customers" without actually offering any way for them to make an income.

Complaints

Sometimes things go wrong. Sometimes you might get frustrated. Please bring that up directly with Simon or Chandima. Raising things in a public forum makes everything so much more complicated, especially if there's misunderstandings. And generally most things are misunderstandings, so a quiet word is better than a public drama-filled rant.

Appreciation

We've worked really hard on this, not only developing it but then documenting it in a way that others can build on. On a human level it's always nice to hear from people how they've used our work. You can send us fan mail and feedback [here](#).

Commercial Support

We offer commercial support for our courses [via our commercial arm](#). Please [contact us](#) to discuss your needs.

Improvements and Suggestions

It is inevitable on a project this size that there are “bugs” in the content. If you spot one, we'd be grateful if you'd let us know.

Sometimes you might look at something and think “That could be better”. We're really happy to hear those suggestions and have a conversation with you. That will likely lead to:

- A clear improvement which we quickly incorporate into the course
- A more involved change which might need more time and thought
- Us explaining why things are why they are and the tradeoffs involved

That doesn't mean you can't customise what you deliver as you'd like, we very much encourage people to take this and make it their own. But we do have to be very thoughtful what's in the “Main” version of Better Conversations which everyone else builds off.

Note that the Foundation needs to be the copyright holder of anything incorporated into the Better Conversations repository. Which generally isn't a problem but we can't accept material taken from elsewhere without a copyright assignment. Our ability to give this stuff away and for you to trust we have the rights to do so is crucial to the success of the whole project.

Controlled Document Details

- **Reference:** [improvements-and-suggestions](#)
- **Last Changed Date:** 1st December 2024
- **Git Version:** [354468f](#)
- **Last Edited By:** Simon Coles
- **Note:** Document is only valid online at <https://betterconversations.foundation>.

Copyright and Crediting Us

Crediting/Referencing Us

Many people feel they want to refer to the Foundation and/or credit us for this work.

If you want to refer to us, then please use the following text:

“The Better Conversations Foundation <https://betterconversations.foundation>”

We won't be upset if you don't refer to us; we're just delighted our ideas travel.

A Note About Branding

If you want to use our work in a commercial context, and would prefer to use your own branding, that is within the terms of the license and we'd encourage you to do so. This especially applies to the use of the course content internally in a company or organisation. Please do put your logo on it. Just make sure you retain somewhere a reference to the Foundation and the CC-BY-SA-4.0 license - even if it is in small text at the bottom.

If you take this and build something new, we'd love to hear about it. Please don't call it "Better Conversations" as it'll confuse people.

A Note about Copyright Statements

The Foundation is releasing Better Conversations and associated material under an Open Source license [CC-BY-SA-4.0](#)

The material provided here is protected under Copyright and our use of an Creative Commons license means you can use it without paying us anything as long as you abide by the conditions of the license - broadly that you respect our copyright, retain the copyright statements, and allow others to enjoy the freedoms we've given you.

What you can't do is remove our copyright, or add your own, to documents you download from this site.

What Copyright Covers

Ideas are not protected by Copyright. Patents are what protects ideas and we haven't applied for a Patent (and indeed, what's here probably isn't patentable).

What that means is you can pretty much do what you want with the ideas and concepts we've documented. It's only when you start copying our text and images that you need to abide by the copyright agreement.

What makes a course the Better Conversations course?

Aims

We encourage people to take what we've done and do their own thing with it; a reasonable question is "at what point does it become a different course?". This is particularly important when people want to call their course "Better Conversations" and refer to the Better Conversations Foundation. It also defines who is eligible for badges and certification as described in the [badges documentation](#).

If you want to call your course "Better Conversations", and associate yourself with The Foundation, then this is what we need you to do.

Remember that we're not trying to restrict people from doing what they want, we're trying to set expectations for what we can support. You can do what you want with this material subject to the Creative Commons license.

This our current attempt at that balance between celebrating diversity and a standardised course we can support. We welcome feedback and suggestions and will adjust as needed.

What makes it the Better Conversations course?

Before we get into the detail, just to emphasise the point, we're not trying to restrict people from doing what they want. We're trying to set expectations for what we can support.

If you want to call your course "Better Conversations", and associate yourself with us, then this is what we need you to do.

Precision matters in these things, so the key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this are to be interpreted as described in RFC 2119 which we've referenced below.

-
- Everyone facilitating the course **MUST** have completed the full course themselves with the Foundation, or one of our Ambassadors. It is **RECOMMENDED** they have also attended an Experience Course as an Observer and they **MUST** have observed the specific module that they are facilitating.
 - You **MUST** follow a flight plan. This is the core of the course and the foundation of everything we do. It's what we can support, along with the Handbook.
 - You **MUST** follow flight plans which are of the same major version as the current course as provided by the Foundation. At the time of writing this is version 3, the latest version is 3.0.4 which means you can use any version from 3.0.0 to 3.0.4.
 - You **MUST** keep modules 1-5 intact, in the same order, with the same names. Module 6 is optional and if you include it, you **SHOULD** customise it to your context.
 - You **MUST** use the same models and exercises.
 - You **MAY NOT** substitute any of the models with your own.
 - You **MAY** add additional modules, either at the start or end of your course.
 - You **SHOULD** deliver the course as a series of 1-hour sessions spaced a week apart. Our experience is that you will maximise the impact of the course because the week between sessions allows people to apply the skills to their own situation and reflect on what they've learned.
 - You **SHOULD** use your own words in the content of the modules, but you **MUST** be aiming for the same outcomes as the original course. We know that effective training means you need to use your own voice.
 - You **MUST NOT** record the sessions.
 - Better Conversations is an experiential course and we want to encourage people to experience it for themselves, whilst also protecting participants' privacy.
 - If people miss a session, they are welcome to attend that module with the Foundation if they are unable to catch up with you, but you **MUST NOT** record sessions under any circumstances.
 - You **MAY** deliver the course in person. Whilst it is designed to be delivered remotely, we recognise that there are contexts where in-person delivery is preferable or necessary. Engaging in [our community](#) will help you adapt the course for your own circumstances.

Further reading

The terminology used in this document is based on the [RFC 2119](#) standard.

News and Articles