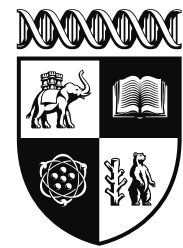


**UNIVERSITY
OF WARWICK**



**International Research Culture Conference 2025
17th September 2025**

*Hosted by the National Centre for Research Culture,
University of Warwick*

Book of Abstracts



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PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

 The Oculus, University of Warwick

 09:30	<p>Opening statements and welcome Professor David Leadley, Pro-Vice Chancellor Research Professor Kirstie Haywood, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research Culture) and Academic Director of NCRC</p>
 09:50	<p>Plenary Session: Frameworks for research cultures – learning from the UK’s pilot REF assessment Steven Hill, Director of Research, Research England</p>
 10:20	<p>Panel Session: Beyond Borders: Exploring Global Perspectives on Research Culture Prof. Kirstie Haywood - Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director of the National Centre for Research Culture at the University of Warwick (Session Chair). Prof. Melissa Miles - Academic Director (Research Culture). Monash University, Australia Prof. Sibusiso Moyo - Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research Innovation and Postgraduate Studies. Stellenbosch University, South Africa Prof. Grace Mulcahy - Chair of Research Culture Initiatives and Research Integrity Officer. University College Dublin, Ireland Dr Steven Hill - Director of Research, Research England, UK Kris Kathiravel, Deputy Director, International Research Partnerships and Programs, Monash University, Australia</p>
 12:00	Presentations (Parallel – Select Options)
 14:00	Workshops (Parallel – Select Options)
 15:00	Research Culture Carousel (Parallel – Select Options)
 15:45	Poster exhibition & word for wellbeing
 16:15	<p>Plenary Session: Research culture: What works. Prof Cat Davies, outgoing Dean for Research Culture, University of Leeds</p>
 16:45	<p>Closing remarks & Poster presentation prizes Professor Kirstie Haywood, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research Culture) and Academic Director of NCRC</p>
 17:00	Close

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Parallel Presentations 12:00 – 13:00 (please click on session title to be directed to abstracts)

OC0.01	Main Lecture Theatre	OC0.02	OC0.04	OC1.01	OC1.04	OC1.06	OC1.09
<u>System Shuffle - Uncovering Hidden Competencies</u>	<u>Building and Empowering Inclusive Research Communities</u>	<u>Building and Empowering Inclusive Research Communities</u>	<u>Collaboration, connectivity and sustainability</u>	<u>Developing and embedding Research Cultures</u>	<u>Integrity, Trust and Transparency in Research</u>	<u>Improving Careers with and for Future Researchers and Research Enablers</u>	<u>Metrics that matter – measuring progress for the future</u>
<p>During this session, we will explore how research culture is shaped by the roles we take on, the systems we work within, and the choices we make together. System Shuffle is an interactive game where participants work collaboratively and creatively to reflect on the roles and agency of different members of team research: Who gets included in decisions? Who gets to advance? How can unexpected external factors affect us all? Alys Kay (1) and Dr Chandrika Nair (2) University of Liverpool (1) and University of Warwick (2)</p>	<p>Mapping Research Cultures: Identifying Key Elements of the Research Process and Environment for Thriving Knowledge Ecosystems Rachel Herbert; Silvia Dobre & Pragya Singh. Elsevier, UK & Netherlands</p>	<p>Addressing the challenges that impede the progression and retention of early to mid-career stage women in academia (WinA)</p> <p>Dr Amber F. Tout; Prof Kirstie L. Haywood; Dr Susanne Arnold; Jane Coleman; Dr Talar R. Moukhtarian. University of Warwick</p>	<p>Interdisciplinary Co-Authoring and Publication - Collaboration, Challenges and Culture</p> <p>Georgia Vesma. The University of Manchester</p>	<p>Giving voice to the voices: Co-creating a framework for research culture change</p> <p>Dr Charmaine Lim (1); Lisa Backwell (2). University of Glasgow (1); University of Edinburgh (2)</p>	<p>Destigmatising how we identify and address research mistakes</p> <p>Dr Catherine L. Winchester. CRUK Scotland Institute</p>	<p>Is redeployment a feasible response to contract precarity in early research careers? Converging evidence from three studies.</p> <p>Noam Tal-Perry (1), Lara Abel (1), Yingjie Li (1), Allison Beggs (1), Molly Smith (1), Luisa Ciampi (1), Mollie Etheridge (1), Becky Ioppolo (1), Tomos Robinson (2), Werner Seitz (3), Debbie Birkett (1), Steven Wooding (1)</p> <p>University of Cambridge (1); Newcastle University (2); Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität München, Germany (3)</p>	<p>Protocol for a theory-based, mixed methods evaluation of Cynnaullgnite: an active learning programme to foster positive research culture at Cardiff University</p> <p>Charlotte Hennah & Sofia Gameiro. Cardiff University</p>
	<p>Creating and celebrating positive research environments: the development and evaluation of the Working Well Together resource</p>	<p>The Plexus: designing and developing connective and inclusive impact-oriented networks for researchers in a post-92 university</p> <p>Dr Liana Psarologaki Buckinghamshire New University</p>	<p>Building Inclusive Research Communities: A Community of Practice Approach to Enhancing Postgraduate Admissions</p> <p>Dr Bing Lu Nottingham Trent University</p>	<p>Cultural Traction: Embedding Research Culture Strategy in Research Communities</p> <p>Prof. Martin Holbraad, Dr. Aeron O'Connor, Dr. Dan Nightingale UCL</p>	<p>Ripped off in academia: the cost and consequences of unethical practices in research</p>	<p>Snakes and ladders: The reality of career development for research enablers</p> <p>Dr Sarah McLusky Independent. Research Adjacent Podcast</p>	<p>Co-designing a National open educational resource on the responsible use of research metrics.</p> <p>Dr Colleen Thomas University College Dublin</p>

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	Sarah Campbell; Claudia Gumm; Eleanor Walsh. University of Bristol				Dr Nicole Brown UCL		
	Peer Mentoring and its role in Professionalising Doctoral Supervision - Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP) Dr Karen Clegg (1); Dr Julia Rayner (1); Dr Eleanor Loughlin (2). University of York (1); University of Nottingham (2)	Reflections on a positive action funding initiative in the era of anti-DEI Soo Lincoln University of Leeds	Working Outside the Box: A Public Squares Initiative to Advance Transdisciplinary Research Culture at Stellenbosch University. Nicala Zeeman and Dr. Astrid Treffry-Goatley Stellenbosch University, South Africa	Researching our research culture: Taking an organisational culture approach to examine the underlying drivers of a positive research environment. Ruby Roberts (1); Jane Williams (1); Rhona Flin (2) Robert Gordon University (1); Aberdeen Business School (2)	Accessible Feedback in Research Dr Thomas Rhys Evans; Roksana Sobolak; Magda Skubera. University of Greenwich	Leadership and Teamwork Skills of Mid-Career Researchers: A Landscape Review Dr Urszula Pawlicka-Deger (1); Dr Ben Murton (1); Prof Simon Hayward (2). Wellcome Trust (1); The University of Manchester (2)	Evaluating Research Culture Change at the University of Dundee Stefanie Petschick University of Dundee

Workshop Sessions 14:00 – 14:50

(please click on session title to be directed to abstracts)

OC1.07	OC0.04	OC1.08	OC1.01	OC1.04	OC1.06	OC1.09
<p><u>Collective action against employment precarity</u></p> <p>Mx Ash Collins. University of Nottingham</p>	<p><u>Shaping the research culture Good Practice Exchange (GPEx) - Share your views</u></p> <p>Ben Bleasdale (1); Yolana Pringle (2); Ishita Puri (3); Daniela Rodriguez Rincon (3); Karen Stroobants (1); Ashley Theunissen (2).</p> <p>CultureBase Consulting (1); Vitae (2); RAND Europe (3)</p>	<p><u>Inclusive Pathways: Embedding EDI into Research and Research Management</u></p> <p>Dr Róisín McKelvey & Dr Alíz Owolabi. University of Edinburgh</p>	<p><u>Change the PATTERN: The Triggers and Impact of Unacceptable Behaviours in Academia</u></p> <p>Dimitrios Zachos (1) & Dr Behice Pehlivan (2).</p> <p>UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology (1), Koç University, Türkiye (2)</p>	<p><u>Pioneering National and International Partnerships in Undergraduate Research</u></p> <p>Thérèse Montgomery (1); Harald Mieg (2); Paul Taylor (3); Liam Bullingham (3); Jane Bryan (4); Emma Barker (4); Caroline Gibson (4).</p> <p>SURE Network, Ireland (1); Erasmus+ projects DigiUR & Posters in Brussels (2); British Conference of Undergraduate Research (3); University of Warwick (4)</p>	<p><u>The 'Cinderella' of EDI: Transforming Doctoral Assessment for Disabled Researchers</u></p> <p>Dr Theresa McKinven (1); Dr Katherine Dean (2); Dr Paula Holland (3); Dr Charlotte Round (1).</p> <p>University of Nottingham (1); University of East Anglia (2); University of Lancaster (3)</p>	<p><u>Public Involvement in Research: What We Can Learn from PPI in Health Research?</u></p> <p>Prof Helen Wheatley, Prof Sophie Staniszewska, Dr Phil Jemmett, Dr Georgiana Mihut.</p> <p>University of Warwick</p>

Research Culture Carousel Sessions 15:00 – 15:45
 (please click on session title to be directed to abstracts)

OC0.01	OC0.02	OC0.04	OC1.09	OC1.06	OC1.07
<u>Session 1</u>	<u>Session 2</u>	<u>Session 3</u>	<u>Session 4</u>	<u>Session 5</u>	<u>Session 6</u>
<p>Leading with Empathy: Co-designing a toolkit for Empathic and Inclusive Research Leadership. Cleo White. University of Leicester</p> <p>Creating More Race Inclusive Research Cultures - University of Birmingham ASPIRE Project Prof. Etlyn Kenny; Prof. Catherine Mangan; Prof. Chris Millward; Prof. Yemisi Takwoingi; Dr Zania Stamataki; Ms Sheena Lucas; Ms Kally Bharti; Ms Nosheen Qamer; Ms Olivia Barfi. University of Birmingham</p> <p>Making time for research, innovation and knowledge exchange: the Sheffield Hallam University Early Career Researcher and Innovator Fellowship</p>	<p>Encouraging the participation in outreach activities for all levels of staff: Sharing experiences across different university institutes. Craig Carnegie (1); Helena French (2); Emily Birkett (3); Sarah Conner (3) University of Warwick (1); University of Nottingham (2); University of Birmingham (3)</p> <p>The roving researcher scheme: an alternative career pathway that supports care leave. Paula Bibby, Katherine M. Dawson, Marie Collier, Liz Simmonds. University of Cambridge</p> <p>Mapping Inclusive Research Leadership and Collaboration through Social Network Analysis: Insights from the Culture Catalyst Fund Zain Ul Abidin, Second: Charlotte Bonner-Evans. University of Glasgow</p>	<p>Co-Creating Inclusive Research Spaces: A Targeted Research Programme for Care-Experienced, Estranged, and Asylum-Seeking Students. Ellis Ryan. University of Warwick</p> <p>EDI in Funding Applications: Developing a Researcher-Focused Toolkit Tave Burnett; Rachel Van Krimpen. University of Nottingham</p> <p>The Department of Imagination - Collaborating with artists to seed imagination practice for more creative, resilient and sustainable research cultures Mireia Bes (1); Giovanni Biglino (1), Bec Gee (2), Dave Jarman (1), Vivienne Kuh (1), Valentina Vezzani (1) University of Bristol (1); Freelance Artist Facilitator (2)</p> <p>How to enable research conversations: Possible activities and event formats</p>	<p>Valuing the Role of Research Professionals: Co-Creating Knowledge and Establishing a Peer Network Aoife Sadlier. The Centre for Public Engagement, Queen Mary University of London</p> <p>Building Online Wellbeing Literacy Resources for Early Career Researchers Tania M. Villanueva-Cabello; Elena Riva; Virginia Thomas-Pickles; Yuxuan Zhang. University of Warwick</p> <p>Measuring What Matters: Rethinking Collaborative Research Cultures from a Qualitative Perspective I Lin Sin; Emma Compton-Daw; Angela Graham; Churnjeet Mahn; Grace Murkett; Katie Salamon; Maria Weikum & Chris Wells-Holland. University of Strathclyde</p> <p>Prospering together - how peer-to-peer collaboration is driving development for Prosper's audience groups Kerry McElroy. University of Liverpool</p> <p>Associations between research culture and mental health and wellbeing in a research community</p>	<p>Mothers in Academia: Exploring the Experiences of Female PGRs and ECRs with Caring Responsibilities Cagla Karatepe, Xinran Gao, Yanyan Li and Mingzhi Li, University of Warwick</p> <p>A toolkit to foster great career conversations Dr Rachel Herries & Dr Rachel Chin. University of Glasgow</p> <p>From Data to Action: Making evidence-informed decisions to strengthen research cultures in higher education institutions. Dr Amy Devenney; Lizzie Ville & Rhian Pennie. UKRN, University of Bristol</p> <p>Participatory Action Research for research culture change. Dr Jess Adams; Prof. Natasha Mauthner; Dr Will Thomson; Dr Amy Stabler. Newcastle University</p>	<p>Research Culture Built from the Ground Up: Diagnosing Culture, Changing and Embedding Culture Karen Edwards.</p> <p>Signing the Declaration is only the beginning: Embedding a strategy for the responsible and fair use of research bibliometrics Edward Cartwright; Shira Elqayam; Jenny Coombs; Mandy Thomas; Alan Cope. De Montfort University</p> <p>Re-contextualising failure in academic research culture: Exploring how non-success has been understood and identifying recommendations to improve wellbeing. Dr Nicky Thomas. University of Warwick</p> <p>Supporting Researchers with Research Culture in Funding Applications Lindsey Spriggs & Sarah Mallet. University of Oxford</p>

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<p style="text-align: center;">Scheme. Gaynor Miller. Sheffield Hallam University</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Building a Long-term Collective Research Culture: Co-creating the LoCoR Model with Students and Staff to Enhance Research Continuity and Transparency Dr Feng Mao & Dr Bing Lu. University of Warwick</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Embedding Integrity Through Practice: Aligning researcher's assessment and Community of Practice to support responsible research recognition.</p> <p>Banaz Jalil (1); Karen Desborough (2); Nicola Payne (3); Evangeline Gowie (4); Robert Darby (4); Neil Jacobs (3,6); Tim Newton (5). University College London (1); Cardiff University (2); University of Bristol (3); University of Reading (4); Kings College London (5); UK Reproducibility Network (6)</p>	<p>Richard Smith; Dr Ayten Alibaba; Dr Joana Almeida; Dr Gill Frigerio; Dr Andy Hind; Yanyan Li; Dr Ida Hannah Lübben; Elyanora Mengliev;, Dr Pontso Moorosi; Miriam Schwiening; Lila Tennent & Yvette Wang. University of Warwick</p>	<p>Hugh Fulham-McQuillan; Gillian Boyle, Hugh Campbell; Maura Hiney; Grace Mulcahy; Ivar McGrath; Adrian Ottewill; Sonya Deschenes. University College Dublin</p>		
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12pm Parallel Presentations/Workshop

System Shuffle – Uncovering Hidden Competencies Workshop

 OC0.01

Alys Kay¹ and Dr Chandrika Nair²

¹University of Liverpool; ²University of Warwick

During this session, we will explore how research culture is shaped by the roles we take on, the systems we work within, and the choices we make together. System Shuffle is an interactive game where participants work collaboratively and creatively to reflect on the roles and agency of different members of team research: Who gets included in decisions? Who gets to advance? How can unexpected external factors affect us all?

Method:

The workshop uses an innovative, game-based approach to simulate real-world disparities. Participants sit at roundtables (8 per table) and adopt roles distinct from their own job family to gain new perspectives. Role cards describe hidden competencies, systemic barriers, and illustrative quotes drawn from a range of anonymized sector experiences. Participants respond to privilege- or barrier-based prompts, moving game pieces forward, backward, or remaining in place to reflect the systemic dynamics of their assigned role.

The workshop is facilitated within a psychologically safe space, encouraging participants to openly discuss and reflect on disparities in recognition and inclusion. By engaging with scenarios rooted in real research culture challenges, participants will deepen their understanding of how hidden competencies shape power dynamics and leave with practical strategies for fostering equitable and inclusive collaborations across disciplines and institutions.

Building and Empowering Inclusive Research Communities (1)

Presentations



Main Lecture Theatre

Mapping Research Cultures: Identifying Key Elements of the Research Process and Environment for Thriving Knowledge Ecosystems

Rachel Herbert, Silvia Dobre and Pragya Singh
Elsevier, UK & Netherlands

Building positive research culture is essential for fostering a thriving and effective knowledge creation process. However, universities, funders, and governments across different countries lack a unified understanding of the optimal research environment that supports high-quality scholarship. This study aims to address this gap by mapping key characteristics that underpin robust research ecosystems across a diverse set of countries, starting with Germany, India, Brazil, and China.

Using qualitative research methods, this project is exploring the commonalities and differences in how different national contexts shape research cultures. Our approach entails conducting a series of workshops and interviews with representatives from across each target country's research community, including researchers, research leaders, and people from research offices and funding organisations. In each conversation we are examining stakeholders' priorities and current approaches to capturing different elements of the research process and environment. Thematic analysis and constant comparison enable us to build a comprehensive map of the drivers for knowledge creation than has previously been understood.

By identifying and categorising elements of the research process and environment which contribute to knowledge creation, this research provides a foundation for understanding, (where appropriate) assessing and improving research cultures globally. A key hypothesis which we are exploring is that regional variations require locally tailored solutions for evaluating and enhancing research environments. This study will contribute to the creation of more supportive and effective research environments, by

enabling research organisations to develop related policies.

Creating and Celebrating Positive Research Environments: The Development and Evaluation of the Working Well Together Resource

Sarah Campbell, Claudia Gumm and Eleanor Walsh
University of Bristol, UK

Research in higher education is often considered an individual endeavour, but research is rarely done in isolation, and the culture of research environments is not created by individuals alone. Research culture is influenced by all those involved in enabling and delivering research. The Working Well Together project focusses on empowering small and large multi-disciplinary groups involved in research endeavours to take action within their sphere of influence and create a culture that suits them, in their local context. Since 2022, WWT has been co-created with a range of groups, including academics, research technicians, and professional services, who play key roles in enabling and delivering quality research across the University of Bristol.

A 5-step, action-focused, reflective framework guides teams through curated activities to i) identify the people they work with, ii) recognise the environment they currently work in, iii) identify how they would like to work together, iv) develop actions to create a research environment that works for them and v) reflect on the changes they have made so far. This has been developed into a self-serve platform as a sustainable alternative to facilitated workshops. Groups take charge of their own programme, to fit within their schedules, with the intention of long-term engagement. We will introduce WWT and describe how it has been co-created with over 700 staff members. We will present a detailed, mixed methods evaluation of the WWT project from consultation and feedback from those involved, and present plans for

future engagement.

Peer Mentoring and Its Role in Professionalising Doctoral Supervision

Dr Karen Clegg¹, Dr Julia Rayner¹ and Dr Eleanor Loughlin²

¹ University of York, UK; ² University of Nottingham, UK

RSVP aims to transform the culture and practice of research supervision. Funded by Research England RSVP is a four-culture change project that aims to explore aspects of doctoral supervision with a view to enhancing practice and influencing policy.

Grounded in pedagogy and bringing together 58 practitioner partners to co-create, pilot and evaluate CPD tools for research supervisors the project aims to provide the sector with road-tested tools to enhance supervisory practice.

Focus groups with supervisors and the results of the UK Research Supervision Survey (UKRSS) 2024 confirm that supervisors prefer and want to learn through sharing of experience. This presentation will outline how this might be achieved, focussing on our approach to peer mentoring and will draw on feedback from supervisors who have taken part in peer mentoring circles at the Universities of York, Nottingham and Queensland University of Technology, Australia. We will outline the process for further piloting with a wider range of partners and provide participants with some ideas about how they can utilise the approach in their own organisations. In addition, we will explore how we can collectively use the intelligence gathered about supervision to feed into culture change more widely.

For the purpose of RSVP, supervisor mentoring is defined as bringing supervisors together for impactful conversations that further the development of supervisory skills and practice. Through sharing experiences, tackling real issues, and challenging each other's thinking, mentors and mentees build confidence in their supervisory approaches.

Building and Empowering Inclusive Research Communities (2)

Presentations



OC0.02

Addressing the challenges that impede the progression and retention of early to mid-career stage women in academia (WinA)

Dr Amber F. Tout, Prof Kirstie L. Haywood, Dr Susanne Arnold, Jane Coleman and Dr Talar R. Moukhtarian

University of Warwick, UK

Research shows that women face disproportionate challenges when it comes to accessing, maintaining, and progressing in their academic careers (Westoby et al., 2021). Women in the early- to mid-career stages particularly experience additional work life conflicts that make them more likely to drop-out of academia altogether - a phenomenon known as the "leaky pipeline" (Blickenstaff, 2005).

This presentation provides an overview of a mixed-method project that utilised surveys (N = 401) and interviews (N = 20) to explore the challenges impeding the retention and progression for early- to mid-career women in UK Higher Education Institutions. The study also investigates the personal and professional impacts of these challenges and the factors influencing women's decisions to stay or leave.

Survey findings will highlight the primary challenges facing women at this important career stage (Aim 1) as well as intersectional differences (e.g. ethnicity, parental status) in women's experiences (Aim 2), and the impact of academic challenges on wellbeing outcomes (Aim 3). Reflexive thematic analysis of interview data will help to further contextualise survey findings and provide additional insight as to the real-world changes that women want to see within this sector.

We will also share an offset of actionable recommendations, co-developed with lived experience groups and decision-making stakeholders from universities, funding bodies and EDI networks.

These recommendations aim to improve career stability, progression, recognition, and reward for women in academia.

Please note: This project is currently ongoing. All findings will have been obtained, analysed, and written up in full by July, ahead of the conference in September. An updated abstract can be provided at a later date.

References

- Blickenstaff, J. (2005). Women and science careers: leaky pipeline or gender filter? *Gender and education*, 17(4), 369-386
- Westoby, C., Dyson, J., Cowdell, F., & Buescher, T. (2021). What are the barriers and facilitators to success for female academics in UK HEIs? A narrative review. *Gender and Education*, 33(8), 1033-1056

The Plexus: designing and developing connective and inclusive impact-oriented networks for researchers in a post-92 university

Dr Liana Psarologaki

Buckinghamshire New University, UK

The presentation introduces a novel model for approaching impact-oriented, inclusive research culture in a post-92 University setting. It will present the new inclusive researchers' network "The Plexus" at Buckinghamshire New University as an insightful and impactful case study for building research culture among a diverse researchers' ecosystem. The Plexus was designed in response to the University's 2024 inclusive research and knowledge exchange strategy under three key values, being empowering, enacting and enabling. Currently there is an overkill of resources available targeting the so called ECRs, including the Researcher's Academy available via

Elsevier and Vitae. On the other hand, an exclusion of mid-career researchers in essential connective and learning activities is noted with concern in recent events including the Vitae International Researcher Development Conference 2024.

The Plexus emphasises the importance of collaborative research and diversified impact, addressing sector expectations and institutional intricacies. Its novel approach is founded upon diffusing the barriers among ECRs and MCRs developing skills and connections among academics (and progressively PSE colleagues) who are becoming research active, returning to research from intensive teaching roles and/or adapting to scholarship from vocational backgrounds. It cultivates an inclusive, discursive and inquisitive research environment. The talk will delve into a reflective account of the first year of The Plexus running in pilot at Buckinghamshire New University, supported by the British Academy ECRN, leading to an institutional expression of interest to become a delivery partner for their Southeast cluster. It will share approaches and tactics as well as benefits and risks associated with such initiative and how it can become a replicable blueprint for good practice of building an inclusive research culture.

Reflections on a positive action funding initiative in the era of anti-DEI

Soo Lincoln

University of Leeds, UK

We will provide insights into lessons learned from the REDI (Research Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) funding calls, piloted in 23/24 and 24/25 at University of Leeds under our strategic programme on enhancing research culture. This positive action-style intervention supports researchers with certain protected characteristics who are institutionally underrepresented in senior academic research, by funding a variety of career development activities. It is unique in being tailored to whatever applicants define as being helpful to enhance future promotion prospects. Over the two rounds, we have funded 36 projects with £420k of support.

We will provide an overview of the data analysed to support the funding pilot and rationale behind the choices made at each step, focusing on key decision-making points to illustrate which dilemmas we encountered and how these were tackled.

These include:

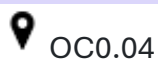
- Our focus on disability, ethnicity, and gender
- Ringfencing opportunities for Academic staff at Grades 8 & 9
- Call open to those undertaking EDI activity regardless of protected characteristics
- Providing non-traditional application review processes and guidance
- Using partially randomised allocation (PRA)
- Addressing intersectionality using multiple 'lottery tickets'
- Maintaining discretion, including preserving the anonymity of awardees
- Providing networking and additional support in addition to the cash injection

Pivotaly, this presentation acknowledges the risk of operating only in a 'deficit model' of action, where funding and case-by-case work provides targeted support for individuals but does not 'fix' systemic bias. We will discuss an analysis of applications to the fund (covering key areas of specific support requested) and feedback from applicants and awardees to explore how this helps clarify our understanding of the barriers experienced by marginalised groups in the research space.

This learning will inform future EDI initiatives to target structural issues, needed now more than ever given the anti-DEI global context in which we operate, where merit and equity are considered mutually exclusive.

Collaboration, connectivity and sustainability

Presentations



Interdisciplinary Co-Authoring and Publication - Collaboration, Challenges and Culture

Georgia Vesma

The University of Manchester, UK

Interdisciplinarity is now a core element of research strategy for most institutions, encouraged in strategy documents if not always through structural provisions (Reybold & Halx, 2012). Explorations of interdisciplinary research have largely focused on how both individual researchers and broader institutional research culture can support and impede high-quality interdisciplinary collaboration at the research stage (Lattuca, 2002).

But what about after the research collaboration, when it's time to write up and publish?

I surveyed 160 self-identified interdisciplinary researchers at a large, research-intensive UK university and conducted follow-up interviews and focus groups to learn about the enablers of – and barriers to – the open publication of interdisciplinary research. The results reveal significant challenges within the co-authoring process, some of which are deeply entrenched within the culture of the host institution.

In addition to known issues such as negotiating contribution statements and author-order norms (Schneider & Gur-Arie, 2017; Youtie & Bozeman, 2016), respondents highlighted the risks of publishing truly interdisciplinary research, noting that it can be harmful to promotion cases, can present reputational risks, and that existing mechanisms such as the REF can prevent the publication of truly innovative research. These risks were identified as particularly present for early- and mid-career researchers, who

are also recognised as the groups most likely to be conducting interdisciplinary research.

The results of this study indicate an underlying research culture challenge, one that goes beyond the recognised challenges of cross-disciplinary collaboration and intersects with the challenges of research assessment. This presentation will examine the risks and challenges identified by interdisciplinary co-authors and consider what institutions can do to facilitate the publication and recognition of excellent interdisciplinary research.

References:

- Lattuca, Lisa R. "Learning Interdisciplinarity: Sociocultural Perspectives on Academic Work." *The Journal of Higher Education* 73, no. 6 (2002): 711–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1558403>.
- Reybold, L. & Halx, Mark. (2012). Coming to Terms with the Meaning of Interdisciplinarity: Faculty Rewards and the Authority of the Discipline. *The Journal of General Education*. 61. 323-351. 10.5325/jgeneeduc.61.4.0323.
- Schneider, Andrea, and Rachel Gur-Arie. "Negotiating Co-Authorship, Ethically and Successfully." *International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution* 5, no. 1/2 (2017): 71–82. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26928595>.
- Youtie, Jan, and Barry Bozeman. "Dueling Co-Authors: How Collaborators Create and Sometimes Solve Contributorship Conflicts." *Minerva* 54, no. 4 (2016): 375–97. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26302058>.

Building Inclusive Research Communities: A Community of Practice Approach to Enhancing Postgraduate Admissions

Dr Bing Lu

Nottingham Trent University, UK

Postgraduate researcher (PGR) admissions play a crucial role in shaping research cultures, yet traditional selection processes often reinforce systemic barriers to access. This presentation explores how the EDEPI project has fostered an interinstitutional Community of Practice (CoP) among a group of international and UK institutions to collectively enhance inclusive PGR admissions. Rather than imposing a top-down framework, this initiative emerged organically from institutions with a shared commitment to rethinking their recruitment practices.

Building on the EDEPI Competency-Based Admissions Framework, three UK institutions engaged as case studies, piloting new approaches to evaluating applicants beyond conventional academic metrics. Through collaborative webinars, facilitated discussions, and shared reflective practices, these institutions worked alongside the EDEPI team to explore challenges, adapt the framework to their unique contexts, and embed equity-driven principles into their PGR admissions processes. This process was iterative and co-owned, allowing for the exchange of institutional insights, collective problem-solving, and the co-creation of best practices.

This presentation will discuss key findings from the case study phase, including:

- How a Community of Practice approach fosters sector-wide knowledge sharing and action toward inclusive recruitment
- The challenges and successes of implementing competency-based approaches across different institutional contexts
- The role of interinstitutional collaboration in building a sustainable, empowered network for research culture transformation

By centring inclusivity within admissions, this presentation highlights the potential for research

communities to become more diverse, dynamic, and equitable from the very first stage of the academic pipeline. In doing so, it offers a model for institutions seeking to move beyond policy rhetoric and toward meaningful, collaborative change in doctoral education.

Working Outside the Box: A Public Squares Initiative to Advance Transdisciplinary Research Culture at Stellenbosch University

Nicala Zeeman and Dr. Astrid Treffry-Goatley

Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Addressing today's complex environmental, health, and sustainability challenges requires solutions-oriented and collaborative research, also known as transdisciplinary research.

This form of research is team-based and often involves a broad range of societal partners working alongside disciplinary experts to develop, and sometimes test, solutions to real-world problems. However, while scholars can potentially play a key role in generating knowledge to address such complex issues, how can institutions better support them to "work outside the box"? More specifically, how can universities foster a research culture that enables diverse teams to cross boundaries, share ideas, and raise funding to sustain new endeavours?

To explore these questions, we draw on The Public Squares project at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, as a case study. Launched in 2024 by the Division of Research Development, The Public Squares aims to advance an impactful research culture grounded in transdisciplinary collaboration. The programme sparked the formation of eleven new research teams, each comprising a diverse mix of academic and non-academic stakeholders and focused on a specific issue of national and/or global significance.

Over a three-year period, these teams participate in a bespoke capacity development programme to strengthen their transdisciplinary research and grant writing skills. The programme also offers the teams expert-facilitated brainstorming sessions to help

them cultivate and fund their unique engaged research projects. In this presentation, we draw on the findings of an evaluation survey and qualitative interviews with team members to assess the feasibility of this approach, and to explore what it might teach us about advancing inclusive and resilient research ecologies in this environment. Our paper offers valuable lessons and practical insights for other universities seeking to future-proof their research through deep collaboration and engagement.

Developing and embedding Research Culture Presentations

 OC1.01

Giving voice to the voices: Co-creating a framework for research culture change

Dr Charmaine Lim¹ and Lisa Backwell²

¹The University of Glasgow; ²The University of Edinburgh

Cultivating a positive research culture requires effective leadership that operates collegially. However, a gap remains in our understanding of how this collegial leadership manifests in practice. The InFrame project, a collaborative endeavour funded by the Wellcome Trust and involving the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and St Andrews, aims to catalyse a transformative shift in research culture through the cultivation of effective collegial leadership.

A central objective of the InFrame project is to broaden understanding of research leadership through providing funding opportunities for new and emerging leaders to investigate their practice. To achieve this, the project has developed and is currently piloting an accessible Culture Catalyst Fund (CCF), which will be used to develop an emerging co-created framework for collegial leadership.

This paper will delve into the key themes that surfaced during the initial round of the CCF. Drawing upon original empirical data collected from project applications across the three participating Universities, the analysis will employ a combination of grounded theory (Ackerly and True, 2020; Lim, 2019), thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2023; Lim, 2023), culturally responsive theory-driven evaluation (Meyer et al, 2021) and a social constructivist approach (Charmaz and Thornberg, 2021; Kim, 2014). This methodological approach prioritises a co-created framework that authentically reflects the perspectives and priorities of our research

communities. By empowering our research communities to articulate their understanding of effective leadership practices and integrating their lived experiences into development and reward systems, the InFrame project will generate a wealth of evidence-based initiatives to enhance research cultures. These initiatives have the potential to be readily adapted and implemented across various job families and career stages within higher education institutions throughout the UK, fostering a more supportive and rewarding research environment.

Cultural Traction: Embedding Research Culture Strategy in Research Communities

Prof. Martin Holbraad, Dr. Aeron O'Connor and Dr. Dan Nightingale

University College London, UK

Catalysing the co-creation of environments that support positive research culture is now a central concern across UK higher education, with universities devoting effort and resources to improving research culture, not least in preparation for REF2029 and its new emphasis on People, Culture and Environment. But how can universities foster positive change in view of the significant diversity of practices and understandings of research culture in different parts of the research community? And how can this diversity be harnessed in universities' efforts to develop robust research culture strategies?

This paper builds on our team's prior work showing that research cultures are embedded diversely in highly localized social structures, relations and histories of particular research communities (O'Connor & Holbraad 2023). Our current UKRI-funded project takes the finding that research cultures exist both in institution-wide structures and

processes (what we call ‘processual research culture’) and the rich and varied tapestry of social and cultural dynamics through which research gets done on the ground (‘relational research culture’) as its starting point (cf. Garsten and Nyquist 2013). Here we propose that maintaining a focus on the points of contact and friction (Tsing 2005) between the relational and processual are key for embedding and sustaining positive, holistic transformations in research culture.

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Researching Our Research Culture: Taking an Organisational Culture Approach to Examine the Underlying Drivers of a Positive Research Environment

Ruby Roberts¹, Jane Williams² and Rhona Flin¹
¹Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University, UK; ²Research Office, Robert Gordon University, UK

Developing and sustaining a thriving, long-term research culture is vital not only for researchers but also for our ability to address global challenges. Yet, several high-profile reports have highlighted concerns about researchers feeling undervalued, pressured to publish, and isolated. Whilst sector organisations and universities alike have begun to address these issues, research culture can be a fuzzy concept with uncertainties about how it can be measured and improved, particularly given the cultural component of REF 2029. Consequently, it is essential that interventions are empirically grounded to ensure that they drive tangible, long-term change. Research from other sectors offer opportunities for cross-sector learning.


Organisational psychology has been examining organisational culture in other sectors for decades, including developing evaluation measures.

The underlying dimensions, norms and behaviours that drive a positive research culture are less well understood, yet research from other sectors can provide understanding of these (e.g., leadership commitment and communication). Taking this innovative approach, the presentation will share best practices for fostering a strong, long-term research culture in terms of (1) defining research culture, (2) understanding the underlying drivers, (3) outlining data from an empirically grounded research culture questionnaire, and (4) discussing enabling mechanisms.

The presentation will outline an interdisciplinary project that developed and piloted a novel research culture questionnaire (study 1; n=177). It was later refined (based on initial psychometric analysis) and run as a full-scale survey with academics, research staff, professional support staff, research students, and university leadership (study 2; n=349; across one university). The resulting factor set provides fresh insight into the underlying dimensions that can direct effective, long-term interventions. Drawing on organisational culture literatures and survey results, key enablers that support a strong research culture will be discussed, such as measuring outcomes, fostering psychological safety, and commitment to people’s wellbeing not just as employees but as humans.

Integrity, Trust and Transparency in Research Culture

Presentations

 OC1.04

Destigmatising how we identify and address research mistakes

Dr Catherine L. Winchester

CRUK Scotland Institute, UK

Research integrity is underpinned by honesty and robust research practices. At the CRUK Scotland Institute we have developed a Research Integrity Service that provides a framework to enable the highest standards of research practices. However, mistakes, due to human error, misunderstanding or lack of knowledge, still occasionally occur. It is important that we recognise this and treat mistakes differently from breaches of research integrity, which are addressed by having a rigorous research misconduct policy. In recognising this we have endeavoured to foster a transparent culture where mistakes or concerns about research practices or outputs can be identified, raised, discussed and rectified.

We have developed an objective and transparent evidence-based process to assess all potential issues with our research practices, outputs and publications, and where possible to resolve them. A vital part of this process involves interacting with our researchers in a non-accusatory and non-judgemental manner. Support for researchers is signposted during the Institute's mandatory research integrity training programme and manuscript pre-submission research integrity review, in our inhouse Research Integrity Toolkit and in a statement on our external webpage. As well as responding to identified or anonymous concerns we encourage our researchers to be open and pro-active about self-reporting as well as raising concerns about other researchers. We understand that there are challenges with this, largely due to embarrassment, perceived fear of retribution or lack of recourse. We also take

steps to protect anonymity. Endorsement of our assessment process by senior leadership and the sharing of case studies, as well as building trust in our Research Integrity Service, has helped to alleviate such concerns.

In conclusion, we think that being open about mistakes contributes to the reproducibility and robustness of research and research integrity and has a positive impact on our research culture.

Ripped off in academia: the cost and consequences of unethical practices in research

Dr Nicole Brown

University College London, UK

In informal settings, academics of all career stages talk about being ripped off in higher education: they experience or witness unethical practices in research, such as academics stealing others ideas, academics being listed as authors where contributions may be questionable, academics not being named in publications when they should be, and academics being forced to add others as investigators for contractual reasons.

Although there is increased interest in developing "good" research culture in higher education, there has not been any research into the costs and consequences of unethical practices in research. This research aimed to redress that gap. To this end, the following research question was formulated: What are the costs and consequences of unethical practices in research in higher education?

In this presentation, I will report on the findings from 26 in-depth interviews with 27 participants across all career stages and disciplinary boundaries.

Research participants talk about having their ideas stolen and therefore becoming more protective of their work. These researchers are less likely to collaborate with others in the future, which results in the long-term societal cost of disengaged researchers and early careers researchers specifically having to navigate the research world without support. The personal costs of feeling gaslit and beginning to doubt themselves. This coupled with the personal disappointment in some cases leads to significant mental health issues, which in turn results in academics leaving the research fields, disciplines, and even the profession altogether. The end result is that particular kinds of research no longer happen at all.

The research that is most likely to be harmed in this vicious cycle is any research into and with marginalised communities. There are, however, very simple measures that could be introduced to counteract this negative spiral. I will therefore conclude this presentation with a focus on robust complaints and misconduct procedures and on collaborative practices rather than competitive edges, when it comes to funding applications, specifically.

Accessible Feedback in Research

Dr Thomas Rhys Evans, Roksana Sobolak and Magda Skubera

University of Greenwich

Feedback is central to research culture and research quality but often fails to meet the needs of diverse researchers. Aligned with Merton's (1973) principle of organised scepticism, feedback promotes rigorous scrutiny and continuous questioning of scientific claims, ensuring research integrity by challenging assumptions, reducing bias, and systematically examining evidence. It also shapes researchers' well-being and self-perceptions, fostering a supportive, inclusive culture that benefits marginalised

researchers facing workplace barriers (Evans & Dobrosielska, 2019; Gregor et al., 2023). However, feedback is often delayed until research completion, emphasising outcomes over process, with late-stage peer review being particularly ineffective for early career researchers who require ongoing guidance (Hamilton et al., 2020; Tennant & Ross-Hellauer, 2020). Early feedback is typically informal, while formal feedback mechanisms are concentrated at dissemination, leaving gaps in support. The Open Scholarship Movement offers a chance to reassess these practices as although initiatives have emerged, they lack central coordination (Pennington et al., 2023), creating an opportunity to integrate timely and less privilege-dependent feedback mechanisms.

The current presentation reports some of the first results emerging from a global, transdisciplinary mixed-methods survey ($n > 500$) that mapped feedback strategies used by researchers across the research lifecycle, evaluating their value and accessibility. Participants reflected on their most recent projects, detailing and rating feedback at each stage from all stakeholders.

Preliminary quantitative results suggest that feedback is vital to research culture and professional development but there are several inadequacies and inconsistencies in current practice that are likely to disproportionately disadvantage marginalised groups and early career researchers. Qualitative data has also informed recommendations to improve the request and delivery of feedback to make the hidden curriculum explicit. We hope this work helps set higher standards for research to improve the quality, relevance, and frequency of feedback in research, strengthening the credibility and validity of scientific findings while promoting inclusivity.

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Improving Careers with and for Future Researchers and Research Enablers Presentations

 OC1.06

Is redeployment a feasible response to contract precarity in early research careers? Converging evidence from three studies

Noam Tal-Perry¹, Lara Abel¹, Yingjie Li¹, Allison Beggs¹, Molly Smith¹, Luisa Ciampi¹, Mollie Etheridge¹, Becky Ioppolo¹, Tomos Robinson², Werner Seitz³, Debbie Birkett¹, Steven Wooding¹

¹ University of Cambridge, UK; ² Newcastle University, UK; ³ Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität München, Germany

ECRs in the UK and beyond face significant job insecurity due to fixed-term contracts. This precarity negatively impacts ECRs' well-being, contributes to the exodus from academia, and disproportionately affects individuals from underrepresented backgrounds. One proposed solution, suggested by multiple UK research bodies, is to strengthen redeployment schemes for research positions. These policies require institutions to prioritise existing employees who meet the essential criteria for new vacancies. However, the feasibility of such schemes for increasing job security for ECRs remains uncertain.

Here, we present findings from three studies assessing the feasibility of redeployment for research positions, each taking a different perspective on redeployment:

- a) ECR perspective: We conducted an online Discrete Choice Experiment with over 500 ECRs across the UK. Participants made hypothetical job selections, allowing us to analyse how they trade-off key job attributes such as location and research interest and to identify for whom redeployment might be an attractive option.

- b) Institutional and PI perspective: We reviewed redeployment policies from more than 20 UK higher education institutions and interviewed over 10 PIs to explore employer perspectives on redeployment, including potential challenges and unintended consequences.
- c) Feasibility analysis: Using large language models (LLMs), we analysed over 9,000 job adverts from the University of Cambridge and compared person specifications as a proxy of the viability of redeployment between research roles.

Our results paint a complex picture. While ECRs show interest in redeployment opportunities, tensions arise when considering the perspectives of PIs and institutions. Our analysis further suggests that the practicality of redeployment varies between disciplines. Taken together, our findings indicate that, in its current form, redeployment may not be well-suited for research roles. In an increasingly precarious academic job market, this raises an important question: Should redeployment schemes be modified, or should institutions explore alternative strategies to support ECR job security?

Snakes and ladders: The reality of career development for research enablers

Dr Sarah McLusky

Independent

Culture is created by people and research culture is created by ALL of the people who work as part of research teams, not just the researchers. Whether you call them research enablers or something else (I prefer research-adjacent) these people are often the glue that holds teams and projects together. But too often their work is invisible and undervalued. And too

often their professional development is an after-thought.

When compared to researchers the difference is marked. While researchers have structured career paths and numerous development opportunities, research-adjacent professionals often struggle to access any career development support at all.

Through the podcast Research Adjacent I have interviewed over 50 research-adjacent professionals in a variety of roles for a range of different organisations. This has given me a broad overview of the challenges they currently face – from a lack of progression opportunities to isolation and imposter moments.

In this talk I will share the most common challenges facing research-adjacent professionals with some suggestions for how to tackle them.

<https://researchadjacent.com/podcast/>

Leadership and Teamwork Skills of Mid-Career Researchers: A Landscape Review

Dr Urszula Pawlicka-Deger, Dr Ben Murton and Prof Simon Hayward

University of Cambridge, UK

Wellcome is an independent charitable foundation, both politically and financially. In 2021, it launched the Discovery Research programme to advance understanding of life, health, and wellbeing through curiosity-driven research to foster a positive research culture and to support the next generation of academic leaders.

The UK funding landscape has been evolving to prioritise team-based and cross-disciplinary work. This shift towards more complex and cross-sectoral collaboration presents a leadership challenge for universities, research institutes, and individual researchers. Navigating this transition requires new skills and capabilities to effectively manage advanced projects and teams in an increasingly interconnected world.

Wellcome is committed to transforming research culture, recognising that leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the values and behaviours embedded within academic environments. Its vision is for mid-career researchers to maximise their research impact and drive positive change in academia through strong personal leadership while effectively leveraging the talent within their teams.

To this end, Wellcome is partnering with Professor Simon Hayward to explore the current research leadership landscape in the UK. This initiative seeks to understand the leadership development opportunities available to mid-career researchers, assess how existing programmes meet their needs, identify challenges in accessing leadership training, evaluate how these initiatives support the formation of long-term, effective teams, and determine what additional mechanisms are required to help researchers sustain and enhance their leadership skills throughout their careers.

We will:

- 1) Outline the contextual and strategic drivers behind the focus on research leadership development.
- 2) Present initial findings from the leadership landscape review.
- 3) Highlight actions to bridge gaps in leadership development for both individuals and teams.

Strong leadership skills are key to shaping a positive, inclusive research culture for 2050, driven by change at multiple levels — from individual teams to broader academic communities, faculties, and the wider research ecosystem.

Metrics that matter – measuring progress for the future

Presentations

 OC1.06

Protocol for a theory-based, mixed methods evaluation of Cynnau|Ignite: an active learning programme to foster positive research culture at Cardiff University

Charlotte Hennah and Sofia Gameiro

Cardiff University, UK

Cynnau|Ignite is an active learning programme to promote positive research culture (RC) practices at Cardiff University via fostering RC values and empowering self-leadership. Cynnau|Ignite was co-designed with staff and university management and is being implemented as three programmes tailored to job roles: Teaching and Research (64 learners), Research-Only (32 learners), and Professional Services, Technicians and Specialists (32 learners).

Conceptualising Cynnau|Ignite as a complex behavioural change intervention, we will detail a pre-registered, theory-based, mixed-methods prospective evaluation to investigate if Cynnau|Ignite can be implemented at Cardiff University (feasibility), is valued by stakeholders (acceptability), and positively impacts RC practices (effectiveness) (Hennah et al, 2025).

In this talk we will:

- Outline Cynnau|Ignite's Theory of Change, i.e. how and why it is expected to change positive RC practices at Cardiff University;
- Describe the mixed-methods research activities designed to establish Cynnau|Ignite's feasibility and stakeholders' acceptability (i.e., data monitoring, sessions observation, and semi-structured interviews);
- Detail a prospective assessment of a control group (of staff not involved in Cynnau|Ignite) and learners' self-reported positive RC

practices (intentions and behaviours), informed by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), to evaluate the programme's effectiveness in improving positive RC practices;

- Reflect on lessons learned regarding evaluation of positive RC practices.

We hypothesise Cynnau|Ignite will be feasible to implement, largely acceptable, and effective in boosting learners' positive RC intentions compared to the control group. However, behavioural implementation of RC practices may be adversely affected by common barriers such as insufficient time and resources, as well as current restructuring occurring at Cardiff University.

Findings will help inform future iterations of Cynnau|Ignite and similar training programmes, advance methods for the evaluation of RC practices, and inform choices regarding investment in RC initiatives at other Higher Education Institutions.

Funding statement:

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Co-designing a National open educational resource on the responsible use of research metrics

Dr Colleen Thomas¹, Patrick Phillips², Dr Emma Dorris¹ and Prof Grace Mulcahy¹

¹University College Dublin, UK; ²Queen's University Belfast, UK

Background: The mechanisms used to assess research have significant influence over the behaviours and attitudes of researchers which consequently links research evaluation practice to research culture (Science Europe, 2023). Poor use of metrics can enable a culture which distorts scholarship towards positive outcomes, potentially resulting in a cumulative effect of citation biases (Devries et al, 2018). It can also disadvantage humanities researchers (Martin et al, 2019). Women and researchers from minority groups tend to be most affected by the inappropriate use of research metrics (Pells, 2018; Chawla, 2016; Inge, 2018). Furthermore, to meet the Irish National priority for mainstreaming the open science practices there must be an evaluation system that appropriately recognises the broad range of outputs beyond publications, and transparent practices which are integral to an open research environment.

Aims: Quality training is key to advancing knowledge of the responsible use of research metrics (RURM); in Ireland, there has been a gap in the infrastructure for training the research community on RURM. The Research Culture Team at University College Dublin led a coalition of partners to develop a National open educational resource (OER) on RURM, co-designed with the research community. It is intended to raise awareness within the Irish research system of RURM and to guide evaluators involved in recruitment, research assessment and career progression. User data will serve as future indicator of changes in assessment practice and research culture across Ireland.

Methods: This project used a co-design process to identify the needs and priorities of the intended audience, preferred delivery method, and mechanisms for effective engagement on this topic. A series of five focus group workshops were held with

members of the research communities (n=124) across Ireland. Participants (n=92) across the four partner institutions beta-tested the draft module. Quantitative and qualitative feedback on relevance to discipline areas, knowledge confirmation activities, and mechanisms for content delivery was collected on a voluntary basis (n=57).

Results and Conclusion: The workshops revealed that across all communities, there is only a moderate level of understanding about research metrics (44% reported little or no familiarity with RURM), making the inclusion of foundational knowledge essential. Recognising the value and limits of all types of research assessment was considered vital for making fair evaluations. Tools and guidance to apply research metrics appropriately in consideration of discipline, career stage, and diversity of output / contribution was a priority. Workshop participants identified videos, text-based content and case studies that provide guidance and practical applications for RURM as their preferred content types. Most beta-testers (88%) found the module was relevant to their disciplines. Most beta-testers agreed that the module is easy to navigate and well structured (83%), allowing them to quickly find the information they were looking for (79%). Nearly two-thirds agreed (63%) that the reflection prompts and activities in the module are engaging and support learning.

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research culture work and research culture evaluation at a juncture in UK Higher Education.

Sector initiatives like the IFRC, as well as the growing importance of People, Culture and Environment for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029, are aiming to create a more equitable and people-focused research culture in the UK, while market forces and cost-cutting are radically changing the sector in different ways. The paper therefore offers some reflections on negotiating these contradictions.

Evaluating Research Culture Change at the University of Dundee

Stefanie Petschick

University of Dundee, UK

In May 2024, along with 23 other institutions within the UK, the University of Dundee was awarded £1 million in funding over 24 months from the Wellcome Institutional Fund for Research Culture (IFRC). The University of Dundee's project "Progressing positive and inclusive research culture at the University of Dundee" comprises a series of initiatives that aim to "advance equitable, diverse, supportive, and productive research cultures and environments within the University" and "promote strategies for sustaining positive research cultures." It is aiming to achieve this by supporting colleagues and postgraduate researchers with primary care responsibilities, enabling leadership transition, addressing precarities in career progression, and overcoming barriers between disciplines and communities.

This paper presents my work in progress as the project's Research Culture Evaluation Lead, which comprises taking stock of the research culture at the University of Dundee at the start of the grant, as well as the evaluation of each project component and their impact on the University's research culture. This paper will present the project's evaluation protocol and initial insight. Further, it will conclude with some critical reflection on the context and obstacles of

Parallel Workshops

Collective Action Against Employment Precarity

 OC1.07

Mx Ash Collins

University of Nottingham, UK

Employment precarity in research careers is widespread and deeply culturally-engrained, notorious for unsuccessful local initiatives and its disproportionate impact on underrepresented groups. Recognition is emerging in the sector of the need to work collectively.

Across April 2025, I am launching a working group on employment precarity through the Research Culture Enablers Network, aimed at bringing together those with the knowledge and interest in this area from across UK HEIs. The goal for this group is to use this collective understanding to work towards effective strategies utilising collective action, to engage with HEI leadership, research funding bodies, and policy makers, and improve employment stability for researchers, technicians, and professional services staff working in research.

The aim of this interactive session is to briefly showcase the learnings of the working group from its first few months, and hone collective insight from attendees on their experiences of change projects on employment precarity at their respective institutions.

Progress in this area requires understanding of the ecosystems change-drivers and policy-makers are operating within, and how to engage with the relative motivations of a diverse range of stakeholders to create locally appropriate solutions.

By introducing attendees to system dynamics mapping, an empirically supported framework (Bradbury-Huang, 2015), in this session we will develop transferable case studies addressing employment precarity and found a strategic network to scale and amplify insight and best-practice emerging from the current groundswell of exciting, but locally isolated activity.

Through this session, the next steps for the working group will be established, to create a more effective plan to engage local and national stakeholders on this subject, which is becoming increasingly challenging, but increasingly crucial, amidst the sector's current financial challenges.

Shaping the Research Culture Good Practice Exchange (GPEX) – Share Your Views

 OC0.04

Ben Bleasdale¹, Yolana Pringle², Ishita Puri³, Daniela Rodriguez Rincon³, Karen Stroobants¹ and Ashley Theunissen²

¹CultureBase Consulting; ²Vitae; ³RAND Europe

The research community has anticipated the development and delivery of the Good Practice Exchange (GPEX) for research culture since it was outlined in the UK Government's R&D People and Culture strategy. The goal of GPEX is to harness and consolidate existing activities relevant to research culture for the benefit of researchers, research, and society. Its core objectives are to: i) build networks and collaboration; ii) support more and better evaluation; and iii) strengthen strategic leadership across the research sector.

In March, UKRI commissioned a consortium of partners - CultureBase, RAND Europe, UKRN, and Vitae - to co-create options for the design and delivery of GPEX with the broader UK research sector. The expected outcomes include identifying priority activities, outcomes, and impacts, supporting evaluations, and facilitating sector engagement and leadership in research culture. Additionally, the project will determine success indicators, costing models, and the necessary resources, infrastructure, and governance for GPEX.

This interactive workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to share their views on the prioritisation of potential GPEX activities, suggestions for alternative activities, and appetite to engage with these activities. The session will begin with a brief progress update on the design of GPEX, highlighting ambitions, insights gained through the co-development process so far, and the next steps. The majority of the session will focus on audience participation exercises, complementing other engagement activities in the project. Inputs from the session will feed into the development of the GPEX delivery model.

Inclusive Pathways: Embedding EDI into Research and Research Management

 OC1.08

Dr Róisín McKelvey and Dr Alíz Owolabi

The University of Edinburgh, UK

Inclusive, transparent and ethical research practice is a core aspect of positive research cultures, and the leadership of research enabling staff is essential to developing and promoting inclusive practices. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is one of the five core values underpinning the University of Edinburgh's Research Cultures Action Plan (RCAP), and career pathways and governance are among the identified drivers for change. Within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, EDI and research support colleagues collaborate on innovative initiatives striving to both embed inclusion and transparency within research management processes and offer career development opportunities to Early Career Researchers.

Colleagues Alíz - and Róisín will lead an interactive workshop focused on inclusive practice in research and research management. They will introduce the topic through their own in-progress case study: EDI within demand management (internal pre-selection) processes for funding applications. Their collaborative project emerged from their roles in demand management and EDI, respectively, and aims to develop more inclusive approaches to internal grant review. Opportunities to adapt principles from this work to other relevant contexts within the research ecosystem will be presented to session participants. Therefore, this session is open to anyone interested in integrating EDI into research and associated support processes. Participants will share experiences, and collaboratively workshop solutions to any challenges encountered, or expected, when implementing inclusive practice.

This session will facilitate community and network building across institutions and provide an opportunity to share learning and practical advice, inspiring innovative avenues for collaboration.

Change the PATTERN: The Triggers and Impact of Unacceptable Behaviours in Academia

 OC1.01

Dimitrios Zachos¹ and Dr Behice Pehlivan²

¹UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology, UK; ²Koç University, Turkey

The prevalence of bullying, harassment, and other forms of unacceptable behaviour in academic settings poses significant challenges to cultivating inclusive and supportive research communities. The PATTERN initiative — a collaboration between Koç University and UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology — seeks to confront these issues and contribute to a cultural shift in academia, away from the ‘thick skin’ and ‘that is the way we do things around here’ rhetoric and towards a culture of care.

This interactive workshop will engage participants in recognising and reflecting on unacceptable behaviours in academia, exploring their triggers, and understanding their impact on individuals and departments. The session draws on key findings from original research conducted as part of the PATTERN initiative in 2024. Our research combined literature reviews, interactive workshops, focus groups, and surveys. Contributors included academic, research, teaching, professional services, and administrative staff, as well as PhD students.

Commonly reported issues included favouritism, abusive supervision, micromanagement, ignored communications, and leadership inaction. These behaviours were linked to negative outcomes such as mental health deterioration, behavioural withdrawal, and erosion of workplace culture — often intensified by pressures to build reputations, secure promotions, and maintain job security.

Through scenarios, group discussions, and hands-on activities, participants will engage with these findings and reflect on how such behaviours manifest in their own environments. By the end of the workshop, participants will have a deeper understanding of barriers to inclusion in academia.

Find out more about PATTERN: www.ucl.ac.uk/ion/equality-diversity-inclusion/pattern

Pioneering National and International Partnerships in Undergraduate Research

 OC1.04

Thérèse Montgomery¹, Harald Mieg², Paul Taylor³, Liam Bullingham³, Jane Bryan⁴, Emma Barker⁴ and Caroline Gibson⁴

¹SURE Network, Ireland, UK; ²Erasmus+ projects DigiUR & Posters in Brussels; ³British Conference of Undergraduate Research; ⁴University of Warwick, UK

This interactive workshop explores how strategic partnerships can transform the undergraduate research landscape by fostering inclusive, cross-institutional, and international collaboration. Drawing on Warwick's leadership in this space, the session will examine how initiatives such as the International Conference of Undergraduate Research (ICUR), the Reinvention Journal, Posters in Parliament, and the British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR) create meaningful platforms for student-led research and global engagement.

Workshop participants will hear from representatives of a diverse range of undergraduate research initiatives, including:

Thérèse Montgomery (SURE Network, Ireland)

Harald Mieg (Erasmus+ projects DigiUR and Posters in Brussels)

Paul Taylor and Liam Bullingham (British Conference of Undergraduate Research)

Jane Bryan, Emma Barker, and Caroline Gibson (ICUR, Posters in Parliament, and Reinvention Journal)

These contributors will share experiences, models of good practice, and collaborative frameworks that support student research dissemination across national and international contexts.

Through facilitated discussion and interactive elements, attendees will be invited to reflect on how these models can be adapted or expanded in their own institutional or national contexts. The session will also highlight opportunities for future collaboration, including Erasmus+ networks and student-led scholarly publication. This workshop is ideal for academics, professional staff, and students interested in expanding the reach, impact, and inclusivity of undergraduate research.

The 'Cinderella' of EDI: Transforming Doctoral Assessment for Disabled Researchers

 OC1.06

Dr Theresa McKinven¹, Dr Katherine Dean², Dr Paula Holland³ and Dr Charlotte Round¹

¹University of Nottingham, UK; ²University of East Anglia, UK; ³University of Lancaster, UK

Often referred to as the 'Cinderella' of EDI, inclusion for disabled Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) has gained more attention recently. While adjustments for taught students have become more accepted and almost routine, PGR programmes present unique challenges. Long-standing traditions of doctoral supervision being the domain of academics and cultures that reflect ableist assumptions about 'independence' within the PGR journey hinder a coherent understanding of how to adjust doctoral research to be inclusive of physical and neurological differences—and the legal and cultural necessity to do so.

This workshop will explore reasonable adjustments for PGRs, with particular focus on the assessment process.

We will:

1. Examine core requirements for successful doctoral studies
2. Analyse the purpose of assessment at doctoral level
3. Evaluate how these elements are reflected in the expectations of reviewers and examiners
4. Address the closed-door nature of doctoral assessment and its impact on institutional and sector-wide change
5. Challenge the standard prescription of allowing additional time as a universal solution

This workshop aligns with the IRCC's focus on research cultures by examining how disciplinary traditions and assessment practices can create barriers for disabled researchers, and how inclusive research communities can be fostered through thoughtful policy and practice changes.

To achieve meaningful cultural change, this workshop will help identify concrete steps including:

- Developing policy recommendations
- Creating an agreed set of standards for arranging PGR assessments
- Outlining supervisor training needs
- Strategies for engaging with funding bodies
- Methods to elevate disability within institutional EDI priorities

Discussion and sharing of good practice will form the core of this workshop, with participants leaving with actionable steps to implement in their own institutions and a network of colleagues committed to achieving consistent sector-wide change.

Public Involvement in Research: What We Can Learn from PPI in Health Research

 OC1.09

Prof Helen Wheatley, Prof Sophie Staniszewska, Dr Phil Jemmett and Dr Georgiana Mihut
University of Warwick, UK

This interactive workshop organised by Warwick Institute of Engagement explores what colleagues across the HE Sector can learn from approaches to Patient and Public Involvement in medical research. Colleagues in the medical sciences have led the way in involving diverse publics in setting research agendas and co-designing and delivering research projects. This has engendered a research culture which is open, collaborative, and remains respectful of expertise by experience.

We will begin with some scene-setting about the seismic shift in research culture from Professor Sophie Staniszewska, leader of the Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) and Patient Experiences Programmes in Warwick Applied Health, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick. Sophie will consider the successes and the challenges that remain in our ambition to embed involvement and engagement at the heart of health and social care research. Sophie focuses on developing the evidence base of public involvement and engagement and is Co-Editor in Chief of BMC Research Involvement and Engagement.

This will be followed by reflections from Warwick's Faculty Public Engagement Leads, Dr Phil Jemmett (Science Engineering and Medicine), and Dr. Georgiana Mihut (Social Sciences), about what public engagement and involvement in research might look like within their faculties, asking "Why and how should the public be involved in research?" We will then facilitate conversations with attendees about the possibilities and challenges of this approach within their own work. These will tackle more granular questions such as how diverse researchers can engage different publics, how to respect the differing knowledge bases, experiences, and sensitivities different publics bring, and the ethics of how we balance this with the expertise and expectations of the academic researcher.

The session will be chaired by Professor Helen Wheatley, Academic Director of Warwick Institute of Engagement. All are welcome, whether committed, curious, or sceptical about the role of public engagement in research.

Research Culture Carousel

Research Culture Carousel

Session 1

 OC0.01

Leading with Empathy: Co-designing a toolkit for Empathic and Inclusive Research Leadership

Dr Cleo White

University of Leicester, UK

Creating More Race Inclusive Research Cultures - University of Birmingham ASPIRE Project

Professor Etlyn Kenny, Professor Catherine Mangan, Professor Chris Millward, Professor Yemisi Takwoingi, Dr Zania Stamataki, Ms Sheena Lucas, Ms Kally Bharti, Ms Nosheen Qamer and Ms Olivia Barfi

University of Birmingham, UK

Making time for research, innovation and knowledge exchange: the Sheffield Hallam University

Early Career Researcher and Innovator Fellowship Scheme

Gaynor Miller

Sheffield Hallam University, UK

Building a Long-term Collective Research Culture: Co-creating the LoCoR Model with Students and Staff to Enhance Research

Continuity and Transparency

Dr Feng Mao and Dr Bing Lu

University of Warwick, UK

Research Culture Carousel

Session 2

 OC0.02

Encouraging the participation in outreach activities for all levels of staff: Sharing experiences across different university institutes

Craig Carnegie¹, Helena French², Emily Birkett³ and Sarah Conner³

¹University of Warwick, UK; ²University of Nottingham, UK; ³University of Birmingham, UK

The roving researcher scheme: an alternative career pathway that supports care leave

Paula Bibby, Katherine M. Dawson, Marie Collier and Liz Simmonds

University of Cambridge, UK

Mapping Inclusive Research Leadership and Collaboration through Social Network Analysis: Insights from the Culture Catalyst Fund

Zain Ul Abidin and Charlotte Bonner-Evans

University of Glasgow, UK

Embedding Integrity Through Practice: Aligning researcher's assessment and Community of Practice to support responsible research recognition

Banaz Jalil¹, Karen Desborough², Nicola Payne³, Evangeline Gowie⁴, Robert Darby⁴, Neil Jacobs^{3,6} and Tim Newton⁵

Session 3

 OC0.04

Co-Creating Inclusive Research Spaces: A Targeted Research Programme for Care-Experienced, Estranged, and Asylum-Seeking Students

Dr Ellis Ryan

University of Warwick, UK

EDI in Funding Applications: Developing a Researcher-Focused Toolkit

Tave Burnett and Rachel Van Krimpen

The University of Nottingham, UK

The Department of Imagination - Collaborating with artists to seed imagination practice for more creative, resilient and sustainable research cultures

Mireia Bes¹, Giovanni Biglino², Bec Gee³, Dave Jarman⁴, Vivienne Kuh⁵ and Valentina Vezzani⁶

¹ University of Bristol, UK; ² Bristol Medical School, UK; ³ Freelance Artist Facilitator; ^{4,6} Centre for Innovation, University of Bristol, UK; ⁵ School of Chemistry, University of Bristol, UK

How to enable research conversations: possible activities and event formats

Dr Ayten Alibaba, Dr Joana Almeida, Dr Gill Frigerio, Dr Andy Hind, Yanyan Li, Dr Ida Hannah Lübben, Elyanora Menglieva, Dr Pontso Moorosi, Miriam Schwiening, Prof. Richard Smith, Lila Tennent and Yvette Wang

University of Warwick, UK

Session 4

 OC1.09

Valuing the Role of Research Professionals: Co-Creating Knowledge and Establishing a Peer Network

Dr Aoife Sadlier

Queen Mary University of London, UK

Building Online Wellbeing Literacy Resources for Early Career Researchers

Tania M. Villanueva-Cabello, Elena Riva, Virginia Thomas-Pickles and Yuxuan Zhang

Institute for Advance Teaching and Learning, UK

Measuring What Matters: Rethinking Collaborative Research Cultures from a Qualitative Perspective

I Lin Sin, Emma Compton-Daw, Angela Graham, Churnjeet Mahn, Grace Murkett, Katie Salamon, Maria Weikum and Chris Wells-Holland on behalf of the wider Collaborative Cultures community

The University of Strathclyde, UK

Prospering together - how peer-to-peer collaboration is driving development for Prosperers audience groups

Kerry McElroy


University of Liverpool, UK

Associations between research culture and mental health and wellbeing in a research community

Hugh Fulham-McQuillan, Gillian Boyle, Hugh Campbell, Maura Hiney, Grace Mulcahy, Ivar McGrath, Adrian Ottewill and Sonya Deschenes

University College Dublin, UK

Session 5

 OC1.06

Mothers in Academia: Exploring the Experiences of Female PGRs and ECRs with Caring Responsibilities

Cagla Karatepe, Xinran Gao, Yanyan Li and Mingzhi Li

University of Warwick, UK

A toolkit to foster great career conversations

Dr Rachel Herries and Dr Rachel Chin

University of Glasgow, UK

From Data to Action: Making evidence-informed decisions to strengthen research cultures in higher education institutions

Dr Amy Devenney, Lizzie Ville and Rhian Pennie

University of Bristol, UK

Participatory Action Research for research culture change

Dr Jess Adams, Professor Natasha Mauthner, Dr Will Thomson and Dr Amy Stabler

Newcastle University, UK

Session 6

 OC1.07

Research Culture Built from the Ground Up: Diagnosing Culture, Changing and Embedding Culture

Dr Karen Edwards

Signing the Declaration is only the beginning: Embedding a strategy for the responsible and fair use of research bibliometrics

Edward Cartwright, Shira Elqayam, Jenny Coombs, Mandy Thomas and Alan Cope

De Montfort University, UK

Re-contextualising failure in academic research culture: Exploring how non-success has been understood and identifying recommendations to improve wellbeing

Dr Nicky Thomas

University of Warwick, UK

Supporting Researchers with Research Culture in Funding Applications

Lindsey Spriggs and Sarah Mallet

University of Oxford, UK

Posters

Workshops for aligning researchers professional expectations at the University of Cambridge

Lara Abel^{1 2 3}, Luisa Ciampi^{1 2}, Mollie Etheridge^{1 2 4}, Becky Ioppolo^{1 2}, Noam Tal-Perry^{1 2 5}, Debbie Birkett⁶, Nicole Horst⁷, Steve Joy⁷ and Steven Wooding^{1 2}

¹Research Strategy Office, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ²Bennett Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ³Darwin College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ⁴Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, UK; ⁵Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ⁶Human Resources, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ⁷Postdoc Academy, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Professional expectations play a crucial role in shaping researchers' experiences in higher education institutions. We developed two workshop formats based on a qualitative study on professional experiences and expectations of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and PIs at the University of Cambridge. The first workshop format aims to align expectations within teams (team handbook workshop). The second format supports ECRs in managing and negotiating expectations with their supervisors (managing expectations workshops).

In the team handbook intervention, we provide scaffolding and facilitate discussion to help teams develop their own team handbook. Team handbooks are structured documents that outline the values, goals, expectations, and working norms of a team. In research groups, they serve as living guides to help members collaborate effectively, communicate clearly, and foster a positive and productive work environment.

The managing expectations workshop is offered in collaboration with the Cambridge Postdoc Academy. In this session, we provide insights into the dimensions of expectations (of the self, others, the research work, the job role, research careers, wider structures, and life outside academia), and researchers' professional experiences at Cambridge. We present strategies for negotiating and aligning expectations between ECRs and their managers.

We explore the usefulness and effectiveness of both workshop formats through semi-structured focus group interviews and a pre- and post-test study design. In both interventions, we use Creative Non-Fiction (CNF)—developed from our qualitative data analysis—as a tool for fostering open-mindedness, empathy, and for enabling difficult conversations. The effectiveness of CNF is evaluated using interview questions and standardised measures of empathy, openness, and compassion.

We will present materials and findings from our first round of workshops and actively engage the audience in exploring opportunities to scale these interventions beyond Cambridge.

Embedding inclusive culture change through voices of UCLs research community

Mary Assad and Dr Natalie L. Marchant
University College London, UK

UCL's Research Culture Community Steering Group (CSG) was established in 2024 as a change agent network designed to embed belonging and community voice at the heart of cultural transformation. The CSG connects researchers' insights directly to UCL's Research Culture (RC) Programme, extending its reach and ensuring alignment with community needs.

Its four core objectives are to:

- Shape projects – Inform priorities using lived and disciplinary expertise
- Comment on plans – Provide feedback on action plans and priorities
- Provide community voice – Raise concerns and insights to programme leadership
- Act as champions – Facilitate local engagement in research culture initiatives

Following an open call in 2023, over 200 self-nominations were received. A Core group of 22 champions was selected to represent a diverse cross-section of research roles, grades, and disciplines (with an emphasis on ECRs) across UCL's faculties and functions, committed to attending termly meetings. To retain broad engagement, 190 Pool members were selected for flexible involvement in activities and specialist topics.

Supported by the RC Programme and RC Change Manager to align with the strategic delivery of the RC Roadmap, the CSG's first year saw high engagement: over five meetings (with 75% average attendance) and more than 20 one-to-one interviews. This led to voluntary champion participation in nine or more RC initiatives and strengthened trust, visibility, and meaningful participation across UCL.

Member insights have informed dashboards and feedback loops designed to surface systemic barriers to inclusion and structural inequities—identifying over 20 recurring challenges and opportunities, now shaping UCL's co-created three-year RC Strategy.

This presentation will share how UCL has developed this inclusive, community-led model for cultural change—leveraging lived experience, promoting transparency, and addressing systemic barriers—to foster trust, belonging, and collaboration across the research community.

Solve for X: Providing a springboard for postgraduates from low socioeconomic backgrounds to thrive in research and beyond

Sophie Bird and Matt Garraghan
Martingale Foundation

The Martingale Foundation exists to support a new generation of postgraduates to become STEM leaders, with a particular focus on those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Research shows that students from these backgrounds face a restricted pipeline into research careers. Martingale aims to address these barriers by offering comprehensive support to help Scholars navigate an often-opaque research culture—ensuring that talented individuals can pursue their passions and bring diverse perspectives to academia and industry.

All Martingale PhD Scholars participate in the PhD Leadership Programme (PLP), a career development initiative designed to empower Scholars with the skills, experience, and confidence to lead in their fields. Through the PLP, Scholars engage with a network of trainers, academics, and professionals who guide them in applying their academic strengths in impactful ways.

The programme culminates in the flagship Solve for X event: a multi-day residential camp where Scholars collaborate in teams—with the support of academic mentors and industry experts—to tackle real-world challenges using advanced mathematical approaches. Building on the success of the Solve for X Training Camp developed for Martingale Masters Scholars over the past two years, the first PhD cohort event is planned for summer 2026.

This presentation will spotlight Solve for X as a key component of Martingale's long-term strategy to nurture inclusive excellence in STEM leadership. We will share insights into its design, goals, and early impact—and invite delegates to consider how similar programmes might enhance support for PhD students and researchers at their own institutions.

Building inclusive, safe and reflective research teams through a virtual escape room.

Sarah Campbell

University of Bristol, UK

There are clear benefits of building a strong and positive research culture and how this leads to higher quality research. These positive cultures are built by all individuals working within them, and how these individuals work together as groups, teams and collaborations is an important factor. However, with strong emphasis on the individual in research and in leadership initiatives, the opportunity to stop, take stock and review group culture and values is often not prioritised. Understanding and acknowledging the complexities of research teams, groups and wider schools, divisions and institutions and the implications of these is important.

Yet 75% of workplace training is considered ineffective and 85% of workplace training is forgotten after 14 days (McKinsey, 2018). Therefore, it is useful to take a different approach to training. Game-based training is shown to be more effective than traditional training in several ways:

- Increased confidence
- Improvement in conceptual knowledge
- Increased productivity and application of new knowledge
- Increased retention of information and knowledge (90% rather than 5%)
- Experiential learning more closely replicates everyday behaviour and skills

For these reasons, we have been pioneering a game-based approach through an experiential, immersive workshop, involving an online escape room and facilitated discussions before and after. This enables groups to understand and reflect upon leadership, soft skills and teamworking styles that exist in the team; the impact of communication and decision-making under pressure, considering individual strengths and weaknesses; and to identify key learnings and actions to take back to their daily work lives about how they work with others.

This poster will introduce game-based learning, the escape room and how it was developed to elicit

certain skills and scenarios, and how it gives participants the opportunity to experience part of the escape room to understand how it works.

Designing a Research Cultures Catalogue

Veronica Cano

University of Edinburgh, UK

The Research Cultures Catalogue initiative at the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) at the University of Edinburgh represents an effort to document, connect, and amplify the diverse cultures across the eleven schools within the college, and more widely at a university level. This presentation introduces the catalogue as both a practical resource and a tool for understanding how research communities lead change.

Established to capture the rich tapestry of actions, initiatives, and projects that often remain siloed within departmental boundaries, the Research Cultures Catalogue serves as a living repository of research initiatives. By systematically collecting and categorizing these instances - ranging from the development of local inclusive policies to local community building events - the catalogue reveals patterns of creativity and impact that might otherwise remain invisible within traditional academic structures.

The catalogue uses the University of Edinburgh Research Cultures Delivery Plan as a starting point. The data is filtered by unit, values, drivers and target group and it has been extracted from a form filled by School's research offices and from information found in school's webpages. The catalogue is particularly useful in two main areas:

- a) for the purposes of College reporting to UE on College and School research culture activities in line with the Research Cultures Action Plan
- b) for Schools to be able to see and take inspiration from what's going on elsewhere and as a repository of institutional knowledge.

Our analysis demonstrates that the catalogue functions as more than just a database—it acts as a

reflective surface that allows the university community to identify its strengths, recognise provision gaps, and foster connections across disciplinary boundaries. We will share insights into how similar initiatives might be implemented elsewhere. As institutions respond to accelerating change, projects like the Research Cultures Catalogue offer a valuable framework for tracking and cultivating vibrant and inclusive research environments.

Valuing Voices: An Interactive Tool for supporting Equitable and Responsible Research

Lucy Cheseldine and Karen Glerum-Brooks
University of York, UK

Valuing Voices is an international partnership project led by the Universities of York and Mahidol. The team have created an interactive Tool to support the design and delivery of equitable and responsible research projects that place people and society at the forefront. While tailored to help users fulfill Responsible Research and Innovation requirements on grant applications, it seeks to improve the quality and outcomes of all research, having been co-developed with the research community in and beyond the UK and tested with over 100 academic and professional services staff at York and Mahidol. In this presentation, we will demonstrate how the Tool works and share our learnings from the development process. We will also invite participants to trial the Tool at their own institutions so that we can collectively identify barriers to equitable and responsible research and find solutions for addressing them.

Our Tool contributes to wider efforts to cultivate a more collaborative, inclusive and sustainable research culture that improves global equity and values all voices in the research lifecycle. It introduces five planning principles: Impact and Engagement; Equity and Diversity in Teams; Strategic Risk Mapping; Environmental Sustainability; Reflection and Learning. The Principles have been co-designed to expand the scope of who the research

involves, which groups it reaches and what benefits it creates for the team and for society. By using a results-based planning model to map what success looks like for each principle, along with the actions and resources needed, the Tool empowers users to produce strong, deliverable plans that distribute responsibility ethically and align with funders' priorities. Our ultimate aims in imagining a research culture for 2050 are that the Tool will increase the success of funding applications, expand the impact and equity of research projects and become an essential mechanism for redressing international hierarchies in research.

To share insights into the effects of Narrative CVs on postdoctoral recruitment processes and outcomes.

Luisa Ciampi^{1,2}, Becky Ioppolo^{1,2}, Noam Tal-Perry^{1,2,3}, Lara Abel^{1,2,4}, Mollie Etheridge^{1,2}, Adrian Barbett⁶, Timothy R. Johnson⁷, Debbie Birkett⁵ and Steven Wooding^{1,2}

¹Research Strategy Office, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ²Bennett Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ³Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ⁴Darwin College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ⁵Human Resources, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; ⁶School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology, Australia; ⁷Department of Mathematics and Statistical Science, University of Idaho, United States

Linked with the movement towards improving research culture and reaching goals of a more inclusive research system, Narrative CVs are increasingly being used and suggested for funding applications and recruitment of postgraduate researchers. However, only a few studies have investigated the effects of using Narrative CVs, especially in recruitment processes.

Our study aims to test if Narrative CVs effect shortlisting outcomes in postdoctoral recruitment by

conducting a randomised controlled trial on live recruitments at Cambridge University. We ask candidates to submit both a standard and a Narrative CV. Pls first rank candidates based on one CV type (randomly assigned) and, then rank them based on both CV types. We analyse our ranking data using a Bayesian Model to understand the variability of the ranking process and outcome. Once the recruitment is completed, we conduct interviews with the panel members and applicants to contextualise the ranking data and understand their experience of writing and using Narrative CVs.

We will share a range of findings from over 15 recruitments across a range of disciplines including:

- Quantitative findings on the effect of Narrative CVs on shortlisting decisions, considering applicant and panel member's demographic characteristics.
- Qualitative findings including participant reflections on the inclusiveness, opportunities and challenges, as well as time effort and reusability of the Narrative CV.
- Practical insights to help use the R4RI Narrative CV template most effectively in recruitment of postdocs. These include exploring the role and overlap of other application document suggestions for template alterations and assessing when using a Narrative CV might be most appropriate to assess skill sets.

Employment precarity and professional development in research careers: REC HURDLE (Revisiting Employment Contracts, Helping Under-represented Researchers to Develop, Lead and Excel)

Mx Ash Collins, Ms Kirstin Barnard, Ms Lucie Whitfield, Ms Fiona Frost and Ms Deanne Hewson

University of Nottingham, UK

REC-HURDLE, a £1m Wellcome-funded research culture project, aims to directly address precarious employment practice and provide specialist career

support for research staff, including removing barriers to career progression with targeted needs-based professional development support for research staff from disadvantaged and under-represented groups. We conducted a root-and-branch review of the use and impacts of fixed term contracts for all staff contributing to, supervising, managing, enabling and supporting the research ecosystem, irrespective of level of experience, or job family. We have identified and shared sector and internal existing good practices and evaluated them for transferability/scaling. We are in the process of co-creating pilot models of less precarious employment with researchers, aiming for approval and resource to change employment practices. By September, we will have selected pilots to pursue from our current 5 options, several of which are novel within the sector.

We offer substantial, individualised professional development support for disadvantaged and under-represented researchers across career stages and job families, through the creation of packages of tailored training and bespoke 1:1 support.

We have expanded our careers offering for researchers to provide 24/7 online co-created careers resources and increase provision of specialist 1:1 career advice, mentoring and development opportunities, including career confidence, and skills workshops. We have also piloted a peer-mentoring scheme for PRISM staff.

Staff from all workstreams and the wider project will attend the IRCC to disseminate the results of this work, which has received extensive positive feedback. We will share lessons learned from piloting bespoke support for research staff, including the barriers and helpful approaches for those from underrepresented groups. We will present the findings of our root-and-branch data review of precarity, along with our experience of tackling precarious employment head-on within the sector's current financial climate, noting the costs and risks of continuing business as usual.

Unpacking Gender Disparities in Research Applications: How Discipline and Seniority Shape Grant Outcomes at University of Cambridge

Agata Czech¹, Noam Tal-Perry^{1, 2, 3}, Becky Ioppolo¹ and Steven Wooding¹

¹Research Strategy Office, University of Cambridge, UK; ²Bennett Institute for Public Policy, Cambridge, UK; ³Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge, UK

Existing research shows that women submit fewer grant applications (Ginther et al., 2016), receive smaller awards (Bedi et al., 2012), and face lower success rates than men (Bornmann et al., 2017). These inequities not only restrict research capacity but also hinder career advancement, as securing grants plays a critical role in hiring and promotion decisions (Bol et al., 2018). However, there has been limited exploration into how these disparities vary across academic disciplines and career stages. This study analyses research grant application rates, size of applications and success rates among male and female researchers at the University of Cambridge from 2015 to 2023.

Using over twenty thousand applications to construct a multi-way Bayesian model, we assess the effects of gender, academic position, school, and year. A key finding emerges when a simple analysis (with only gender as a predictor) is compared to the multi-way model. The former suggests that women apply for grants approximately 10% less often than men. However, once school and academic position are accounted for, this marginal disparity disappears. Similar reductions in marginal effect are observed in both the average size of grant applications and success rates.

These findings suggest that structural factors—such as women’s underrepresentation in higher-funded disciplines and differences in career seniority—could be the primary drivers of gender disparities in grant outcomes. However, a range of patterns of disparities (in all directions) emerges in different disciplines and at different career stages, which is not explained by the structural factors. The study points to two

complementary strategies for reducing these disparities: targeted interventions to address specific inequities at certain academic grades and within particular schools, and broader efforts to tackle the structural imbalances that shape the research funding landscape. Other institutions should carefully consider structural factors when conducting similar analyses.

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Facilitating a collective living knowledge: developing narrative CV support and a model for responding to future change

Hannah Dutton and Lydia Nicholson
University of Liverpool, UK

This presentation outlines our approach to facilitating support for writing narrative CVs at the University of Liverpool. As Research Development Facilitators, we have developed a dynamic “collective living knowledge” of narrative CVs, which we believe represents an effective model for responding to future sector changes.

The introduction of narrative CVs by research funders has brought a more flexible, qualitative approach to demonstrating academic careers, enabling assessment of a more diverse range of career contributions. During UKRI’s R4RI pilot, we developed written resources to support the transition to narrative CVs but realised that the initiative would continue to evolve — both in terms of how narrative CVs were

being written by applicants and assessed by funders. Thus, we devised a more multifaceted and agile form of support.

Through consultation across our diverse institutional community, we moved from a static set of resources to a broad range of support, including information sessions, interactive workshops and one-to-one feedback to meet the needs of both research-active and research-enabling colleagues.

Through delivering these activities, we continue to gather insights into the challenges and experiences of the community, creating a feedback loop enriching the support we provide. Shifting from a consultation approach to this practice-led approach has allowed us to facilitate a “collective living knowledge” of narrative CVs, that is a product of the community and simultaneously of direct benefit to the community.

Sustained cross-community engagement is often a challenge for communities of practice. We have facilitated an inclusive and evolving collective living knowledge that is representative of and accessible to our entire community, whilst removing the onus on individual colleagues for long-term cross-community engagement with an ever-increasing range of issues. As the wider research sector continues to transform, facilitating a collective living knowledge offers an effective approach to supporting our research community through further change.

Improvements and support mechanisms for making fellowship application processes more inclusive.

Joy Singarayer and Nathaniel Edward-Inatimi
University of Reading, UK

Research fellowships can be a crucial step in furthering a research-oriented career and for achieving permanent academic roles. As such, these roles are often highly competitive, and the application process can involve several rounds of review and interviews. There have been consistent efforts in recent years to address significant disparities in the awards across areas like ethnicity, gender, disability,

and socioeconomic status. However, while progress has been made in areas like gender balance and the number of funding opportunities, significant award gaps persist.

Within the context of the UKRI 5-year EDI strategy announced early 2023, we analysed diversity data for UKRI fellowship (and principle investigator) application rates to assess if this strategy is having the intended impact as we approach the halfway point. We also look at HESA academic staff data to highlight the importance of intersectionality in good EDI policy. We surveyed staff across all departments at the University of Reading to find common experiences both positive and negative surrounding the fellowship application process, highlighting current support mechanisms, and to ask if people felt they had adequate support both internally and from external funding bodies.

Finally, we held a series of focus groups with academics at various career stages to gain testimonials of common experiences, challenges, and barriers to applying for fellowships. At these focus groups we also discussed and workshopped key support mechanisms which we are now recommending be implemented at the University of Reading to help underrepresented researchers in their fellowship applications and wider professional development.

Addressing Financial Strain, Career Uncertainty, and Mental Health Challenges for Early-Career Fellows

Ehsan Ezzatpour Ghadim
University of Warwick, UK

Postdoctoral researchers are essential drivers of innovation and knowledge creation, bridging the gap between doctoral training and established academic or industry careers (National Postdoctoral Association, 2023). They occupy an increasingly crucial role by advancing cutting-edge research, mentoring early-career scholars, and cultivating interdisciplinary collaborations (Becker et al., 2024). Despite these contributions, postdocs often face

complex professional and personal challenges—including financial instability, unclear career trajectories, and limited institutional support—that can adversely affect their mental health and overall well-being (Sparling, 2023).

Findings

Surveys indicate that up to 75% of postdocs experience ongoing negative mental health symptoms—particularly chronic stress, anxiety, and depression—while more than half consider leaving academia due to these issues (National Postdoctoral Association, 2023). Postdocs often occupy a “grey zone,” lacking access to tailored institutional resources (Becker et al., 2024). Skill gaps persist: 45% feel inadequate in grant writing and 50% in communication, echoing findings from a baseline study showing insufficient research environment understanding (University of Sheffield, 2021). Compounding these pressures, 65% report or witness bullying and power imbalances, highlighting systemic deficiencies in mentorship structures (Kaska, 2022).

Discussion

The interplay of job insecurity, competitive pressures, and underdeveloped professional skills profoundly impacts postdocs’ well-being. Uncertainty around securing stable appointments exacerbates stress, while limited institutional support and frequent geographical relocations can lead to burnout. Addressing skill deficiencies in project management, networking, and leadership—alongside improved mentorship and mental health services—emerges as a critical step in mitigating these challenges.

Next Steps

Institutions can implement policies that recognize the distinct position of postdoctoral researchers, offering targeted mental health support, clear career progression pathways, and comprehensive training modules. Peer-based communities and forums for collaboration will further bolster resilience. A concerted effort to reform academic culture and mentorship models can facilitate a more supportive and sustainable postdoc environment, enhancing innovation and retention in the research workforce.

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Advancing Open Research and Data Stewardship: Cross-Disciplinary Insights and Best Practices

Sofia Fernandes, Elliot Ludvig and Qwin Saika
University of Warwick, UK

This project aims to build greater openness, integrity, and trust in research by exploring how open research and data management are approached across disciplines and career stages. Through faculty-level workshops and a university-wide survey, we’ve engaged researchers—from early career to senior—to reflect on what openness means in their fields and share experiences across disciplines.

The work supports a broader cultural shift at Warwick, aligned with our commitments to the UK Reproducibility Network and CoARA. Insights from the workshops and survey are shaping a practical Open Research and Data Stewardship Framework, co-created with the Warwick research community to offer recommendations, tailored guidance, tools, and resources to help researchers embed open practices into everyday work.

To broaden participation and disseminate findings, a final symposium will be held at the project's conclusion. This event marks the launch of the framework and celebrates the winners of Warwick's first Open Research Award, recognising exemplary projects from researchers at all career stages from each faculty and interdisciplinary work. Winners will present their projects through poster sessions, sharing real-world applications of open research. This collaborative effort between academic and professional staff is helping to build a more inclusive and connected research culture that values integrity, trust, and transparency in research by recognising the diversity of research practices and identifying shared needs.

Applying behavioural science to research culture: an applied, interdisciplinary, mixed-methods study on enabling collaborative research leadership

Emma Francis¹, Huner Erdinch¹, Sadie Boniface¹, Angel Chater¹, Susan Michie¹, Gemma Bridge², Lucy Dang², Ireen Litvak-Zur³, Florence Reedy³, Emma Todd², Shirley Wardell³, David Faraday³, Rachel Witton³ and Fabiana Lorencatto¹

¹Centre for Behaviour Change, University College London, UK; ²Research Culture team, University College London, UK; ³Advance HE, UK

Rationale and Aims

Improving research culture is a growing priority in universities, with collaboration and leadership being key areas of focus. As these are forms of human behaviour, behavioural science frameworks can be used to understand drivers of collaborative leadership, to inform design of improvement strategies. This study applied the Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW) approach to develop an intervention to improve collaborative research leadership, therefore contribute to enhancing research culture at UCL.

Methods

This mixed-methods study involved intervention development whereby we conducted 31 semi-structured interviews with research-active staff to

explore influences on collaborative leadership and inform the design of a novel collaborative leadership programme. Topic guides were based on the Capability-Opportunity-Motivation-Behaviour (COM-B) model of behaviour. Interview transcripts were analysed using deductive framework and inductive thematic analysis. Identified influences were mapped to potential intervention strategies using the BCW and Behaviour Change Technique (BCT) taxonomy.

Findings

Influences on collaborative leadership were identified across all COM-B domains. Within Capability this included: having the knowledge of what collaborative leadership entails and how to perform this; within Motivation: compatible goals and having other (higher) priorities; and within Opportunity: available resources including a professional network(s), and outcomes being driven by the competitive environment rather than team science. Examples of interventions proposed included skills coaching, 360 feedback with colleagues, and goal setting in reflective journals.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates how behavioural science frameworks can be used to understand factors influencing behaviours underpinning research culture and inform targeted intervention development. The intervention is currently being piloted and evaluated to explore its implementation and impact.

FAIR Voices: Co-developed guidance for FAIR data sharing in qualitative research with Patient and Public Involvement

Sofia Gameiro¹, Harriet Quinn-Scoggins², John Gallanders⁷, Kellie Snow³, Lucy Brookes-Howell⁴, Kai Thomas⁵, Amy M. Russell⁶, Adele Battaglia⁷, Hameed Khan⁷ and Jan Davies⁷

¹School of Psychology, Women's Health

Research Wales Centre, Cardiff University, UK;

²PRIME Centre Wales, Division of Population Medicine, School of Medicine, Cardiff University, UK; ³University Library Service, Cardiff University, UK; ⁴Centre for Trials Research, Cardiff

University, UK; ⁵School of Psychology, Cardiff

University, UK; ⁶Leeds Institute of Health Sciences, University of Leeds, UK; ⁷Patient and Public Involvement Partner, UK

There is growing expectation for research teams to engage with open qualitative research but little guidance to support this (Tamminen et al., 2021). In health and care research, the use of Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) and co-production approaches are now considered a key marker of good research practice (NIHR, 2022). The aim of the FAIR Voices project was to co-develop guidance with PPI partners to support co-produced decision-making about FAIR – Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable - qualitative data sharing.

Three co-design workshops, followed by a period of document drafting, with additional per demand meetings, led to the co-development of two outputs: a set of principles to promote co-production of FAIR qualitative data-sharing practices, and a step-by-step guidance document to support research teams to share qualitative data in a FAIR way.

Six principles were identified to ensure pragmatic but informed co-decisions conducive to ethical, safe, and participant-centred open research practices, with shared ownership of outputs (as appropriate). These were Working together, Protect people taking part, Institutional support and governance, Informed Consent, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and Data Ownership.

The guidance was organised chronologically, covering the sequence of steps necessary to make qualitative data FAIR: Planning, Informed consent, Data de-identification, Access control, and Rights management. At each step due consideration was given to resources and procedures needed to enable PPI partners to meaningfully engage in decision-making about FAIR practices, both at project and organisational level.

The work highlighted the complexities of ensuring responsible FAIR data sharing, with many decisions being data-specific and requiring professional discretion, and practices being resource intensive. The implications are that decisions and accountability should not befall on single individuals. Instead, these should be co-produced and shared with PPI partners and other stakeholders (e.g., funders, as relevant), and supported by a robust governance structure and adequate resource allocation.

Funding statement

The work was co-developed in the context the FAIR Voices project, which received an award from the Cardiff University 2023 Research Culture Fund.

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Positive research culture practices of early career researchers and research enablers at Cardiff University: Insights from the Cynnau|Ignite programme

Gameiro S¹, Hennah C¹, Lefevre W¹, Rizwan M², Edwards N³, Beckett H⁴, Convery M², Dawson H², Morris J⁵, Rigby M², Vilares J³, Wahl-Jorgensen K⁶ and Williams R²

¹School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Wales, UK; ²Organisational and Staff Development, Cardiff University, Wales, UK; ³Strategy and Operations team, The Research Service, Cardiff University, Wales, UK; ⁴Human Resources, Cardiff University, Wales, UK; ⁵School of Welsh, Cardiff University, Wales, UK; ⁶School of Journalism, Media and Culture, Cardiff University, Wales, UK

Positive research culture (RC) facilitates research excellence and career development for those working in academia, but little is known about positive RC practices and aspirations of researchers and research-enablers. This study aims to profile early career colleagues at Cardiff University who are committed to positive RC, and describe associated behaviours and intentions.

This online mixed-methods survey, informed by the UKRI Vitae RC Framework (Powell et al., 2024) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), evaluated self-reported positive RC behaviours (past 6 months) and intentions (next 6 months). Participants were early career staff working in Teaching, Research, and Professional Services roles, who applied to participate in Cynnau|Ignite; a multi-stream career development programme funded by the Wellcome Trust and designed to promote positive RC.

Total sample was 105 participants, 65.7% were white, 66.7% women, 80.0% heterosexual, and 49.5% had caring responsibilities. Participants reported moderate to high past positive RC behaviours (M(SD)=5.70(1.22), from 1 to 7) and future intentions (M(SD)=6.16(1.07), from 1 to 7), with little variation between roles. Open-text descriptions of behaviours and reasons justifying intentions were thematically

analysed revealing 2799 codes, organised into 36 themes and 9 meta-themes. Meta-themes about past behaviour captured perceptions that a healthy and inclusive environment is needed (31.1%) to enable collaboration (21.2%), and seen as critical for knowledge advancement and meaningful impact (47.7%). Meta-themes about intentions indicated these were largely driven by personal motivation (29.0%) and role requirements (3.7%) but hindered by lack of control over external factors (16.7%) or negative attitudes (5.0%). Self-selection participant bias and social desirability in self-reported behaviours and intentions may have inflated results.

Results indicate early career staff with an interest in positive RC are likely to be enacting these practices and intrinsically motivated to continue doing it, even when faced with lack of resources and control over external factors.

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Sustainable, ethical and inclusive research practices

Becky Gordon and Catriona Gold

Lancaster University, UK

Changes in the way we operate are introducing our researchers and participants to new complexities and risks which threaten the integrity of research if not done properly.

Lancaster University is currently undertaking a Wellcome Trust funded project which aims to re-imagine working practices whilst enhancing and building resilience into our research culture.

We focus on three overarching but interlinking pillars: sustainable research practices, mitigating ethical risks arising from digital research approaches, and the enhancing inclusion in our research. We are:

- investigating current practices and innovative ideas
- developing support mechanisms, resources, strategies and policies
- evaluating and communicating our activities
- The team aims to produce multiple deliverables available for the HEI sector, these include:
 - Training tools for researchers on sustainability, citizen science and inclusion
 - Pilot of academic safe spaces to discuss complex digital related ethical issues
 - Discussions on climate change action and use of data collected by personal devices
 - New mobile sensing devices for future citizen science research projects
 - Recommendations for policy and practice changes

At the halfway point of our 2-year project we will present an overview of the project, its findings and deliverables to date and how these intersect.

Practice makes progress.

Practice makes progress. Reflections on leading PCE preparations.

Rachel Herries & Tommy Wong

University of Glasgow, UK

Rachel Herries, Research Culture Manager and Tommy Wong, Research Culture Officer at the University of Glasgow share their experience of preparing for People, Culture and Environment (PCE), REF2029.

The PCE pilot experience acted as a valuable reflective exercise on the metrics and evidence that we could confidently utilise within our institutional and unit level pilot submissions. Challenges for institutional and unit level analysis included identifying data owners, working across different data systems and data accessibility.

Noting that at time of submission and preparation of this poster, guidance for REF 2029 PCE are still to be confirmed. This poster draws on learnings from preparation for and submission to the recent PCE pilot

and the University of Glasgow's own internal evaluation project of the PCE pilot experience.

Cumulating to focus on research culture enhancement and providing clarity from the institution perspective and encouraging grassroots initiatives at the local, School and College level.

Preliminary learnings include [1] acknowledging the need to support our research community with the interpretation of what Research Culture is and means across the institution, [2] consideration of varying confidence levels in narrative writing and [3] access to and understanding of metrics and evidence.

Developing Evidence-Informed Output Narratives for fairer research evaluation across disciplines

Dr Stuart RF King and Dr Elizabeth Gadd

Loughborough University, UK

In academic promotion and other internal assessment processes, research-active colleagues are often asked to demonstrate the quality and significance of their work. The methods used to evidence and assess these qualities vary by discipline but typically involve peer review, supported by qualitative and quantitative indicators and metrics. The global shift towards more responsible research assessment has highlighted the limitations of many traditionally used metrics and the need for new, fairer evaluation methods.

This is particularly relevant for 'practice-based' or 'non-textual' outputs, which can already be difficult to assess using conventional measures—especially when reviewed by individuals outside the researcher's immediate discipline, as can often occur in promotion processes.

To address these challenges, Loughborough University has developed Evidence-Informed Output Narratives (EONs), to offer a more equitable and discipline-sensitive approach to research assessment. The EON framework guides researchers in drafting a narrative statement for one or more of

their research outputs and demonstrating each output's quality and visibility by drawing on a weighted menu of evidence types. Co-developed with academic colleagues across disciplines, this weighted menu reflects disciplinary standards and includes categories such as Evidence of Quality/Peer Validation, Evidence of Reach/Visibility, and Evidence of Contribution, helping researchers select the most relevant indicators for their work.

By applying the metrics that matter in each context, this structured yet flexible approach can ensure fairer and more meaningful evaluation across disciplines. Following a successful pilot in 2024, EONs will be more widely implemented at Loughborough University in 2025. This presentation will outline the development and implementation of EONs, aiming to gather wider feedback and support other institutions in adopting similar approaches.

Navigating Interdisciplinary Pathways: Cultivating Versatility and Readiness to Contribute for Early-Career Researchers

Yanyan Li

University of Warwick, UK

As an early-career researcher (ECR) in the social sciences, my journey has been shaped by engaging in interdisciplinary research beyond my field, collaborating across departments, and teaching students from diverse academic backgrounds. These experiences have highlighted the unique challenges faced by ECRs, particularly in navigating interdisciplinary work while also establishing a solid foundation within their own discipline (Jaeger-Erben et al., 2018).

Interdisciplinarity often presents uncertainty for ECRs, as it requires balancing intellectual exploration with the pragmatic demands of employability, alongside the precariousness of short-term academic contracts (Abidin, 2019). For those still solidifying their academic identity, like myself, these challenges are compounded by vulnerabilities stemming from limited experience. Through my involvement in interdisciplinary teams, particularly in medical and health sciences and applied linguistics, I have learned

to adapt methodologies, bridge epistemological divides, and translate knowledge across domains. These skills are crucial for developing the versatility needed to navigate the challenges ECRs face. Moreover, teaching students from fields such as computer science and chemistry has further deepened my understanding of interdisciplinarity, particularly the challenge of balancing the need to build disciplinary expertise with the flexibility and readiness to contribute to institutional commitments beyond traditional academic boundaries. These experiences have reshaped my view of how research culture can better support ECRs, emphasising that adaptability, curiosity, and a willingness to learn are essential qualities for making meaningful contributions to the evolving research landscape.

This poster thus discusses how research culture can be cultivated to better support ECRs by fostering inclusive, dynamic, and collaborative environments that allow them to confidently engage in interdisciplinary research and ventures. By recognising the challenges faced by ECRs and promoting versatility, readiness to contribute, and continuous learning, this poster aims to draw implications for how to create a research culture that nurtures confident, adaptable ECRs in today's interdisciplinary landscape.

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Menopause Matters: Understanding How Women Conceptualise the Impact of Menopause on Academic Careers

Marina Mendonça, Julie Eyden, Hazel Sayer, Gemma Gray, Michaela Gummerum and Luke Hodson

University of Warwick, UK

Women in academia face specific challenges (e.g., maternity, menopause, care duties) which contribute to perpetuating systemic issues (i.e., the “glass ceiling,” the “leaky pipeline”), ultimately hindering gender equality. Moreover, the menopause transition usually occurs at a time when women are most likely assuming leadership positions in their academic careers. While recent actions by higher education institutions represent a positive step (e.g., the creation of specific guidelines and resources), perceptions of challenges and support may vary depending on the menopausal stage (i.e., pre/peri/postmenopausal) and on the representation of women across disciplines (e.g., STEM vs. social sciences).

In this study, we qualitatively explored how academic women conceptualise the impact of menopause on their careers. We conducted focus groups with academics from the University of Warwick at different menopausal stages, from disciplines/departments with distinct representations of women (e.g., STEM vs. Humanities/social sciences). The aim was to capture perspectives of menopause and its impact on academic careers. Of particular interest are women’s intended academic career goals, how menopause has affected or could affect these goals, perceptions of institutional barriers and support, and potential strategies to alleviate challenges associated with menopause.

Focus group transcripts were thematically analysed to understand perceptions of menopause and enable identification of specific challenges and best practices across career stages and disciplines. Findings aim to inform tailored policies to support the retention and progression of academic women.

Building inclusive communities in an interdisciplinary, multi-institutional Centre for Doctoral Training

Rachael Miles¹, Vivienne Kuh¹, Darragh Murnane², Laura Urbano², Alexander Edwards¹, Kerry Knox³ and Jonathan Reid¹

¹University of Bristol, UK; ²University of Hertfordshire, UK; ³University of York, UK

The EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in Aerosol Science is an eight-institution, multidisciplinary centre that uses a cohort-based approach to train postgraduate researchers (PGRs) in the fundamentals of interdisciplinary aerosol science. The CDT is highly diverse, comprising more than 100 PGRs from across all STEM disciplines, 60+ academics from multiple faculties and institutions, and over 90 industrial, public sector, and third-sector partners. The breadth of the CDT represents a unique opportunity to create an inclusive community focused on researcher development across all career stages and sectors.

The CDT taught curriculum was co-created between PGRs and professional aerosol scientists working across all employment sectors, resulting in the CDT’s Nine Graduate Competencies that describe the core knowledge and skills aerosol science graduates need to develop. The use of research-based instructional strategies and engaged learning projects in curriculum delivery allows learners to develop their team-working and communication skills, as well as their reflexive practice and resilience. All CDT stakeholders (PGRs, academics, and partners) are supported to explore issues of responsible research and innovation, environmental sustainability, and equity, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) in the context of their practice. Inclusion is considered in the design of all aspects of the CDT environment.

This presentation will outline how embedding ED&I and wellbeing throughout CDT delivery and operations has supported the development of an inclusive community spanning multiple career stages, institutions, and employment sectors, and the impact that this has had on research culture.

Co-creating and delivering a self-sustaining Research Management and Workforce Development training programme for long-term use in Kenya and the UK

Caroline Ngugi¹, Shem Mutuiru¹, Fred Kariuki¹, Daniel Jameson² and Ruth Norris²

¹Kenyatta Teaching, Referral and Research Hospital (KUTRRH), Kenya; ²The University of Manchester, UK

To describe an innovative international collaboration designed to accelerate research readiness and collaboration by co-developing and co-delivering changes in processes, ways of working and culture in two large institutions across Kenya and UK.

This presentation describes a British Academy ODA funded project to co-create and deliver an innovative Research Management and Workforce Development training programme between Kenya (Kenya Teaching, Referral and Research Hospital [KUTRRH]) and the UK (The University of Manchester [UoM]).

We will describe the background, drivers, deliverables, aims and progress to date, as well as our underpinning model of collaborative team research principles, diversity, inclusion, and gender equity.

Through building projects together, UoM and KUTRRH have started to identify areas where improved understanding of organisational and cultural differences would facilitate effective collaboration. We will address these challenges as well as those identified through our general joint experience of conducting collaborative research.

We will provide co-designed training, enabling teams of administrators and researchers to understand how to work together effectively using train-the-trainer and peer trainer models to create a self-sustaining programme that can be embedded within both institutions.

We will co-create training to enhance interoperability between core research supporting functions (finance, research support & development, HR, governance,

ethics and legal/contracts) to build interdisciplinary teams with a shared vision and effective working methods who are then able to train others.

The project's outcomes will serve as the bedrock for future Kenya-UK research partnerships, improving the entire research lifecycle, and form a blueprint for the development of intra and inter-partner training.

We will provide and embed the learning and development needed to drive clinical research with international partners; and enhance UoM's ability to partner with Kenya on projects aligned with its Social Responsibility agenda and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We will co-develop improvements in the following competencies:

1. Review of Strategic Vision, Mission and Research Focus
2. Interdisciplinarity and Internationalisation of Research
3. Innovation Collaborative Culture
4. Strong Institutional Support for Research Infrastructure
5. Sustainability through Capacity Building

Developing an inclusive Team Research training and development package for a large research-intensive university

Ruth Norris, Charlotte Stockton-Powdrell, Karon Mee and Holly Fairburn-Barnes
University of Manchester, UK

Our training was piloted as in-person workshops in the pilot phase with attendees from the Biology, Medicine and Health faculty only. Learnings from this phase directly informed the content, format, and facilitator model to improve both the breadth and depth of the training offering. The strategies we employed included:

- Recruitment of a Training Manager with pedagogical expertise to develop content and lead facilitation
- Targeted communications to ensure training uptake across disciplines and groups

The impact of this recruitment and communications strategy is demonstrated in the growth of reach and breadth:

- 2023: n=34 — one faculty only
- 2024/25: n=118 — all faculties and central services
- Module Development: Our Training Manager assessed and uplifted the modules, improving content, structure, and presentation using pedagogical knowledge and feedback. An additional Team Building module was also developed.
- Delivery Options: We reviewed our platforms and modes of delivery, resulting in a flexible suite:
 - A self-led online learning platform
 - Content for six training modules for in-person workshops
 - Extended versions of all six modules for in-person workshops
 - Self-led train-the-trainer module
 - Commissionable bespoke training based on needs assessment
 - Content for live online workshops

We use a developmental, iterative, learner-centred, and feedback-centred approach to continuously improve content and delivery. Recent participant feedback includes:

“Great facilitation... really engaging and interactive. Can take a lot of tools to use in my role...” “The training was well-structured and engaging, with clear real-world applications...”

We have found that driving parity and inclusiveness in attendance across disciplines and faculties remains a challenge, as does engaging senior academics. We are currently undertaking an evaluation and sustainability planning, the findings of which will inform future options.

Building Bridges: Advancing Research Culture through Digital Humanities Collaboration

Dr Mara Oliva

University of Reading, UK

This presentation explores the transformative collaboration between the Digital Humanities Hub and the Community of Practice (CoP) at the University of Reading, which played a pivotal role in enhancing the University’s research culture. Rooted in a shared commitment to interdisciplinarity, innovation, and inclusivity, this partnership laid the groundwork for a new Interdisciplinary Research Centre in Digital Humanities (IRDH). The IRDH has formalised and strengthened existing collaborations by bringing the Hub and CoP into a cohesive unit that bridged disciplinary, structural, and cultural divides across the institution.

A defining feature of the IRDH is its innovative governance model, which uniquely combines academic and professional services leadership. This co-directed structure supports long-term sustainability and nurtures a collegial and collaborative research environment. By integrating the Hub as a distinctive, service-based unit within the Library—supported by seconded staff from services such as DTS—the IRDH ensures operational continuity and institutional resilience.

The IRDH enhances digital scholarship across the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences, aligning with institutional priorities such as Open Research, AI ethics, and digital sustainability. It has increased external funding success by providing structured support for grant applications, established digital fellowships for researchers and professional services staff, and expanded training in digital humanities methods. Furthermore, the IRDH has built national and international partnerships, including with leading museums such as the British Museum and the Natural History Museum, to amplify Reading’s research profile. By fostering an inclusive, cross-disciplinary culture of collaboration, the IRDH has made a significant contribution to the University’s Research Culture Project, creating a vibrant and supportive environment for knowledge exchange and innovation.

Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Transparency and Inclusion in Research Participation

Ms Niamh Quann, Dr Daniel S March and Prof James O Burton

University of Leicester, UK

Introduction

Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) are the gold standard for evaluating health technologies, yet many publicly funded trials face significant recruitment challenges. Only 55% of trials meet their target sample size, and 78% recruit at least 80% of their target. Participant Information Sheets (PIS) are essential for ensuring informed consent, yet over 50% are considered difficult to read, potentially deterring participation and reducing trust in research. Improving transparency and accessibility in research materials is essential for fostering an inclusive and ethical research culture.

Proposed Methods

An intercalated Master's (iMSc) project aims to develop and enhance transparency and inclusivity in trial recruitment by improving PIS design. Using qualitative methods, the project will explore stakeholder perspectives, including patients, carers, family members, research teams, and Research Ethics Committee members, on barriers to understanding and engagement with current PIS formats. The study will use purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups, with thematic analysis, supported by NVivo software.

A co-design methodology will inform the development of a more engaging PIS, incorporating video clips, participant interviews, and infographics. The redesigned PIS will be tested within a Study Within a Trial (SWAT) to assess its impact on participant comprehension and engagement.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

This project will generate evidence-based recommendations for improving PIS design, leading to:

1. Greater transparency and trust in the informed consent process;
2. Increased inclusivity and participant engagement in clinical trials;
3. Improved trial recruitment and ethical compliance.

Findings will be disseminated through conferences and publications, providing the student with valuable experience in qualitative research and research communication. By promoting transparency, inclusivity, and researcher development, this project contributes to building a more ethical and effective research environment.

Investing in career development and research culture knowledge for researchers and research enablers: Cynnau|Ignite

Morris, J., Rizwan, M., Hennah, C., Rigby, M., Williams, R., Convery, M., Dawson, H., Gameiro, S., Vilaes, J., Beckett, H., Edwards, N. and Wahl-Jorgensen, K.

Cardiff University, UK

Analyses of the experiences of researchers in the UK suggest that there are clear barriers to career development including, but not limited to, a lack of leadership training (Wellcome Trust 2020). The results of Cardiff University's Research Culture Survey (Cardiff University 2023) also reflected this trend and indicated barriers to building attachment to positive cultural values such as insufficient career development opportunities for both researchers and research enablers.

This paper reports on an ongoing intervention designed to simultaneously advocate for positive research culture as well as promoting empowerment through leadership development. The Cynnau|Ignite Programme, funded by the Wellcome Trust's Institutional Funding for Research Culture Fund, was launched in 2024 for Early Career Researchers and Technical and Professional Services colleagues who enable research. A total of 128 colleagues are taking part in the programme, which takes a multi-faceted

approach to leadership development in the context of positive research culture and comprises seven modules on research culture and career development, as well as research culture projects supported by action-learning. A pre-registered prospective mixed methods evaluation based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) allows us to collect data on participants' positive research culture behaviours and intentions prior to and following the programme (Hennah et al. 2025).

Following a brief overview of the programme aims, we focus on the principles of self-leadership (e.g. Du Plessis 2019) which shaped the approach to broader learning objectives and content design and show how these principles were embedded within the modular approach. The second part of the paper provides insights into participants' qualitative feedback on specific modules and focuses on perceptions of the extent to which module content has improved career development. We end the paper with a discussion of the data and suggest avenues for future initiatives.

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FLIP: Future Leaders in Impact Programme

Emma Roberts¹, Joshua Allen², Mandeep Tutt¹ and Dr Lesley Chikoore¹

¹University of Warwick, UK; ²Birkbeck, University of London, UK

The Future Leaders in Impact Programme (FLIP) was developed by Warwick's Arts Impact Team to support researchers with little to no experience of Impact to build their skills.

FLIP is currently in its second iteration. Each year, a cohort of researchers (13 and 10) receives training on Impact and are encouraged to develop a small-scale impact project. There is opportunity for discussion and for individual support from the impact team. Additionally, participants have access to a budget for kickstarting activities.

Key outcomes of the programme include:

Skills Development:

Participants in 2023/24 agreed they now know what impact is, and the majority indicated they could now identify partners, evaluate their impact and set objectives. One participant said: "It has made me more aware of impact and the need to track and gather relevant information for evaluation. It was nice to have the time and space to think about this aspect of research"

Supporting an impact pipeline:

Feedback demonstrated that participants shared what they had learned with other researchers, and one is now an Impact Director. The programme was identified as beneficial for career development and an aid in promotion applications.

Engaging external audiences with research:

FLIP led to research being shared with external partners, including:

- Training sessions for volunteers
- Co-designing a research project
- Evaluation of events with stakeholders

- Reading workshops with schoolchildren

Facilitating connections:

The cohort model engendered connections between researchers across the Faculty. One participant commented: "Having a group of us at a similar stage in our careers was also hugely beneficial" while others commented that regular meetings with the same group worked well.

Areas for further development:

- Following feedback, a more flexible approach to project budgets was used
- Time for developing impact was highlighted as a concern, particularly for staff on teaching contracts

Metrics Matter? Harnessing Data on PGR Expectations and Hofstede's Cultural Model to Transform Research Supervision

Dr Heather Sears and Dr Victoria Ríos Castaño
Coventry University, UK; University of York, UK

Our literature review of PGRs' expectations of supervisors unsurprisingly highlighted the importance of a positive research culture (i.e. supportive, collaborative, inclusive) and the value doctoral candidates place on having a respectful, collegial, and empathetic relationship with their supervisors. This applied across all the countries studied in large and small-scale surveys, including Finland, Spain, and the UK (Pyhältö et al., 2020); China (Bahtilla & Oben, 2021); and Pakistan (Hina Batool et al., 2022). In this paper, we draw upon metrics collected both in selected surveys and Hofstede's cultural model—particularly the Power Distance Index (PDI), which addresses inequalities in terms of power and opportunities. These will act as operators to compare studies on “virtuous” versus “vicious” supervisory relationships and to discuss the extent to which doctoral candidates are (or can be) empowered to negotiate and challenge the authority of their supervisor(s), depending on the location or country in which the supervision takes place.

Our findings have implications for the development of both doctoral candidates and supervisors across cultural and national contexts, contributing to the generation of outputs for the Next Generation Research Supervision Project (RSVP), which aims to transform research supervision culture and practice.

References:

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From the margins to the middle: creating a culture of belonging without barrier or boundary

Professor Julia J.A. Shaw
De Montfort University, UK

Research systems worldwide, in academia and beyond, have taken a participative turn to address uncertainty and seek innovative approaches to complex global challenges such those outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. From climate change to the ethical and societal implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI), inclusive research is a pathway that ensures diverse perspectives inform solutions that are effective, fair and socially responsible. Furthermore, recent research has shown that for underrepresented groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities and women, a sense of belonging - fostered within a culture of inclusion - is a core determinant of their career development.

Rooted in ethical and moral imperatives, inclusive research cultures not only enhance research quality

but also foster more equitable outcomes. The active engagement of a collection of diverse voices and communities, perspectives and experiences, in the co-production of knowledge also enhances the research process, including how research is governed, financed, and integrated into broader policy and practice. REF 2029 embodies this participative transformation with a stronger focus on assessing People, Culture, and Environment (PCE); in which equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) priorities are integrated across research institutions aimed at initiating and sustaining equitable and supportive cultures for researchers (including PGRs), participants and communities. The application of indicators of inclusion are also significant in that they encourage and embed within research processes and institutions, a diversity of perspectives, methodologies, knowledge, skills and worldviews. Accordingly, these measures yield increased relevance, improved outcomes and deliver real-world impact.

This paper will draw on recently published research and share examples of some of the measures successfully implemented within my interdisciplinary research centre and wider research community, which have resulted in enriched inclusive innovation, engaged research, and enhanced impact across disciplines and fields.

Highly personalised coaching: a powerful component of researcher career development programme

Dr Iveta Simera¹, Anna Sanders², Emily Lloyd³ and Clare Wakeham⁴

¹Coaching for Research Leaders; ²Jon Rees Associates Ltd; ³University of Oxford, UK; ⁴Clare Wakeham Consulting & Coaching

Early career researchers (ECRs) need to know what they can do to progress their research career. This knowledge can be successfully shared through training workshops. The crucial, and more difficult, point is how to support ECRs in implementing this new knowledge in their individual contexts.

The NIHR-funded GROW Programme was created to support career development of mental health

researchers (<https://mentalhealthresearch.org.uk/grow/>). It includes highly personalised coaching provided by three independent qualified coaches with extensive experience of supporting HE/academic research professionals. This talk will present insights from coaching four cohorts of GROW participants. Post-programme participant surveys were very positive, consistently highlighting coaching and peer networking as the most impactful components of each programme. Coaches also surveyed their coachees, prompting reflection on the impact and process of coaching, and provided recommendations to programme organisers based on this feedback and their own reflections.

GROW's use and experience of coaching was innovative in several ways:

Academic researchers are familiar with mentoring, but not coaching: introducing coaching to them enabled strategic thinking about their career, and brought significant benefits in their career development.

Coaching is often available to senior leaders but rarely to people earlier in their careers; this programme has proved its value at this crucial career formative stage. Our experience suggests this population is exceptionally open to coaching and able to use it particularly well.

Through this process we gained valuable insights that could help others in implementing similar individual career development support. At the conference we will share insights relating to:

How to introduce and implement coaching to maximise uptake and benefits on career development
Main coaching themes, trends and differences observed between cohorts

How to respond to needs that emerge during the programmes, e.g. providing additional group activities that meet these needs and make the most efficient use of programme funding

Everything we (think we) know about Narrative CVs

Liz Simmonds¹, Karen Stroobants¹, Noemie Aubert Bonn², Justyna Bandola-Gill³ and Wolfgang Kaltenbrunner⁴

¹University of Cambridge, UK; ²University of Manchester, UK; ³University of Birmingham, UK; ⁴Leiden University, the Netherlands

As a sector, where have we got to with NCVs? Do you get the impression that we keep asking the same questions about them, have the same doubts and face the same challenges to progress?

Using NCVs to assess researchers has become a widespread practice in line with the research culture movement, capturing and contextualising broader contributions to the research endeavour and encouraging more qualitative assessment of individuals. This has been quite a shift for a sector that for many years relied on metricised indicators of success. NCVs vary widely in their format and have been adopted or suggested for many different types of assessment by both funders and research organisations. Much faith has been placed in their potential to contribute towards an improved research culture but there remain many unanswered questions about how and why NCVs should be used.

Our project, funded by the UKRI Metascience fund, is an international meta-analysis looking at the state of play for NCVs, and at this session we will present a review of what we know so far and what we, as a sector, still need to know.

Evaluation of NCVs can be complex, particularly when testing in situ or in a comparative study. A number of studies have already been conducted or are in progress: these cover multiple organisations, NCV formats, uses and evaluation methodologies.

We will offer insights into whether the evaluations in progress answer the questions we have as a sector and if not, suggest how they might. The talk will also provide insights about evaluating research assessment that would be useful for others working in this space.

Stronger together? Journeys towards equitable partnerships between HEIs and IROs

Dr Beth Steiner¹ and Dr Paola Ricciardi²

¹University of Reading, UK; ²Natural History Museum

This poster is a step in our ongoing exploration of partnerships and collaborations between HEIs and other institutions, aiming to reflect on a type of relationship which is common and viewed positively, but not always critically examined.

Using the strategic partnership between the University of Reading and the Natural History Museum as a starting point, we will structure the poster around the following key questions, to draw in those interested in such partnerships:

Why partner? What sparks the interest to work with another organisation, and learn about how they approach research and its outcomes?

To align or not align? How do we deal with the different aims of the organisations? Is it best to integrate them or not?

Do we adjust the sails? What in a partnership causes a change of direction, and how do we incorporate the subsequent outcomes?

Is this for real? How do we ensure that useful partnerships are maintained and allowed to grow, producing lasting outcomes?

The poster will both share reflections based on our experience and include a prompt to contribute to our research via a QR code leading to a short survey on the questions outlined above.

The survey will also be shared with other groups before and after the conference. We will then analyse and share the resulting data with research enablers across the sector via a brief article and public presentations. In addition to sharing tabulated anonymised data, we plan to use a modified version of Durham University's "Research Culture Islands" creative activity to map an island (or archipelago) to demonstrate the 'geography' of a fair and productive

collaborative partnership. The ultimate goal of this activity is to facilitate the creative examination and evaluation of the establishment, maintenance, and flourishing of partnerships which can catalyse impactful research and a healthy research culture.

Work/Life Hacks for Women

Dr Tse-Hui Teh, Dr Laura Fenner and Ms Vaishnavi Godane

University College London, UK

Do women academics tend to compromise their health in order to succeed in their careers? Do they sometimes work themselves to exhaustion and ill health to achieve promotion to professorship? Our personal observations seemed to suggest that this might be the case.

To explore these issues and identify strategies for women to succeed while maintaining their health, we organised a series of three events in which participants heard from an eminent woman professor and supported their peers. Through these sessions, we aimed to contribute to a supportive and inclusive higher education environment with fairer career development.

Each event was divided into two parts. The first part featured an interview with an eminent woman professor where we heard about their career journey, particular challenges that they faced, strengths that they felt helped them succeed, and support they had to succeed.

The second part was small group discussions to create some “hacks”, followed by a plenary summary. The discussions centred on challenges participants were currently facing and aimed at brainstorming new hacks or sharing successful approaches from their own experiences. The themes addressed through these hacks included: managing boundaries and expectations; work-life balance and navigating family planning; self-care and well-being; effective time management; building confidence and resilience; and managing work relationships and stress.

The structure of these sessions meant that we created a collaborative, collegiate and trusting environment where vulnerabilities could be aired and addressed. Participants came away having helped others and been helped, which builds the supportive environment to empower us to achieve our career goals without breaking our health.

The events were funded by UCL Research Culture and open to all women academics and professional services staff at UCL. The forthcoming final event is planned as a feedback and future prospectus session.

Empowering an Inclusive Engineering Research Community through Creative Collaboration

Briony Thomas, Kacper Dobras, John Warwick, Hardy Whiteley-Boocock and Graham Brown

University of Leeds, UK

Inclusive cultures are essential to attracting and retaining diverse talent in engineering research. Yet, traditional efforts have focused more on recruitment than systemic cultural change. This project set out to (i) understand cultural challenges and (ii) co-develop actions with those whose voices are often lesser heard within the engineering research community.

Benchmark data was collected via an anonymous Research Culture Survey following development and iteration with researchers and research-enabling colleagues to enable our progress to be measured on a bi-annual basis. Artist-facilitated activities enabled researchers and research-enabling colleagues to take a creative deep-dive into these challenges and develop meaningful actions. Each series of workshops culminated in a public-facing activity that amplified participants’ voices and celebrated the diversity of our research community.

A standout initiative in 2024 involved a team of engineering technicians collaborating with community designers from Leeds’ African and Caribbean community. Working across disciplines - including mechanical, electrical, robotics, and 3D printing - this team collaborated on the design and

fabrication of a Carnival Queen costume using CAD, machining, electronics, and digital fabrication techniques. Their technical expertise, combined with the creativity of community designers, overcame traditional manufacturing constraints.

The co-created costume led the 2024 Leeds West Indian Carnival parade and featured in Light Night Leeds performances, reaching over 115,000 people. These nationally celebrated events showcased the role of technical professionals as ambassadors for inclusive research and innovation.

The project built sustainable relationships and secured further research impact funding and is transforming how the faculty engages with its local communities. The success of this participatory model—bridging engineering and the arts—demonstrates the power of creative collaboration to challenge norms, build trust, and make engineering more inclusive.

This bold, participatory approach is a replicable model for transforming research cultures and creating empowered, inclusive communities through joyful, co-produced action.

Reimagining Leadership from Below - What Metrics Matter to Research Associates

Will Thomson and Amy Stabler

Newcastle University, UK

This poster presents the design and development of an embedded evaluation process that actively involves research associates at Newcastle University. The goal is to co-create a local, context-specific research culture metric. This innovative evaluation method is being developed within the university's Wellcome Trust-funded Institutional Fund for Research Culture project, Reimagining Leadership. The 2.5-year project adopts an experimental and action-oriented approach to improve research culture through the lens of psychological safety, aiming to “increase levels of psychological safety by improving leadership practice across the institution” (Rowe et al., 2023).

The poster speaks to the conference theme of “metrics that matter” by asking: what metrics matter to whom, in what context, and how? It focuses specifically on the lived experience of research associates—a group that occupies a paradoxical and often marginalised position within institutional research culture. Despite being central to funded research projects, research associates’ unique perspectives are frequently overlooked due to their precarious employment on short-term contracts. Our model seeks to engage with their situated perspectives as an alternative positionality to help reimagine research culture and leadership practices. When foregrounded, such perspectives offer alternative epistemologies that can inform evaluative criteria and the metrics developed from them.

As insider practitioner researchers—conducting research on research within our own institution—we have adopted a realist evaluation approach (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). This theory-driven methodology helps to identify patterns and refine context-specific “micro-theories” that inform decisions and actions. In realist evaluation, causality is understood to be generative rather than linear, aiming to describe how opportunities and ideas, when introduced into appropriate contexts, can lead to successful outcomes (Cheyne et al., 2013).

We have recently entered this phase of our project evaluation. The poster will outline findings and share insights from an evaluation workshop with research associates, scheduled for May 2025.

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Conceptualising professional services researchers in higher education

Charlotte Verney and Helen Curtis

University of Bristol, UK

The contributions that technical and professional service staff make to the research process within universities are increasingly recognised (de Jong and del Junco, 2023; The Hidden REF, 2023), yet there is little visibility of university professional services staff who are actively researching—we call these individuals professional services researchers (PSRs).

We conducted an empirical study within one UK higher education institution, using semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders of the research support process, a survey of PSRs to understand their experiences of researching, and a networking event where PSRs reflected on the findings of the study and shared their experiences. We found that the concept of a PSR was not well understood and made recommendations to enable a more inclusive research culture for professional staff (Verney & Curtis, forthcoming).

Through this empirical research, we developed and proposed a new conceptual framework to distinguish between the work that professional staff do to support and enable the research of others, and the more active engagement they have with research, through: delivering parts of the research process, leading research initiatives, and taking a research-informed approach to their work.

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Research England SIRF Review - Effectiveness of Ring-Fenced Funding

Sarah Bird, Joe Ellery & Rhiannon Hails

Research England UKRI

Research England (RE)'s strategic institutional research funding (SIRF) Review is a review of our approach to our formula-based research funding. Further information can be found on [Research England's website](#).

The poster includes RE's understanding of the [SIRF Principles and Objectives](#) of SIRF, which are being tested as part of the SIRF review.

One phase of the SIRF Review is to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of our funding. One stream is RE's SIRF ring-fenced funding, which includes the Enhancing Research Culture Fund. The IRRC provides RE with the opportunity to better understand what research culture activities are happening across the sector and share further details about the review.

The purpose of the work package is to:

1. evaluate the effectiveness and impact of ring-fenced funding;
2. produce evidence to support and inform future government spending reviews;
3. produce outcomes to support current and future SIRF ring-fenced funding policy decisions;
4. produce evidence to test against the [SIRF Principles and Objectives](#)

What do we want to know?

Research England is eager to better understand how ring-fenced funds are being used across the sector and what impact they are creating.

1. Has ring-fenced funding been able to create impact within your institution, if so how and are there examples?

- a. Are there examples of changes in practice or capacity building because of this funding?
2. What are the advantages of ring-fencing?
Would these particular research or related activities have taken place without the ring-fenced funds?
3. Are there limitations and challenges associated with ring-fenced funding?
4. Does ring-fencing still provide institutions with flexibility to decide how funding is effectively spent within their institution?

We also want to understand if there is anything we can change to improve the effectiveness and impact of these funds within institutions.

What next?

RE acknowledges there are currently several asks of the sector. We will continue to gather evidence in 2025, with engagement opportunities to be determined for late 2025 /early 2026.

If you would like to talk to us or share your experience, please contact the Research Funding team at researchpolicy@re.ukri.org