

IRCC 26

Hosted by the National Centre
for Research Culture



International Research Culture Conference

‘Collaboration for Lasting Change’

Monday 21st and Wednesday 23rd September 2026

Book of Abstracts

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International Research Culture 2026 Conference Programme

Monday 21st September 2026 - Online

Time (BST)	Session description	Speakers
09:30	Welcome and opening remarks	Professor Kirstie Haywood Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research Culture) and Academic Director of NCRC
10:00	Plenary: Panel Session - <i>Lighting a fire: how can funders support positive research culture behaviours?</i>	Dr Sean Sapcariu, Luxembourg National Research Fund Geraldine Clement-Stoneham, Medical Research Council, UK Dr Ken Emond, British Academy, UK Dr Charlotte Spear, Wellcome Trust <i>Chair – Vicky Strudwick, Head of Partnerships, National Centre for Research Culture at the University of Warwick</i> This panel session will explore how funders are embedding and incentivising positive research culture behaviours within their processes. Funder representatives will discuss their first-hand experiences of incorporating tools such as randomised allocation, narrative CVs and research culture maturity frameworks, and the outcomes to date. They will consider what else might be possible in this space, and the structures and support needed to realise this.
11.00	Break	N/A
11:30	Parallel Sessions (Pre-Selection) P1	N/A
12:45	Break for lunch	N/A
13:30	Parallel Sessions (Pre-Selection) P2	N/A
14:45	Break	N/A
15:15	Plenary: Panel Session - Tackling racial inequality in research environments: what works, and what’s next?	Professor Etlyn Kenny, University of Birmingham Dr Karisha George, University of York Nic Farmer, MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology Fiona McClement, University of Edinburgh <i>Chair – Dr Anil Awesti, Associate Professor, University of Warwick</i> This panel session brings together representatives of a range of different initiatives aimed at tackling racial equality and underrepresentation. The panel of project leads and members will share what has worked well (and what hasn’t) and what has changed. They will jointly consider where the focus needs to move next, and how best to collaborate for maximum impact.
16:15	Close	N/A

Wednesday 23rd September 2026 – In-Person

Time (BST)	Session description	Speakers
08:45	Arrival, registration, refreshments	
09:30	Welcome to day 2 (in-person)	Professor Kirstie Haywood Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research Culture) and Academic Director of NCRC
09:45	Plenary Keynote: Beyond Partnership: Building Research Cultures that Enable Collective Impact	Professor Jimmy Volmink Executive Director for Equity, Wellcome Trust Collaboration is often framed as partnership—but lasting change requires something deeper: shared purpose, aligned incentives, and collective accountability. This keynote will explore how research culture can evolve to support true collective impact, where collaboration is embedded rather than episodic. It will consider how funders, institutions, and researchers can work together to create environments that value diverse contributions and ways of working. The talk will also reflect on barriers, including competition, structural inequities, and fragmented systems, and offer perspectives on how these might be addressed to enable collaboration that delivers meaningful, long-term change.
10:30	Refreshment Break and Poster Gallery	
11:00	Challenge-led Workshops	
12:30	Lunch	Poster Gallery, Exchanges Journal Drop in
13:30	Parallel Sessions P3	
14:45	Refreshment Break and Poster Gallery	
15:15	Plenary Keynote: The Technician Commitment: A Collaborative Approach to Transforming Culture for Technical Careers	Dr Kelly Vere MBE Director, UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy, University Director of Technical Strategy, University of Nottingham Technical professionals are central to addressing global challenges. They enable research, teaching, innovation and knowledge exchange across institutions and borders. Yet, despite their critical contributions, they have often lacked visibility, recognition and clear career pathways, frequently described as an “invisible workforce” within higher education and research. This keynote will explore how a collaborative, system-wide approach can drive lasting culture change for technical careers. Drawing on the UK’s experience through the Technician Commitment, it will demonstrate how coordinated action across institutions, funders and sector bodies has transformed visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technical professionals. The session will also introduce the UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy, a national initiative designed to embed long-term change and strengthen the technical workforce through partnership and shared ambition.
15:45	Plenary Panel: We are all here for the research: Delivering Research Professional Futures Collaboratively	Dr Isabella von Holstein - Senior Project Manager, King's College London Dr Dan King – Director, Research Consulting Dr Jess Pilgrim-Brown – Research Fellow, University of Oxford <i>Chair: Lorna Wilson, Managing Director of Research and Innovation Services, Durham University</i> Universities face growing pressure to strengthen and sustain research, making the contributions of research professionals more important than ever. This panel will explore the emerging Research Professional Futures initiative and why it matters now. Drawing on personal experiences and lessons from previous culture change efforts, panellists will discuss how stronger collaboration between academics and research professionals, evidence-informed practice, and meaningful metrics can drive lasting improvement. The session will introduce plans for the first sector-wide professional development framework, pilot activities, and a wider strategic vision, while examining the barriers and perceptions that continue to limit progress and opportunities for transformation.
16:45	Closing remarks Poster presentation prizes	Professor Kirstie Haywood, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research Culture) and Academic Director of NCRC

Monday 21st September

Parallel Sessions P1

LINK	LINK	LINK	LINK	LINK
P1.1 Collaborative and Interdisciplinary Research Cultures Chair: Ayten Alibaba	P1.2 From Mid-Career to Leadership: Shaping Research Culture Chair: Dr John MacArtney	P1.3 Recognising Technical Input to Research: From Ensuring Fair Attribution to Promotional Pathways Chair: Sarah Bennett	P1.4 Inclusive and Diverse Research Environments Chair: Marie Sams	P1.5 Research Culture in Global and Institutional Contexts Chair: Carole Harris
Interdisciplinary Research Conversations: Design and Analysis <i>Dr Ayten Alibaba; Dr Yanyan Li; Dr Joana Almeida; Dr Gill Frigerio; Dr Yvette Yitong Wang; Prof Richard Smith. University of Warwick</i> What really supports interdisciplinarity? Lessons learned from the Biomedical Data Science Career Development Survey <i>S. Cadman (1); T. Casci (2); P. Davies (3); R.E. Etherington (2); D. Gavaghan (2); C. George (2); C. McLean (4); D. Sims (2)</i> <i>Health Data Research UK (1); University of Oxford (2); University of Dundee (3); Cancer Research UK (4)</i> Enabling Interdisciplinary Collaboration through Small-Scale Research Culture Funding <i>Dr Colleen Thomas; Prof Grace Mulcahy; Ms Gillian. University College Dublin</i> From Catalyst to Culture: Sustaining Transdisciplinary Research through the Public Squares Initiative <i>Dr Astrid Treffry-Goatley; Miss Nicala Zeeman; Mrs Ameera Crew. Stellenbosch University</i>	Leadership as Research Culture Infrastructure: Applying the Framework for Leading in Higher Education to enable a lasting change in the research ecosystem <i>Dr Ireen Litvak-Zur. Advance HE</i> Meet the LAP Lander Team: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Fostering Research Leadership <i>Lisa Guenther & Kim Moran-Jones. University of Edinburgh</i> Fostering strong, sustainable research cultures through investing in ‘mid-career’, ‘established’ researchers: a cross-institutional mentoring scheme for MCRs. <i>Dr Kate Jones (1); Dr Sam Fernandes (1); Dr Jen Lynch (1); Dr Sarah Ashworth (2); Chris Atkinson (3); Jaime Harrison (4); Dr Angela Midgley (5); Alison Monkhouse (6); Dr Elizabeth Scanlon (7)</i> <i>Manchester Metropolitan University (1); University of Manchester (2); Lancaster University (3); Leeds Beckett University (4); University of Salford (5); University of Huddersfield (6); Sheffield Hallam University (7)</i> Reframing Research Culture through the lens of Service Excellence - A Mid-Career Researcher perspective <i>Dr Fola Ikpehai, SUMS Consulting</i>	Changing Culture Surrounding Technical Roles Through Opportunities, Knowledge and Skills <i>Dr Kay Doncom. University of Warwick</i> Driving Research Culture through Technician Pathway Design <i>Dr Ian Tidmarsh (1); Dr Jane Eagling; Esther Umoren; Heather Atkins-Whitehead; Abigail Acheson; Ben Dobson; Professor Chris Fox; Professor Craig Banks; Dan Swain; Dave Camlin; David Harmes; Ffion Evans; Gill Dorey; Dr Helen McCormick; Kate Rowland; Professor Jamie McPhee; Dr Judy Brook; Dr Lisa Simmons; Professor Mike Coldwell; Nichola Ellis; Orlagh McCabe; Rebecca Bradley; Sam Gray; Yogita Patel (2)</i> <i>National Technician Development Centre (1); Manchester Metropolitan University (2)</i> Recognising Leadership and Expertise in Research Technical Professionals <i>Ms Susie Cook (1); Dr Natalie Homer (1); Mr Lee Murphy (1); Dr Sally Shirran (2); Dr Phil Whitfield (3); Dr Claire Wilson (3)</i> <i>University of Edinburgh (1); University of St Andrews (2); University of Glasgow (3)</i>	Is an inclusive research environment a sufficient condition for a diversified body of doctoral students to progress and thrive in academia? <i>Dr Stewart Eyres (1); Dr Cristina Izura (2)</i> <i>Eyres Inclusion Consulting (1); Swansea University (2)</i> Building Consensus for Change: Advancing Gender Equity in UK Higher Education through the Women in Academia Project <i>Dr Talar Moukhtarian & Dr Marie Sams University of Warwick</i> ‘Inspiring’ Research Culture Change? <i>Aaron Andrews. University of Leicester</i> EDI metrics: Evidence and Metrics for Research Culture and EDI in BBSRC Strategically Supported Institutes <i>Prof. Jayne Hope; Dorotea Deshishku; Jeanette King, Dr. Sam Gamal. The Roslin Institute, University of Edinburgh</i>	Researcher Impact Profiles and Measures of Positive Social Change: A Systematic Review <i>Haley A Beer; Helen Bevan; Julia Borgers; Katharina Dittrich; Carly Hegenbarth. University of Warwick</i> When values meet infrastructure: negotiating equity in international research collaboration <i>Dr Victoria Anker. University of Edinburgh</i> Open Research Practices and Researchers' Assessment: A Global Landscape Review <i>Banaz Jalil (1), Felix Pedrotti (2), Anna Korzeniowska (3), Neil Jacobs (4), Tim Newton (5)</i> <i>University College London (1); University of Surrey (2); University of Southampton (3); UK Reproducibility Network (4); King’s College London (5)</i>

Parallel Sessions P2

LINK	LINK	LINK	LINK	LINK
P2.1 Embedding Evidence and Evaluation in Research Culture Chair: Kirstie Haywood	P2.2 Doing Culture Differently: Practical Examples from Research Environments Chair: Rika Nair	P2.3 Doing Culture Differently: Practical Examples from Research Environments Chair: Katie Reynolds	P2.4 Inclusive and Diverse Research Environments Chair: Vicky Strudwick	P2.5 Wellbeing and Belonging in Research Environments Chair: Elena Riva
Embedding evidence-informed decision-making into research culture and strategy development <i>Dr. Amy Devenney; Lizzie Ville. University of Bristol</i> When Learning Is Not Enough: Testing the Learning-to-Application Inference in the Evaluation of Culture Programmes <i>Chrissi McCarthy (1); Lucy Day (2); Rachel Cowen (3); Martin Brooks (2)</i> <i>Centre of Behavioural Equality (1); Liverpool John Moores (2); University of Manchester (3)</i> Embedding evaluative thinking: An outcomes-focused approach to evidencing research culture impact <i>Dr Sarah Masefield. University of York</i>	The Shadow Committee Toolkit - How we went from Reimagining to Transforming Governance <i>Sophie Daniels; Sapna Marwaha; Dr. Andrea Lambell; Dr. Johanna Thren. University of Durham</i> Connections, Collaborations, Communities: A Team Approach to Researcher Development <i>Dr Kate Jones; Dr Jen Lynch; Dr Sam Fernandes. Manchester Metropolitan University</i> Spotlighting research cultures through national collaboration: insights from Scottish Research Integrity and Culture Week <i>Dr Emma Compton-Daw (1); Professor Jemina Napier (2); Dr Frances Medaney (3)</i> <i>University of Strathclyde (1); Heriot-Watt University & Scottish Graduate School for Social Science (2);</i> <i>Hosted by University of Aberdeen on behalf of the Scottish HE Sector (3)</i> How to teach research culture: Insights from two educational initiatives at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit <i>Dr Saskia Frisby. University of Cambridge</i>	Building Sustainable Research Communities: Strategies for Capacity, Collaboration, and Positive Research Culture <i>Dr Bogusia Wojciechowska. ESRC - ADR UK</i> Supporting institutional research integrity and research culture priorities: a cross-institutional exploratory working party on ‘Recognising Contributions in Research <i>Professor Karen Spencer; Dr Richard Greenham; Mrs Dawn Cremonese. University of St Andrews</i> Reflecting on the scalability of research culture interventions: a case study on expectation management workshops for research groups <i>Dr Luisa Ciampi. University of Cambridge</i> From Away Day to Action: A Pedagogically Informed Model for Strengthening Research Culture through the Scholarly Innovation Away Day (SIAD) <i>Amy Osmond & Dr Derek Lai Teik Ong. Hertfordshire Business School, University of Hertfordshire</i>	National LGBTQ+ Mentoring Network for Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science <i>Dr Daniel Herring (1); Dr Rowland Seymour (2); Professor Tyler Kelly</i> <i>Coventry University (1); University of Birmingham (2);</i> <i>Queen Mary University of London (3)</i> Taking the next step: evolving our approach to positive action through the PATHWAY programme <i>Vicky Strudwick; Dr Jamie Burford, University of Warwick</i> From Margins to Methods: Women of Colour Navigating Higher Education <i>Professor Sukanya Krishnamurthy. University of Edinburgh</i> The Beacon Academy: A qualitative exploration of the impact of co-created internship program for under-represented students on research delivery and research culture. <i>Chloe Berg; James Frearson; Kirstie Haywood; Thomas Dale MacLaine. University of Warwick</i>	Space to belong: Exploring the role of belonging on PGR wellbeing <i>Anna Butters; Ke Li; Lauren Martin; Richard Cooper; Chris Blackmore. University of Sheffield</i> Understanding researcher’s experiences of "failure" in academia and identifying recommendations to better support research careers in higher education <i>Dr Celia J Bernstein; Mr Dinesh Passi; Dr Nicky Thomas; Professor Kirstie L Haywood; Professor Felicity Boardman; Dr John I MacArtney. University of Warwick</i> Improving Career Development for Research Professionals at a UK Higher Education Institution: a Mixed-Method Study Applying Behavioural Science <i>Emma Ruby Francis (1); Christopher Vucic (1); Huner Erdinch (1); Sadie Boniface (1); Angel Chater (1); Lucy Dang (1); Hassan Sultan (1); Donna Swann (1); Susan Michie (1); Emma Todd (2); Geraint Rees (2); Fabiana Lorencatto (1)</i> <i>University College London (1); University of Bedfordshire (2)</i> Investigating Research Culture through Personal Interactions: Evidence from a John Fell funded project at the University of Oxford <i>Jessica Pilgrim-Brown. University of Oxford</i>

Wednesday 23rd September – Challenge Led Workshops

1 <u>Beyond the bid: accountability for research culture in funded research</u> Facilitators: Taryn Bell and Hanna Groothuizen	2 <u>Measuring Change: A Research Culture Data Capture and Evaluation</u> Facilitators: Sarah Masefield, Amy Mayfield, Cathal Rogers	3 <u>Making the Invisible Visible: Developing Reward and Recognition for Good Research Culture</u> Facilitators: Rika Nair, Alys Kay, Julia Schoonover	4 <u>Researcher and Research Professional Wellbeing in Healthy Research Cultures: Learning Across Institutions and Contexts</u> Facilitators: Elena Riva, Amber Tout, Tania Maria Villanueva Cabello
Research culture is increasingly featured in grant applications, but its real impact depends on what happens after funding is awarded. If commitments to team working, career development, inclusion, open research and responsible leadership are assessed only at application stage, they risk becoming part of winning funding rather than delivering research. Building on Monday’s funder panel, this workshop will bring together participants from universities and funding organisations to explore how research culture commitments can be sustained throughout the post-award grant cycle. Focusing on award set-up, project delivery, monitoring, reporting and future funding decisions, participants will consider accountability, incentives and proportionate follow-up. The session will produce a co-created set of practical principles, accountability mechanisms and shared responsibilities for institutions and funders.	This challenge-led workshop will bring together the research culture community to explore approaches to data capture and evaluation, while providing a peer-learning space for participants looking to build skills and confidence. The session will begin with presentations from Taru Silvonen (University of Bristol) on evaluating research culture projects and support needs; Jayne Hope (University of Edinburgh) on research culture and EDI data, benchmarking and evaluation; and Adam Partridge, Suz Garrard and Maedbh King (Trinity College Dublin) on research culture data capture and evaluation across disciplinary contexts. Participants will then join a world café discussion on the challenges and opportunities of generating and using research culture evidence and insight. Coordinated by the RCEN Data Capture and Evaluation Working Group.	Research depends on many contributions that often remain hidden or under recognised within current research systems. This interactive session will explore how we can make these invisible contributions more visible and valued. It will begin with a facilitated discussion and short panel bringing together diverse perspectives on recognition in research. Speakers will highlight contributors at the interface of academia and society, including independent researchers, community partners, and others whose expertise may not always be formally acknowledged. The session will also recognise the crucial contributions of research professionals and research methodologists. Participants will hear emerging findings from the Research Culture Enablers Network Working Group, which is examining reward and recognition practices across the UK to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. A collaborative mapping activity will encourage collective reflection, identify priorities for change, and generate practical actions to support more inclusive, equitable, and comprehensive approaches to recognising the full range of contributions that enable excellent research.	Researcher wellbeing and healthy research cultures are increasingly recognised as global priorities, yet institutional responses vary across contexts. This interactive workshop will bring together researchers, research culture practitioners, professional services colleagues, and institutional leaders to share experiences and learn from one another. The session will begin with emerging findings from Warwick’s Re-Well programme, including a UK study exploring organisational drivers of researcher wellbeing and occupational stress, alongside a mapping exercise of institutional responses across higher education. These findings will provide a platform for discussion and comparison. Through facilitated discussions and collaborative activities, participants will explore approaches to wellbeing, workload, inclusion, career development, and research culture, identifying lessons learned, evidence gaps, and effective practices. The workshop will foster international exchange, future collaborations, and comparative research opportunities, and will conclude with an arts-based wellbeing activity led by Warwick’s Words4Wellbeing team.

5 <u>Advancing Racial Equity in Research Environments: collaborative action</u> Facilitators: Vicky Strudwick, Karisha George, Aaron Andrews, Abimbola Ayorinde, Etlyn Kenny, Jasdeep Singh	6 <u>Safe to fail: A workshop to explore holistic approaches to addressing “failure” in research culture</u> Facilitators: Rachel Lewis; Miranda Raven; Annie Bryan; Ayten Alibaba; Harriet Richmond; John MacArtney	7 <u>Identifying competencies for high-quality public, patient and community involvement in research within different disciplines</u> Facilitators: Felicity Boardman, Kirstie Haywood, Helen Luckhurst, Sophie Staniszewska, Helen Wheatley, Julie Roberts	8 <u>AI in Research: The Impact on People, Practice, and Policy</u> Facilitators: Dr Federica Coluzzi; Jason Snow; Dr Scott Summers; James Parry
Drawing on examples of pilot interventions and emerging frameworks for addressing racial inequity in research environments, participants will explore the structural, cultural and procedural barriers that can limit progress, as well as gaps in existing policies, support mechanisms and institutional approaches. Through facilitated discussion and collaborative problem-solving, they will identify priorities for action and opportunities for shared learning across organisations. These insights will be used to co-create a practical action plan, setting out recommendations, responsibilities and next steps for accelerating collective progress towards more equitable and inclusive research cultures.	A positive research culture depends on creating environments where all researchers can thrive. While frameworks such as the Vitae Research Culture Framework recognise that risk-taking, setbacks and failure are integral to research, the systemic impacts of non-success remain underexplored. This workshop will examine how failure is experienced and understood across research environments, moving beyond individual wellbeing to consider relational, structural and cultural dimensions. Participants will share practical examples of initiatives that address the wider impacts of rejection, setbacks and non-success, and explore how responsibility can be more effectively shared across institutions. Using creative, participatory methods, the workshop will co-produce recommendations for embedding healthier approaches to failure and fostering a more supportive and inclusive research culture.	This workshop will begin by reviewing what is known about the competencies required for conducting public, patient and community involvement (PPCI) in health and care research. We will then explore with delegates the similarities and differences to other disciplines. Delegates will discuss the following questions: • What skills and knowledge are required for PPCI across all disciplines, and which ones are particular to certain fields? • Which competencies are relevant to professional services roles and do these vary by the area or type of research? • What factors affect people’s confidence in conducting PPCI? • Which competencies are likely to be more useful in creating sustainable collaboration?	Artificial intelligence is already influencing how research is designed, carried out, evaluated and communicated. It is becoming clear that responsible adoption of AI depends on research culture: the relationships, values, practices and policies that shape how AI is understood and used. In this interactive 90-minute workshop, we will explore how AI is reshaping the ways that researchers and research professionals connect, communicate and collaborate within and across research. Drawing on emerging evidence and shared real-world experiences, we will examine the opportunities, tensions and trade-offs that AI creates for key research culture priorities, including community, belonging, inclusion, and accessibility. Participants will then consider how these changing practices challenge institutions to rethink their approaches to AI practices, policies and governance; to enable them to maintain integrity in research when AI is used. Through discussion, reflection and practical examples, we will invite participants to explore how their own institutions can shape AI-enabled research cultures and governance that strengthen, rather than diminish, collaboration, human connection and research integrity.

Parallel Sessions P3

P3.1 Embedding Research Culture (Strategy) Chair: Sophie Staniszewska	P3.2 Career Development and Pathways Chair: Harriet Richmond	P3.3 Doctoral Researchers in Collaborative Research Cultures Chair: Rhiannon Martyn	P3.4 Who Contributes to Research? Recognition, Roles, and Reward(1) Chair: Ian Hancox	P3.5 Inclusive & Diverse Research Environments Chair: Kat Grover	P3.6 Who Contributes to Research? Recognition, Roles, and Reward(2) Chair: James Burford
From Experience to Evidence: A Service-Design Approach to Measuring Research Culture <i>Alys Kay. University of London & National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange (NCACE)</i> Whose responsibility is research culture change? Insights from researchers and research enablers in UK Universities <i>Catherine Davies. University of Leeds</i> Making Strategy Work: Translating Lived Research Culture into Implementable Action <i>Dr. Chiara Cipollari; Prof. Sharron Dolan. Glasgow Caledonian University</i> What is the role of short-term projects in enhancing research culture? Perspectives from project leads <i>Hayley Shaw; Katy Butcher; Professor Julie Barnett. University of Bath</i>	Strengthening Research Culture through involving and supporting Early Career Academics and Researchers at the University of Birmingham <i>Dr Giuditta Fontana. University of Birmingham</i> Rewiring the System: Dismantling Research Precarity to Foster Collaborative Research Cultures <i>Benjamin Ankomah-Appiah. Eötvös Loránd University</i> Fair and Transparent Academic Promotions for UCL Early Career Researchers (ECRs) <i>Sonja Weirauch. UCL</i> The Realities of Management in Academic Research: Insights from Postdoctoral Experiences <i>Dr Barbora Oudova-Rivera; Dr Harriet Richmond; Dr Jessica Lewis; Dr Christopher Rodrigue. University of Warwick</i>	Bridging Worlds: Enhancing Research Culture in Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships through Professional Development for Non-University Supervisors <i>Prof Janet De Wilde (1); Prof Julie Sheldon (2) Queen Mary University of London (1); Liverpool St John Moores (2)</i> Institutional approaches to supporting doctoral supervision: Insights from UK Doctoral Schools <i>Dr Hang Li (1); Dr Karen Clegg (1); Prof Doug Cleaver (2) University of York (1); Sheffield Hallam University (2)</i> Improving collaborative culture and peer support through a cross-programme student-led workshop series <i>Jenn Yoo. University of Edinburgh</i> The role of joint doctoral degrees in shaping research culture <i>Prof Liezel Frick (1); Prof Katherine Wimpenny (2); Prof Sibusiso Moyo (1); Prof Elena Gaura (2); Prof Luca Morini (2); Dr QueAnh Dang (2); Dr Dimitar Angelov (2) Stellenbosch University (1); Coventry University (2)</i>	Do We Belong? Teaching-Focused Academics in a Research-Intensive <i>Dr Clare Patterson; Dr Adam Jowett. University of Warwick</i> Research culture in the UK higher education: the missing perspective of professional services staff <i>Dr. Zhuo Sun. University of Essex</i> Recognising the value of technical expertise <i>Dr Sally Morgan; Dr Natasha Dorling; Dr Jenny Loukes; Dr Endre Putyora. University of Edinburgh</i> Valuing Technical Leadership: Evidence and Emerging Policy Lessons from the Scottish Research Technicians' Professional Academy <i>Mr Mohammad Ali Salik (1); Dr Sally Morgan (2); Mr Jamie Smith (3) University of Glasgow (1); University of Edinburgh (2); University of St Andrews (3)</i>	The Building Race Equity and Diversity (BREaD) in Research Network: Community Conversations about health research with local communities from racially minoritised backgrounds <i>Angela Kibia (1); Dr Juliana Onwumere (2) King's College London (1); South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (2)</i> Experiences of gender-based microaggressions and microinclusions in research settings <i>Yihua Chen; Csilla Pákozdy; Nicole Tausch; Gillian R. Brown. University of St Andrews</i> Making Equity an Institutional Responsibility: An In-House Career Development Programme for Global Majority Researchers <i>Dr Sayema Rahman Khan. University of Manchester</i>	Invisible researchers: A cross organisational perspective of professional and technical services researchers <i>Ms Helen Curtis (1); Dr Ellis Ryan (2); Dr Charlotte Verney (1) University of Bristol (1); University of Warwick (2)</i> Championing technical advancement by aligning with research culture strategy and funding <i>Bethan Upex; Andrew Moss. Durham University</i> Recognising What Counts: Rethinking Leadership, Reward and Contribution in Research Culture <i>Zain Ul Abidin; Kay Guccione; Charlotte Bonner-Evans. University of Glasgow</i> Bridging Divides: Teaching-Focused Staff and Their Place in Research Culture <i>Dr James Burford; Dr Gill Frigerio; Fatima Alhaj-Hasan; Milena Cuccurullo. University of Warwick</i>

P3.7 Research Professionals Futures Workshop Rika Nair/Katie Reynolds	P3.8 Responsible Research Practice Chair: Carole Harris	P3.11 Navigating the politics in Research Culture Facilitators: Karen Stroobants, Ben Bleasdale, Emily Ennis, Ashley Collins and Jess Adams	P3.10 Research Culture Carousel(1) Facilitator: Adele Kenny	P3.9 Research Culture Carousel(2) Facilitator: Harbeena Lalli
This interactive session will provide a forum to delve into who Research Professionals (RPs) are and the role they play in shaping positive research cultures. This is a chance for colleagues to help shape our next engagement activities, including our upcoming community of practice. RPs are a diverse and highly skilled community whose work helps research happen effectively, ethically, securely and with impact. Working across research development, programme management, research strategy, libraries, innovation, partnerships and many other areas, RPs contribute specialist expertise throughout the research lifecycle. Yet despite their significant contribution, RP expertise is often under-recognised and underutilised across the sector. This is a co-creation workshop where we want to hear from colleagues leading on research culture change at their institutions and to learn from each other what has worked and how progress can be measured to ensure lasting culture change. We will explore how different institutions are currently recognising and supporting Research Professionals and identify opportunities to strengthen collaboration across the wider research ecosystem. Join us to share insights with peers and to contribute to a growing national conversation about the future of RPs.	Recognising wiki contributions as collaborative research outputs: Towards an open research toolkit <i>Dr Guilherme Fians. University of Manchester</i> Cross-institutional Ethics for Culture Change: A Culture Catalyst Fund Case Study <i>Dr Caitlin McDonald. University of St Andrews</i>	Research culture is often discussed in terms of values, behaviours, and systems, but less frequently as a political space shaped by structural forces and everyday practices. For many working in this area, it can feel isolating and frustrating to navigate power dynamics and ownership spread across different levels. Join us for a highly participatory session to connect the conceptual political frameworks shaping research culture reform, our shared experiences of “small p” politics - how research culture is negotiated, resisted and reshaped in daily practice - and the “big P” political landscape of government strategy and funding priorities which shape our environment. We will explore our collective experiences, knowledge and questions, and work together to move towards collective sense-making and action - aiming to leave us better positioned, individually and together, to navigate and influence research culture politics.	Transforming Supervision Culture and Practice: The Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP) <i>Dr Heather Sears, Dr Victoria Ríos Castaño. Coventry University</i> Role modelling through the CIRCLE (Championing Interdisciplinary Research CuLturEs) fund <i>Lucy Newman. Queen Mary University of London</i> Planning and supporting community-based research: useful tools and insights from practicing researchers <i>Ms Catriona Gold, Ms Becky Gordon. Lancaster University</i> Using peer power and ripple effects to spread an inclusive writing culture <i>Rosie Wadman (1); Dr Jess Macpherson (1); Dr Kate Jones (2) University of Southampton (1); Manchester Metropolitan University (2)</i>	Unlocking creative potential beyond the lab <i>Ana M. Ribeiro; Andreu Gual; Holly Blondin; David del Álamo; Thiago Carvalho; César Serrano; Fran Martínez Jiménez; Guillermo Villacampa; Mate Maus; Óscar Llorián-Salvador; Tian Tian; Johannes Jaeger; Imma Falero. Vall d'Hebron Institute of Oncology (VHIO)</i> Community of Practice as Collective Action on Research Culture at University of Oxford <i>Lindsey Spriggs, Sarah Mallet. University of Oxford</i> The Integrity Quest: an interactive way to explore ethics and integrity principles <i>Cosmin Mudure; Dr Jacob Barker; Fran Baber; Dr Filipa Vance; Oli Schofield. University of Bath</i> CIRCLE: Built From the Inside Out <i>Dr Cleo White. University of Leicester</i> The Bridge of Possibility: How to co-create research culture through drawing together. <i>Laura Evans-Hill. Nifty Fox Creative</i>

Monday 21st September

Parallel Sessions (Pre-Selection) P1

P1.1 Collaborative and Interdisciplinary Research Cultures

Chair: Ayten Alibaba

Interdisciplinary Research Conversations: Design and Analysis

Dr Ayten Alibaba; Dr Yanyan Li; Dr Joana Almeida; Dr Gill Frigerio; Dr Yvette Yitong Wang; Prof Richard Smith.
University of Warwick

Interdisciplinarity is widely advocated as essential for addressing complex societal challenges. Institutional approaches often assume that collaboration and interdisciplinarity emerge organically through proximity and networking. Our presentation challenges this assumption, showing that, instead, research conversations need to be purposefully and intentionally designed and facilitated. On the basis of analysed conversation transcripts and participant feedback, we shed further light on the notion of interdisciplinarity as a form of intercultural dialogue (Alibaba et al., in press).

Drawing on newly analysed data from Phase 2 of the University of Warwick Research Culture Fund funded project, Countering Silos and Hierarchies through Peer-to-Peer Research-in-Progress Conversations (<http://warwick.ac.uk/researchconversations>) we explore how structured conversational activities can enable enhanced understanding and engagement across disciplinary and professional boundaries. The project brought together participants from diverse roles, including teaching-focused academics, research staff, postgraduate researchers, and professional services staff. Using participant reflections, peer-dialogue feedback, and workshop data, we analyse how purposefully structured, task-based activities prompted participants to confront and negotiate differing assumptions about research practices, knowledge production, and collaboration.

On this basis, we show how disciplines function as communities, embodying distinct social practices with underlying values, norms, and ways of knowing. Interdisciplinarity in research and teaching therefore involves more than combining expertise; it requires reflexive engagement with ‘the other’. Our research findings show that carefully and purposefully designed conversational spaces can enable this process by supporting perspective-taking, translation, and mutual recognition. Our analysis showed, further, that interdisciplinarity can be conceived as a ‘third space’ site of negotiation rather than compromise. Participants reflected on lived experiences of misrecognition and exclusion, alongside tensions between disciplinary traditions. Differences emerged around what counts as a valid and successful research contribution, publication norms and expectations on productivity and of collaboration, and the emotional dimensions of research practice, including frustration, uncertainty, and independence. These differences were not simply technical but reflected distinct ways of ‘doing’ and understanding interdisciplinarity in research and teaching.

This paper offers both a conceptual contribution by shedding further light on the notion of interdisciplinarity as intercultural dialogue as well as a practical contribution by demonstrating how purposeful research conversation design can support interdisciplinarity in higher education institutions.

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What really supports interdisciplinarity? Lessons learned from the Biomedical Data Science Career Development Survey

S. Cadman¹; T. Casci²; P. Davies³; R.E. Etherington²; D. Gavaghan²; C. George²; C. McLean⁴; D. Sims²

¹Health Data Research UK; ²University of Oxford; ³University of Dundee; ⁴Cancer Research UK

The benefits of interdisciplinary research are well recognized, particularly in the context of biomedical research, but researchers crossing disciplinary divides often face challenges which hinder their career progression. Building on previous work by the X-NET team, which highlighted these interdisciplinary barriers, the INTEGRATE project aims to evidence and support the adoption of practical initiatives that address these barriers. In this session, we will share our findings from the INTEGRATE Biomedical Data Science Career Development Survey, which aimed to better understand the different career roles associated with the community, and identify which activities were truly supportive in their career development.

Our survey was launched UK wide and received 72 responses across the country, spanning multiple job roles including PhD students, post-doctoral researchers, technical professionals and group leaders. This study highlighted not only the varied roles that exist within biomedical data science but also identified the diverse routes by which members of the community entered into biomedical data science. By asking about experiences of career support at multiple levels, from local research groups to interactions with funders and the wider community, we were able to develop a virtual inspiration board to encourage the uptake of these initiatives at different organizational levels.

Across the community, there was a key demand for increased training resource, with 65% of researchers reporting that they lacked either time or funding to take part in training activities. Furthermore, there was a strong desire to improve peer support across the community with 64% of respondents expressing that they would like to interact more with the computational community. Through the INTEGRATE project, we have developed additional practical programmes to help support these interactions, including the UK-wide ‘Bytes and Bench’ interdisciplinary peer mentoring programme, to help connect early career researchers from computational and laboratory-based backgrounds. As a guiding principle, our initiatives have been developed to be low cost and scalable to facilitate their adoption in multiple contexts.

Although our work has focused on the context of biomedical data science, the recommendations and tools that have been developed by the INTEGRATE project are highly applicable across other disciplinary contexts. Through sharing our resource with the wider community, we hope to foster a more inclusive research environment that encourages and facilitates communication across disciplinary boundaries.

Enabling Interdisciplinary Collaboration through Small-Scale Research Culture Funding

Dr Colleen Thomas; Prof Grace Mulcahy; Ms Gillian
University College Dublin

Interdisciplinary research is recognised as beneficial for leveraging diverse skill sets to address complex societal problems (Katz & Martin, 1997) and offering creative solutions that may not be found through mono-disciplinary research. While there is good literature discussing how to define interdisciplinary research and how to work across disciplines, there is little that addresses what interventions effectively stimulate interdisciplinary research (Neman, 2024).

Engagement with the research community at University College Dublin (UCD) through surveys (2021, 2023, 2025) and focus sessions has indicated collegiality and opportunities to connect are the first and second elements required for interdisciplinary collaboration. Emerging quantitative and qualitative data from an internal seed funding scheme is finding that small-scale funding to support the enhancement of institutional research culture offers a proving ground for team collaboration.

The first element for collaboration is collegiality. In 2022, the University College Dublin Research Culture team conducted a series of focus group conversation (UCD Research Culture Initiative, 2022b) with cohorts representing diverse research roles and colleges (n = 13) to validate and extend the findings from the institutional survey on Research Culture (UCD Research Culture Initiative, 2022a). From these conversations it was made clear that collegiality underpins collaboration. Informal interactions with colleagues were mentioned by participants as the ‘social glue’ that unites research communities. An environment in which colleagues support each other to succeed, particularly in research, establishes psychological safety. Trust, engendered by good relationships with potential collaborators is the first principle for effective research collaboration (Edmondson & Roloff, 2008; Allen, & Magill, 2026).

The second element for interdisciplinary collaboration is the opportunity to connect across disciplines. Participants in UCD 2022 focus sessions noted that researchers need time to engage with others to develop new connections. Pollinator events and academic matchmaking were identified as good places to start. Supportive institutional infrastructure and toolkits that foster interdisciplinary exchange can buttress the initial stages of collaboration (Gilmour, 2024).

Most research collaborations do not leap from first meeting to a large externally funded project. An intermediate step where researchers can test the waters is required. The UCD Research Culture - Local Actions, Initiatives and Measures (ReCLAIM) scheme, supported by an Institutional Funding for Research Culture Award from Wellcome Trust, offered up to €10,000 of funding for projects up to 12 months duration. All members of the research community were eligible to apply including graduate research students, postdocs, faculty, technical officers and professional staff. Two rounds were run from 2024-2026. Project proposals to the (n=114) ReCLAIM scheme enabled 91 cross-college collaborations plus dozens of collaborations across departments within the same college. Using data from project reports and follow-on interviews with participants, this study will examine the effect of small-scale research culture funding on interdisciplinary research collaboration at UCD.

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From Catalyst to Culture: Sustaining Transdisciplinary Research through the Public Squares Initiative

Dr Astrid Treffry-Goatley; Miss Nicala Zeeman; Mrs Ameera Crew.
Stellenbosch University

Universities are increasingly expected to support transdisciplinary (TD) research to address complex societal challenges. While many initiatives succeed in catalysing collaboration, less is known about how these efforts translate into longer-term shifts in research culture. Moving from short-term intervention to sustained practice remains a key challenge. This paper draws on the final phase of the Public Squares initiative at Stellenbosch University, a three-year programme designed to support collaborative, impact-oriented research. The initiative brought together eleven teams of academic and societal partners, creating space for co-creation, skills development, and the advancement of new research agendas.

Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and programme outputs, we examine how participation contributed to emerging changes in ways of working, and the conditions needed to sustain these beyond the life of the initiative. We focus in particular on how teams move from supported collaboration to more independent, self-sustaining practices, and how this process is shaped by institutional contexts and funding realities. Findings suggest that sustaining TD research depends on early and ongoing stakeholder engagement, distributed leadership, and flexible programme design, alongside alignment with institutional incentives. At the same time, short-term funding cycles and structural constraints continue to limit what can be carried forward.

We argue that initiatives such as Public Squares play an important role in creating the conditions for cultural change, particularly by enabling experimentation and relationship-building. However, their longer-term impact depends on how these practices are taken up and embedded within the institution.

This paper offers practical reflections for universities seeking to support more durable and self-sustaining forms of transdisciplinary research.

P1.2 From Midcareer to Leadership: Shaping Research Culture

Chair: Dr John MacArtney

Leadership as Research Culture Infrastructure: Applying the Framework for Leading in Higher Education to enable a lasting change in the research ecosystem

Dr Ireen Litvak-Zur.
Advance HE

The higher education sector is undergoing profound transformation, with political uncertainty, financial pressures, technological disruption and evolving expectations reshaping academic work and institutional life. The Framework for Leading in Higher Education (FLHE) offers a sector wide response designed to elevate leadership as a core career path, empower leaders across all levels, and align individual behaviours with institutional values. As a holistic model of inclusive, contextual and collective leadership with a specific HE application, its application to research culture transformation has become increasingly evident.

Current REF 2029 guidelines emphasise a shift away from individualised achievement toward systemic, enabling environments where excellence is built through culture, strategy and sustained practice. This shift requires leadership to operate at a distributed, ecosystem level, reflecting FLHE's principles. As institutions grapple with how to support thriving research cultures, the FLHE offers a comprehensive framework to respond to the need to build leadership capacity to drive research culture transformation. The framework presents leadership as social practice, embedded in relationships, shared purpose and collective accountability. In a research context, this translates into research leadership across levels, a set of shared values, and a clear vision for the required transformation.

This presentation explores how the FLHE can be operationalised to address the topic of 'Strategy Development and implementing research culture actions. Using insights from sector engagement, research culture literature and ongoing implementation work, the session will map how the FLHE provides a scaffold for strengthening leadership ecosystems that support healthy research culture and for aligning strategic institutional aims with the lived experiences of researchers, technicians, and professional services staff.

In the presentation we that embedding the FLHE within organisational development, researcher development and culture change initiatives provides a practical, evidence informed route to transforming research culture not through isolated programmes but through collective leadership practice. In doing so, it offers a blueprint for delivering collaborative, lasting change.

Meet the LAP Lander Team: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Fostering Research Leadership

Lisa Guenther; Kim Moran-Jones.
University of Edinburgh

The College of Science and Engineering at the University of Edinburgh has recently inaugurated the Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) in collaboration with the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, and the Institute for Academic Development. This pioneering initiative is designed to nurture a vibrant research environment by inspiring mid-career academics to perceive leadership as both rewarding and attainable. Mid-career researchers often find it difficult to reach the next level as leaders of larger research programmes and interdisciplinary projects. Existing leadership programmes often require substantial time commitment whereas LAP is delivered through monthly one-hour online webinars, centred on experience-sharing, networking opportunities, and sandpit problem-solving sessions. Workshops are tailored to cover essential topics (i.e., leadership styles, team dynamics, strategic thinking, and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion). By utilising online platforms, LAP significantly aims to enhance community building, facilitating participation for busy mid-career researchers spread across different campuses. The organisers plan to share the successes and challenges faced since the programme's launch. They will also present their approaches to cross-college collaboration and evaluation strategies. By showcasing their experiences, they aim to gather constructive feedback from the wider community and inspire similar initiatives at other institutions.

Fostering strong, sustainable research cultures through investing in 'mid-career', 'established' researchers: a cross-institutional mentoring scheme for MCRs

Dr Kate Jones¹; Dr Sam Fernandes¹; Dr Jen Lynch¹; Dr Sarah Ashworth²; Chris Atkinson³; Jaime Harrison⁴; Dr Angela Midgley⁵; Alison Monkhouse⁶; Dr Elizabeth Scanlon⁷

¹*Manchester Metropolitan University*; ²*University of Manchester*; ³*Lancaster University*; ⁴*Leeds Beckett University*; ⁵*University of Salford*; ⁶*University of Huddersfield*; ⁷*Sheffield Hallam University*

Mid-career' or 'established' researchers (MCRs) often have significant research citizenship and/or leadership responsibilities, whether formal or informal. Therefore, MCRs have a crucial role to play in setting the tone for strong and positive research cultures at local and institutional levels. Ensuring they have adequate support for their own development is essential, but until recently MCRs had been largely forgotten in career and professional development provision for researchers, which has tended to focus on Doctoral and Early Career Researchers. (1) Recent sector and institutional data highlights low levels of job satisfaction and gaps in provision for MCRs (2) and there is increasing recognition that MCRs, although experienced, still require support to develop and remain in the sector. (3)

Mid-Career Researcher Mentoring (MCRM) is a cross-institutional mentoring scheme that has been delivered since 2021 by a variety of institutional partners. (4) The scheme has grown significantly over the past few years, with 14 matched mentoring pairs in 2022/23, 61 in 2023/24, 69 in 2024/25 and 88 in 2025/26. It currently involves seven institutional partners, the Universities of Manchester Metropolitan, Lancaster, Sheffield Hallam, Manchester, Salford, Leeds Beckett and Huddersfield, and evaluation partner, the University of East Anglia (UEA).

Drawing on the literature around mentoring for academics and researchers, (5) and our collective institutional experience, the scheme matches MCR mentees with mentors who are experienced academic researchers or research leaders from another institution. Matching is based on areas of support requested/offered as well as disciplinary matching. This enables mentees to access support from beyond their existing networks, learn about other institutional contexts, achieve a broader perspective on their development and career progression, and expand their networks.

The scheme runs annually in a reciprocal format where each institution is allocated mentee places based on the number of mentors they recruit. Online support and resources are provided. Mentees and mentors have access to optional development sessions where they can reflect on and

enhance their mentoring practice and meet others taking part in the scheme. Since 2023 the scheme has received 299 mentee applications and 227 mentor applications, with some mentors supporting the scheme in consecutive years. Evaluations of the scheme have shown that its cross-institutional nature has enhanced its contribution to research cultures and the efficacy of the mentoring relationships. Mentees (6) reported the value of hearing different institutional perspectives and building understanding of cultures, work practices and standards in other institutions. Mentors (7) noted that insights from different academic cultures allowed benchmarking of policies and strategies. They felt the scheme enhanced their understanding of the broader challenges faced across the sector and felt their participation contributed to the development of new professionals and helped to elevate standards and morale across the sector.

The scheme has also provided a valuable opportunity for researcher development and research culture colleagues across the seven institutions to work in partnership, share good practice, and foster a research culture community that goes well beyond our individual teams and institutions.

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Reframing Research Culture through the lens of Service Excellence - A Mid-Career Researcher perspective

Dr Fola Ikpehai
SUMS Consulting

Debates surrounding Research Culture in higher education frequently emphasise complexity, portraying cultural transformation as inherently difficult due to the interplay of structures, behaviours, and competing institutional priorities. This presentation challenges that assumption by reframing Research Culture through the lens of service excellence, drawing on a structured maturity framework developed through institutional improvement programmes.

While much of the existing discourse focuses on early career researchers or senior leadership, this session centres on the mid-career researcher (MCR) - a cohort uniquely positioned at the intersection of delivery, leadership, and institutional navigation. MCRs simultaneously experience AND shape research culture; they manage projects, supervise others, engage with governance structures, and translate institutional systems into lived experience. As such, their perspective provides a powerful diagnostic lens for understanding the research environment and culture.

Using a six-dimensional service excellence framework this presentation explores what “good” looks like from an MCR standpoint. It argues that many of the challenges attributed to Research Culture - such as lack of clarity, administrative burden, inconsistent support, and misaligned incentives reflect gaps in service design and operational maturity.

The presentation hypothesises that a positive Research Culture emerges from the intentional alignment of operational systems with researcher experience. For mid-career researchers, service excellence is characterised by clear and navigable processes, integrated systems that reduce friction, transparent decision-making, meaningful performance measures, and organisational structures that enable academic work. Conversely, where services are fragmented and reactive, cultural challenges are amplified, which reinforces perceptions of complexity and limits researchers’ ability to thrive.

By repositioning research culture as an outcome of service design rather than an abstract construct, this session offers a practical and scalable approach to cultural transformation. It invites institutions to move beyond describing cultural challenges towards assessing and improving the maturity of the systems that underpin these challenges. Ultimately the question is whether the sector’s difficulties lie in the nature of Research Culture itself, or in the way it is operationalised.

P1.3 Recognising Technical Input to Research: From Ensuring Fair Attribution to Promotional Pathways

Chair: Sarah Bennett

Changing Culture Surrounding Technical Roles Through Opportunities, Knowledge and Skills

Dr Kay Doncom
University of Warwick

Enhancing research culture requires sustained investment in the people and roles that underpin the research ecosystem. Research Technical Professionals (RTPs) play an important role in research excellence by contributing essential expertise and technical knowledge. Yet, like many technical roles, they have had limited visibility, recognition and access to structured professional development. The EPSRC-funded TSN ROKS (Technology Specialists Network: Research Technical Professional Opportunities, Knowledge and Skills) project seeks to address these challenges through a coordinated programme of activities that aim to raise visibility, build knowledge and skills and facilitate effective knowledge exchange for technical staff across the UK. This presentation will outline three core TSN ROKS activities and consider their contribution to strengthening research culture.

The Outreach Demonstrator Funding scheme supports RTPs to design and implement portable STEM engagement activities that reflect their specialist areas of practice. By enabling technical staff to lead outreach in schools, community spaces and public events, the scheme enhances the visibility of technical careers and challenges perceptions of who participates in research. This also provides RTPs with the opportunity to develop their skills in writing a business case for the funding and in project management. The Proposal Support Workshop responds to the technical community's needs around confidence, knowledge and participation in research funding processes. The workshop provides RTPs with a structured introduction to the grant writing process, from forming a bid writing team, the writing process through to post award processes and project management. This activity not only strengthens technical staff capability by equipping them with the insight and tools to engage more effectively in bid development but also supports fairer recognition of RTP contributions in research bids.

Working alongside the UK ITSS facilities showcase – a map of facilities based on expertise and capabilities - the Equipment Sharing Fund allows researchers, academics, students and technical professionals access to specialist instrumentation and expertise at other institutions. This helps foster collaboration between institutions, raise the visibility of these facilities within the research community and also ensures fair attribution for RTPs in any outputs generated from the research. Together, these activities demonstrate how targeted, technician-centred initiatives can improve research culture by increasing visibility and professional opportunities for RTPs. The presentation will discuss the implementation of the activities, outcomes and insights and lessons learned.

Driving Research Culture through Technician Pathway Design

Dr Ian Tidmarsh¹; Dr Jane Eagling²; Esther Umoren²; Heather Atkins-Whitehead²; Abigail Acheson²; Ben Dobson²; Professor Chris Fox²; Professor Craig Banks²; Dan Swain²; Dave Camlin²; David Harmes²; Ffion Evans²; Gill Dorey²; Dr Helen McCormick²; Kate Rowland²; Professor Jamie McPhee²; Dr Judy Brook²; Dr Lisa Simmons²; Professor Mike Coldwell²; Nichola Ellis²; Orlagh McCabe²; Rebecca Bradley²; Sam Gray²; Yogita Patel²
¹National Technician Development Centre; ²Manchester Metropolitan University

Technical staff are integral to university success, yet their career progression and recognition often feel opaque. To address this persistent sector challenge, Manchester Metropolitan University implemented sector leading promotion pathways in 2025. This initiative included a dedicated Research Technical Professional (RTP) promotion pathway, which fundamentally changed the landscape of technical careers at the university and provides a robust model for recognising technical input to research.

Developing this pathway was a highly collaborative endeavour that aligns directly with the need for cross sector partnerships. The project team comprised technicians, academic staff, key institutional stakeholders, and the National Technician Development Centre (NTDC). This diverse working group ensured the resulting RTP pathway serves as a powerful statement about the importance the university places on technical skills and expertise. It provides RTPs with a clear, achievable route to plan their careers and achieve promotion within their roles by demonstrating core technical and technology focused criteria.

One of the largest impacts of this practical implementation has been a significant improvement in institutional research culture. The pathway directly addresses historical issues regarding the visibility and retention of technical staff within the wider research team. It fosters a truly supportive and empowering environment where technicians feel recognised for their research outputs and rewarded for their professional development. The personal impact of this initiative is profound. One of our successful RTPs stated that their “contribution to research delivery is no longer simply assumed; it is explicitly acknowledged, rewarded and celebrated”.

Furthermore, the pathway aligns perfectly with the university's research strategy and explicitly satisfies the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Statement of Expectations for Technology and Skills Specialists. By providing a structured and sustainable career trajectory, we are actively fulfilling the national mandate to recognise and reward technical expertise alongside academic contributions. Manchester Met is fostering a highly inclusive and diverse research environment. This commitment to a culture of shared research, diverse perspectives and collaboration ultimately elevates the quality and impact of the research we deliver every day.

The success of this initiative has been formally recognised both internally and externally. Our RTP promotion pathways recently won the Research Culture award, and the Significant Progress award from the NTDC. This presentation will share clear findings and practical insights from our journey, demonstrating the critical importance of implementing these pathways to build a stronger and more inclusive research culture.

Recognising Leadership and Expertise in Research Technical Professionals

Ms Susie Cook¹; Dr Natalie Homer¹; Mr Lee Murphy¹; Dr Sally Shirran²; Dr Phil Whitfield³; Dr Claire Wilson³

¹University of Edinburgh; ²University of St Andrews; ³University of Glasgow

Core facilities are centralised, open-access, shared resources that provide researchers with equitable access to specialized equipment, cutting-edge technologies, and expert consultation. Managed well, these facilities can consolidate resources, reduce costs, and most importantly enable a broad range of innovation, research and teaching activities.

The professionals who manage these facilities are highly specialized experts with extensive research experience. In addition, they possess diverse skills spanning research and teaching including a) financial management b) people management, c) strategic planning, and d) user engagement.

Core facility leads occupy a grey area between academic and technical classifications with opportunities to contribute to strategic decisions are reduced. Within traditional university structures they lack defined career pathways. This ambiguity can lead to their contributions being overlooked, resulting in isolation, limited peer networks, and few leadership development opportunities.

The Research Technical Professionals: Recognising Leadership & Expertise (RELAX) project was a Wellcome InFrame-funded initiative designed to address these research culture challenges. The project aimed to foster a sense of community and professional identity among core facility leaders through a series of tailored leadership development days. By creating spaces for connection, collaboration, and recognition, RELAX aimed to elevate the visibility and value of Core Facility Research Technical Professionals and the essential shared facilities they sustain.

The presentation will provide insights and key findings from the RELAX study and if the project intervention was able to contribute to a more inclusive, innovative, and community-driven research ecosystem within our universities.

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P1.4 Inclusive and Diverse Research Environments

Chair: Marie Sams

Is an inclusive research environment a sufficient condition for a diversified body of doctoral students to progress and thrive in academia?

Dr Stewart Eyres¹; Dr Cristina Izura²

¹*Eyres Inclusion Consulting*; ²*Swansea University*

A range of initiatives are recruiting a more diverse doctoral student body and creating environments supporting them to succeed in their studies. As a doctoral qualification remains the dominant “entry ticket” to academia, particularly to pursue research, this is an essential step to diversifying academia. In recruitment and progression these initiatives are successful, although unevenly distributed across institutes and disciplines. But even if inclusive research environments can be achieved universally, is this sufficient to retain a more diverse body of doctoral students and academics who thrive rather than just survive?

While the work to make research environments more inclusive is central to ensuring success amongst a more diverse student body, there is a risk that it is accompanied by acculturation. That is, as we diversify the student body, they are expected to assimilate into dominant research cultures which remain aligned to the interests and priorities of white, straight, cis men of mainly European cultural backgrounds. Do they have to discard their lived experiences and differing priorities to progress? Or do they go against the prevailing expectations, risking being perceived as irrelevant? This matter hugely for the future relevance and health of academic research.

Particularly within research-intensive universities, the demographics of academics from the UK does not well match the overall UK population. Further in most large cities, academic staff in research-intensives fail to be representative of the people in the surrounding communities. This is also true of their student bodies. For example, the bulk of increased participation in higher education by UK members of the global ethnic majority has been in post-92 institutes. Institutes tend to recruit from similar universities, and the pipelines of GEM graduates and doctoral student intakes are poorly connected. Many Centres for Doctoral Training achieve ethnicity balance in their student cohorts only through the recruitment of international students.

50% of academics are women and 4% are Black, but this is unevenly distributed across institutes of differing levels of research activity, and at professorial level both groups remain significantly under-represented. Consequently, research is often carried out by an unrepresentative body of people. While the international nature of UK academia tempers this to an extent, academics from outside the UK do not have the same perspectives as those from the UK within under-represented groups. While this potentially justifies reasons for concern, what perspectives do doctoral students in the UK have of research culture?

To understand how doctoral students perceive and experience research culture, we have completed a pilot study with 74 participants across 16 broadly defined academic disciplines. Their expectations of the culture in their discipline or institute were consistently more positive than their experiences in practice. Thematic analysis is underway and suggests they are very aware of how culture has a role in constraining the what and how of their research. We will present our findings as a catalyst to discussion. We intend to scale the work to include many more respondents, sampling the full range of academic disciplines and allowing us to examine variations across different demographics and lived experiences. We are actively seeking collaborators, be they academics, doctoral students or those supporting graduate studies.

Building Consensus for Change: Advancing Gender Equity in UK Higher Education through the Women in Academia Project

Dr Talar Moukhtarian; Dr Marie Sams; Najma Moalin

University of Warwick

Despite sustained efforts to promote gender equality in higher education, women continue to experience barriers to progression, retention, and recognition throughout academic careers. The Women in Academia (WinA) project was established to better understand and address these challenges. Phase I of the project explored the experiences of early and mid-career women researchers through surveys, interviews, and co-production activities, identifying key themes including job insecurity, limited progression pathways, and work-life balance pressures. These findings informed a roadmap of recommendations for action.

This presentation focuses on Phase II of the project, which shifts attention from understanding barriers to building national consensus around practical priorities for change. Drawing on the recommendations developed in Phase I, Phase II brought together a diverse panel of experts from across the UK higher education sector, including EDI leaders, funders, and academic and professional service leaders, to identify shared priorities for advancing gender equity for women in research.

We will outline the rationale for the study, describe the consensus-building methodology, and discuss emerging insights into how the sector can move from isolated initiatives towards coordinated action. We will also consider the opportunities and challenges of developing common priorities in a complex and diverse higher education landscape. By identifying areas of broad agreement, the project seeks to support institutions, funders, and policymakers in creating more inclusive and equitable academic environments for women and, ultimately, contribute to wider improvements in research culture across the sector.

‘Inspiring’ Research Culture Change?

Aaron Andrews.

University of Leicester

While Leicester is a superdiverse city, with 60% of the population from Global Majority backgrounds, this is not reflected in the University of Leicester’s staffing. At each stage of academic career progression, there is a reduction in ethnic diversity. Research culture change was put forward as part of the solution to this ‘leaky pipeline’.

This paper offers a critical reflection on a programme of work intended to ‘inspire’ research culture change at the institution through engagement with colleagues, a flexible funding scheme, and changes to annual Performance Development Discussions. Taking place during a series of redundancies and departmental closures, a backlash against ‘DEI’ (the tellingly Americanised acronym for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion), and

amid uncertainty over the role of research culture and environment in the REF, this paper reflects on the limits on inspiration and invites discussion on how to promote positive and inclusive research cultures during a time of crisis.

EDI metrics: Evidence and Metrics for Research Culture and EDI in BBSRC Strategically Supported Institutes

Prof. Jayne Hope; Dorotea Deshishku; Jeanette King, Dr. Sam Gamal.
The Roslin Institute, University of Edinburgh

The EDImetrics project, led by The Roslin Institute and funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) Connecting Culture Fund 2024, set out to understand mechanisms and best practice for evidencing and reporting on Research Culture and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across the eight BBSRC strategically supported Institutes: the Babraham Institute, the Earlham Institute, IBERS (Aberystwyth University), the John Innes Centre, the Pirbright Institute, the Quadram Institute, the Roslin Institute and Rothamsted Research.

Using a mixed-methods approach including literature and document analysis, a Call for Evidence, campus visits, semi-structured interviews and co-design workshops, the project engaged stakeholders across the eight Institutes, from research-active and professional services staff to PhD students and Institute Directors.

Findings revealed that while all Institutes demonstrate a strong commitment to EDI principles and collect core EDI data, significant inconsistencies in measurement approaches limit cross-institute benchmarking. Institutes apply locally adapted methods, resulting in substantial variation in categorisation, terminology and protected characteristics coverage. Impact evaluations are largely ad hoc, longitudinal data is rare, and qualitative data remains underused, making it difficult to assess whether initiatives are creating lasting change or to attribute outcomes to specific interventions.

Despite these challenges, the project identified considerable grounds for collaboration as Institutes show high willingness to share resources and co-develop solutions. With most staff surveys running on a two- to three-year cycle and the majority completing a cycle in 2024, a clear opportunity exists to coordinate a network-wide data collection cycle from 2026, enabling meaningful peer comparison and benchmarking.

The project produced a set of prioritised, time-bound recommendations. In the short term, Institutes are encouraged to agree a minimum standardised, DAISY-compliant survey question set and synchronise data collection cycles. In the medium term, the focus shifts to developing a shared benchmarking framework and evidence-based evaluation approaches. Longer-term ambitions include tracking EDI outcomes longitudinally, introducing formal impact assessments and implementing leadership development programmes for culture stewardship.

A key conclusion concerns the balance between reporting and sustainability. Robust evaluation is essential for strategic programmes and formal commitments, but community-led, volunteer-driven initiatives (the grassroots networks that represent the sector's greatest cultural asset) require light-touch reporting to preserve the creativity and engagement that make them effective.

The EDImetrics project demonstrates what is possible when cross-institutional collaboration is given structured support. With 100% Institute participation and clear readiness for joint action, the BBSRC network is well positioned to achieve sector leadership in Research Culture and EDI measurement and practice.

P1.5 Research Culture in Global and Institutional Contexts

Chair: Carole Harris

Researcher Impact Profiles and Measures of Positive Social Change: A Systematic Review

Haley A Beer; Helen Bevan; Julia Borgers; Katharina Dittrich; Carly Hegenbarth.
University of Warwick

Across global higher education systems, researchers are increasingly expected to demonstrate positive social impact alongside scholarly excellence (Currie et al., 2016; Wickert et al., 2021). Social impact is commonly defined as a demonstrable effect on society, policy, practice, or quality of life beyond academia (REF, 2021). In response, a growing number of models and frameworks have emerged to guide and assess research impact, from national evaluation systems to participatory and co-productive approaches. However, comparative and theory-informed analyses of how these frameworks conceptualize impact, structure researcher roles, and operationalize measures of social change remain limited (Williams et al., 2025). This creates uncertainty for researchers navigating expectations to produce responsible, impactful research while avoiding the unintended consequences of metric-driven evaluation (Espeland & Sauder, 2007, 2016).

Addressing this gap, this paper presents findings from a systematic literature review of research impact measurement models and frameworks, asking: What models and frameworks exist to measure research impact, and how can they be classified to better support researchers in pursuing positive social change? Following established review procedures (Paul et al., 2024), we analysed 93 peer-reviewed articles identified across six major databases. Our analysis focused on definitions of impact, framework purposes, researcher roles, stakeholder involvement, and measurement approaches.

The review makes two interrelated contributions. First, we introduce the concept of researcher impact profiles: configurations of skills, activities, and challenges that enable different impact-creation processes. We identify five profiles: Technical Adviser, Knowledge Broker, Bridge Builder, Embedded Practitioner, and Co-creator. These profiles span a continuum from transactional, expert-led engagement to relational, co-productive collaboration, reflecting insights from prior work on impact pathways and generative impact (Bansal & Sharma, 2022; Williams et al., 2025). Importantly, the profiles are not hierarchical; rather, they highlight the specific capabilities required to work responsibly with stakeholders in different contexts.

Second, we distinguish between process-oriented indicators, which assess how impact is generated, and change-oriented measures, which assess what type of social change occurs. Across the literature, we identify five dimensions of change commonly targeted by impact frameworks: instrumental, conceptual, capacity-building, societal, and economic. Mapping measures to both researcher impact profiles and types of change clarifies why no single framework or metric can adequately capture the diversity of impact pathways.

Overall, this study reframes research impact as a plural and relational phenomenon shaped by researcher roles, stakeholder relationships, and contextual dynamics. For the IRCC community, the findings underscore the importance of aligning impact assessment with responsible engagement practices and caution against one-size-fits-all metrics that risk constraining socially valuable research.

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When values meet infrastructure: negotiating equity in international research collaboration

Dr Victoria Anker
University of Edinburgh

Equity has become a central principle in contemporary research culture, particularly within international collaborations. However, less attention is paid to how such values are interpreted and enacted through the administrative, financial, and governance systems that underpin research in practice. As international collaborations continue to grow, understanding how these systems shape global partnerships is increasingly important for ensuring that commitments to equity are realised in meaningful ways.

This paper draws on experience from managing, and contributing to the management of, inter-institute and interdisciplinary research collaborations involving partners across the globe. Together, these experiences provide insight into how equity is negotiated across different institutional, cultural, and national contexts, and how it is shaped by the infrastructures through which research is delivered.

The collaborations discussed here involve multiple institutions operating under different governance regimes, funding structures, and regulatory expectations. This diversity creates both opportunities for knowledge exchange and challenges for coordination, particularly where institutional processes are not designed for implementation across multiple contexts.

Across these settings, several recurring tensions emerge. First, while equity is widely endorsed as a shared value, its implementation is mediated through institutional systems that often prioritise other concerns, such as compliance, risk management, and reputational protection. Second, administrative and governance processes are not experienced uniformly: practices that are routine or un-burdensome in some contexts can carry significantly greater implications elsewhere, particularly where institutes operate under different financial or regulatory constraints. Third, responsibility for navigating these tensions frequently sits with project managers and coordinators, who work at the interface of institutional

systems and collaborative relationships but have limited authority to reshape underlying structures.

These tensions are particularly visible in areas such as financial reporting, contracting, and data governance, where institutional requirements intersect with diverse ways of organising and resourcing research. In these moments, abstract commitments to equity are translated into specific procedural demands, revealing how values are prioritised, negotiated, or deprioritised in practice.

These observations suggest that research culture cannot be understood solely through formal commitments or policy frameworks; it must also be examined through the everyday infrastructures – bureaucratic, temporal, and financial – through which values are operationalised. Strengthening equitable international collaboration therefore requires greater reflexivity in how existing processes are applied across contexts. This includes recognising where flexibility is possible, where standardisation creates unintended barriers, and how administrative practices can better reflect collaborative research aims.

By foregrounding values-in-practice, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions on research culture by highlighting the need to align institutional infrastructures with the collaborative and equitable ambitions they are intended to support.

Open Research Practices and Researchers' Assessment: A Global Landscape Review

¹Banaz Jalil, ²Felix Pedrotti, ³Anna Korzeniowska, ⁴Neil Jacobs, ⁵Tim Newton

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Open Research (OR) and Open Science have become central to improving the transparency, accessibility, and reproducibility of research, while efforts to reform Researcher Assessment (RA) increasingly aim to value contributions beyond publication-based metrics. This global landscape review maps the evolution of OR-related documents, resources, and initiatives and examines their intersection with Responsible Researcher Assessment (RRA), with particular attention to Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) as key drivers for policy and culture change.

Using a multi-method search strategy encompassing web search engines, databases, internal project knowledge, and citation-chaining, the authors compiled and coded 100 English-accessible, transdisciplinary resources published between January 2012 and July 2025. Each resource was categorised by type, topic, intended audience, publication year, and three geographical dimensions, and analysed using Excel and Power BI.

Our findings show a sustained rise in OR documentation over 13 years, with a marked acceleration from 2020 to 2023 and peak output in 2021–2022, likely reflecting heightened attention to openness during the COVID-19 period. Regional production dominates (57%), particularly from Europe, while most resources target a global audience (71%). Seventeen resource types were identified, with reports and toolkits most prevalent (32% combined). Topic analysis identified 25 themes, led by Responsible Research Assessment (58%) and Open Science/FAIR Data (44%). RPOs were the most frequently addressed audience, followed by funders and researchers, underscoring the institutional locus of change. Several limitations exist, including English-language bias and exclusion of discipline-specific resources. The review evidences a maturing OR ecosystem shaped by regional collaboration and global dissemination, with assessment reform and data openness as persistent drivers.

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Parallel Sessions P2

P2.1 Embedding Evidence and Evaluation in Research Culture

Chair: Kirstie Haywood

Embedding evidence-informed decision-making into research culture and strategy development

Dr. Amy Devenney; Lizzie Ville
University of Bristol

This talk outlines the COMET project and its work to promote evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) within research culture and strategy work across UK higher education institutions. We present COMET's research findings and the sector-wide engagement process which, together, informed a joint sector statement on EIDM for research culture and strategy. This statement advocates for the consistent, transparent and effective use of empirical evidence alongside institutional data, stakeholder insight and professional expertise. Drawing on case studies that demonstrate EIDM, we provide practical guidance for audience members to embed EIDM as routine practice within their own organisations, enabling stronger cultures and more sustainable research environments.

When Learning Is Not Enough: Testing the Learning-to-Application Inference in the Evaluation of Culture Programmes

Chrissi McCarthy¹; Lucy Day²; Rachel Cowen³; Martin Brooks²
¹*Centre of Behavioural Equality*; ²*Liverpool John Moores*; ³*University of Manchester*

Training-led interventions have become a central mechanism through which universities respond to increasing expectations around research culture. Despite this growth, evaluation practice remains underdeveloped. In most cases, evidence of success is drawn from learning-stage indicators such as participant satisfaction, confidence, or perceived competence. The implicit inference is that learning signals readiness for application. This paper questions that assumption.

Drawing on the training transfer literature and behavioural science, the study interrogates what we term the learning-to-application inference: the tendency to treat evidence of learning as a proxy for likely enactment in practice. While models such as Kirkpatrick and CIRO provide structured approaches to evaluation, they do not require testing of the conditions under which learning translates into application. This creates a persistent inferential gap, particularly in culture-focused programmes where outcomes depend as much on organisational context as on individual capability.

The paper presents a case-bound diagnostic evaluation of a structured research culture training programme delivered across nine organisations. Application is defined narrowly as the production of programme-specified strategic deliverables, rather than long-term behavioural or institutional change. A triangulated design is employed. First, learning indicators are assessed using a hybrid CIRO–Kirkpatrick framework. Second, the application is appraised through a rubric derived from the programme's internal theory of application, focusing on value alignment, co-production, and contextual specification. Third, narrative inquiry is used to examine the contextual conditions associated with alignment or non-alignment between learning and application, structured through the COMPASS framework (capability, opportunity, motivation, and training features).

The analysis tests whether strong learning indicators are sufficient to signal likely application and identifies the conditions under which this inference breaks down. Results show that learning is neither a necessary nor sufficient predictor of application. In several cases,

high learning scores coexist with weak or incomplete deliverables, while in others, modest learning indicators are associated with strong outputs. Patterns of divergence are consistently explained by contextual conditions, particularly opportunity structures, institutional alignment, and the presence or absence of enabling organisational support.

The paper adds to research culture evaluation in two ways. Empirically, it provides evidence that current evaluation practices risk overestimating programme effectiveness when relying on learning-stage data. Conceptually, it reframes evaluation as an inferential problem, arguing for the explicit testing of behavioural sufficiency conditions in addition to learning outcomes. The evidence shows that more robust evaluation requires moving beyond descriptive accounts of what participants learned towards diagnostic analysis of whether and under what conditions learning can be applied.

Embedding evaluative thinking: An outcomes-focused approach to evidencing research culture impact

Dr Sarah Masefield
University of York

I transitioned from a career in monitoring and evaluation to research culture. Naturally, this led me to explore the questions:

- what existing evidence and insight is available for research culture in higher education institutions;
- how can we better use available systems and structures to gather and record evidence; and
- how can we generate evidence of the impact of research culture interventions?

As the sector grapples with the need to understand and measure research culture, how it changes over time and how positive change occurs, I have started building an evaluative mindset towards research culture at the University of York. This shift to a supportive outcomes-focused approach seeks to embed a learning culture informed by appropriate and proportionate data collection and use. This will provide valuable evidence of impact and distance travelled for the institution and unit REF SPRE statements, and help with making the case for continued research culture investment.

In my presentation, I will discuss:

- taking a systematic approach to embedding monitoring, evaluation and learning into our Enhancing Research Culture grant programme
- applying the principles of monitoring and evaluation to meet departments at the University 'where they are at' and not overburden them with addition or unrealistic expectations
- working with teams/individuals across the institution to build evaluative capability

- reviewing existing information systems to understand what insight is and is not already available
- reviewing and developing tools and practices for evidencing impact
- using monitoring and evaluation frameworks to inform and record evidence and insight
- identifying where qualitative and quantitative data are needed
- the challenges and opportunities for research culture from my perspective as an evaluator and what we can learn from other sectors/disciplines where evaluation is already consistently embedded in project delivery

I will be able to present preliminary findings and lessons learnt from our evaluative approach to offer recommendations to the sector on evidencing research culture in higher education institutions.

P2.2 Doing Culture Differently: Practical Examples from Research Environments

Chair: Rika Nair

The Shadow Committee Toolkit - How we went from Reimagining to Transforming Governance

Sophie Daniels; Sapna Marwaha; Dr. Andrea Lambell; Dr. Johanna Thren
University of Durham

Many research culture initiatives deliver local impact but struggle to deliver sustained organisational or sector wide change. The Reimagining Governance project used a theory of change driven approach to explore how we could support the progression from reimagining research governance in the context of a pilot shadow committee model to transforming governance practice both within and beyond our institution. The project was based on the theory that improving research culture requires more inclusive, accessible and effective decision making, enabled by investment in people, relationships and organisational infrastructure.

Our open-access Shadow Committee Toolkit has been developed based on this work, to contribute an intervention for increasing research environment inclusion and diversity across the sector. The toolkit captures key shadow committee model design principles and underlying aims, describes implementation practices and highlights lessons learned along the way. Based on this, other organisations can draw on our project's learnings to implement positive change in their own contexts. By making this resource openly available, the project aims to support wider adoption, adaptation and scaling of inclusive governance practices across the research ecosystem.

Our shadow committee model utilised temporary mirror committees whose meetings preceded the established committee's meetings and whose minutes and reflections were integrated into established governance: structures through informal reflections, mutual mentoring, agenda-setting and debrief meetings. At the individual level, the project aimed to build governance capability and agency among early and mid career professionals with limited prior exposure to institutional decision making. At the community level, the project focused on building collective capacity through shared language, inclusive practice and peer support.

Mechanisms such as co-developed agendas, post meeting debriefs and mutual mentoring between shadow and established committee members were designed to increase empathy, transparency and trust across governance structures.

The toolkit includes a report, videos and resources covering:

- the inclusive recruitment approach with which members from diverse, traditionally under-represented roles and backgrounds were recruited onto the shadow committees;
- tools and templates built into the project design to empower the Shadow Committee members to contribute;
- how the theory-of-change driven process evaluation captured ongoing learnings;
- and recommendations on how organisations can embed inclusive governance principles.

This presentation will reflect on how theory of change objectives shaped project design, what enabled learning to be translated into organisational and sector level outputs, and where tensions emerged between experimentation and institutionalisation. In so doing, it offers practical lessons for those seeking to scale what works and to transform governance in ways that support lasting research culture change.

The Vice-Chancellor and university leadership have been regularly updated on learnings and have actively sought opportunities to embed learning from the programme more widely. Learning from the pilot has been synthesised into a report setting out evidence informed recommendations for Durham University and the university leadership have committed to taking action. Our talk will draw from our external report which considers how similar impacts might be achieved at other organisations.

Connections, Collaborations, Communities: A Team Approach to Researcher Development

Dr Kate Jones; Dr Jen Lynch; Dr Sam Fernandes.
Manchester Metropolitan University

Established in 2024, Developing your Research Career (DYRC) is a researcher development initiative led by the Researcher Development and Training Team in collaboration with academic and professional services (PS) colleagues from across the faculties and PS directorates at Manchester Metropolitan University (Mcr Met).

The DYRC initiative was conceived as a way of providing a consistent research-focused induction to academics, research staff and research technical professionals (RTPs). It is part of our commitment to the career development of researchers under the Researcher Development Concordat (1), which for Mcr Met includes academics and RTPs. The initial design of DYRC responded to the University's institutional data from the 2023 CEDARS (2) and 2024 Research Culture survey (3). This showed that our researchers needed further support to realise their own personal career goals and contribute to the ambitious aims of Mcr Met's research strategy (4).

Through a series of themed events on topics such as building international reputation, growing research funding, research impact, and research environment, DYRC aims to enhance institutional and sector literacy, signpost career and professional development offerings across the University, and demystify parts of research processes and careers that are often hidden or unsaid (5). It focuses on bringing together researchers in all roles and from all career stages with each other to support cross-faculty relationship building and provide opportunities for interdisciplinary partnerships to grow. DYRC aims to foster a sense of connection with research-enabling and supporting colleagues, who RTPs, academic and research staff may not be aware of, or may be hesitant to approach, especially if they are new to the University or earlier in their career.

DYRC is overseen, shaped and delivered by a working group with representatives from each of the University's four Faculties, Technical Services, the Doctoral College, Library and Cultural Services, People and Organisational Development, Research Development and Delivery, the International Office, Innovation Development, Research Impact & Engagement, Research Environment, and Research Intelligence. Providing a space where colleagues can come together to share what we do and learn more about the work and perspectives of others, has strengthened a sense of community and shared endeavour for research-enabling and supporting colleagues. (6) Our collective work on DYRC has forged new relationships, strengthened existing ones, and enhanced our ability to work collaboratively to identify and solve shared challenges.

By providing dedicated space and time for researchers and research-enablers to meet and work with each other, DYRC has created diverse and

collaborative teams that span the whole University. Conceived as an induction tool, it has grown into a space that fosters positive research communities and cultures based on a shared commitment to the importance and lasting impacts of career and professional development for researchers. This has been recognised through the feedback we’ve received from researchers (7) and also at sector level where in 2025 DYRC was shortlisted for the Vitae ICE ‘Research Culture Impact through Researcher Development Award’ (8).

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Spotlighting research cultures through national collaboration: insights from Scottish Research Integrity and Culture Week

Dr Emma Compton-Daw¹; Professor Jemina Napier²; Dr Frances Medaney³

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Scottish Research Integrity and Culture Week (SRICW) is a national, collaborative platform to showcase, connect and amplify research integrity and research culture activity across Scotland. This session will offer SRICW as a case study in how collaboration can act as enabling infrastructure for research culture change. It will bring together perspectives from the Founding Partners, Heriot-Watt University and University of Strathclyde, alongside newer partners, and the Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager, to discuss how the growth of SRICW is increasing efficiency, widening participation and supporting system level impact within a context of increasing financial and capacity pressures across the sector.

Emerging from an initial partnership between two universities, SRICW has evolved into a multi institution platform involving 15 universities alongside cross sector networks, funders and policymakers from Scotland, the wider UK and beyond. In 2026, the partners collectively delivered more than 40 events within a single coordinated week. SRICW offers a model for how collaboration can move beyond coordination to become a shared delivery model. We will offer reflections on the “distributed delivery, collective strategy” approach, where partner institutions co design a common framework, while retaining autonomy over local content, and discuss how this model reduces duplication, lowers organisational burden and supports the inclusion of a range of institutions and perspectives.

We will place SRICW within a wider context of the Scottish research ecosystem and the systemic change the Scottish Funding Council is seeking to drive through the Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager. We will discuss the power of collective national action to drive engagement and attention at a time when there are many competing priorities, including how SRICW is embedding support for research cultures within the research ecosystem and contributing to institutional priorities in preparation for REF 2029.

Aligned with IRCC’s focus on collaboration for lasting change, this session reflects on how collaboration and strategic positioning enable SRICW to function not simply as an annual event, but as an increasingly embedded part of Scotland’s research culture infrastructure. Attendees will gain practical insights into the conditions that have made SRICW effective: trust-based partnership, clarity of shared purpose, light touch coordination and collective ownership, and how similar models might be adapted at institutional, regional or national scale.

How to teach research culture: Insights from two educational initiatives at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit

Dr Saskia Frisby

University of Cambridge

Research culture is a team effort. If we ensure that every member of a department understands the meaning of a positive research culture, recognises its importance, and feels empowered to change that culture, subtle and localised behavioural change can precipitate rapid cultural shifts. Instilling these mindsets, however, is challenging. Without explicit discussion, students and junior staff members lack an understanding of what is “normal” (e.g. precarious contracts, long working hours, or hierarchical student-supervisor relationships) and, even if a phenomenon is “normal”, whether it is acceptable. Additionally, they frequently view research culture as the preserve of Principal Investigators (PIs) or Heads of Department, failing to recognise opportunities to engineer the culture that they experience. Conversely, engaging PIs is difficult – those who already prioritise a positive research culture regularly attend research culture training events, while those who see no need to improve their research culture are uninterested in hearing new perspectives.

I will present two educational initiatives. The first is a one-hour interactive seminar for first-year postgraduate students, which can be embedded into standard postgraduate introductory training. The seminar teaches the students what “research culture” means, explores what research culture is like nationwide (Moran et al., 2020), and discusses the forces that govern our local research culture (including University and funder concordats). Students discuss the research culture that they are experiencing and consider the roles that Universities, funders, publishers, PIs, and they themselves can play in improving research culture. The result is empowered students with good “research culture literacy” who are keen to join further activities (e.g. the departmental Working Group on Research Culture) and are equipped to shape the research culture of the future.

The second is a termly research culture seminar for the whole department, embedded within an existing internal seminar series with mandatory attendance for all researchers. Each seminar features two or three speakers, both presenting on a theme on which individuals and teams can make an important and immediate difference (e.g. collaborating within teams of different sizes, intercultural communication, setting expectations). The seminar programme contains a balance of external research culture experts from across the UK, to introduce new strategies and skills, and internal speakers who illustrate how these practices can be implemented locally. After the two talks, every researcher participates in structured small-group discussion, before a traditional Q&A with the speakers and a continuation of the discussion over lunch. As a consequence of this seminar series, PIs have already begun to make concrete changes to the way in which they communicate with their students, and research culture has become a topic of vibrant conversations including all department members.

P2.3 Doing Culture Differently: Practical Examples from Research Environments

Chair: Katie Reynolds

Building Sustainable Research Communities: Strategies for Capacity, Collaboration, and Positive Research Culture

Dr Bogusia Wojciechowska

ESRC - ADR UK

A healthy and thriving research culture depends on communities that are inclusive, supportive, and genuinely connected. In this presentation, I will share practical insights on how research communities—when intentionally structured—can strengthen belonging, professional development, and collaboration, ultimately creating environments where researchers feel able to do their best work.

Drawing on examples from ADR UK’s affiliate communities, I will highlight how communities of practice contribute to positive research culture by supporting wellbeing, enabling responsible and open research, building leadership capability, and creating trusted spaces for collaboration, particularly when working with complex or sensitive data.

I will outline the core components that make communities sustainable—clarity of purpose, shared leadership, relational trust, and opportunities for peer learning—and discuss the cultural enablers that allow them to thrive. The session will offer concrete actions that individuals and institutions can take to nurture these communities and embed them within wider organisational culture.

The emphasis is on empowering researchers, strengthening collective problem solving, and shaping a culture where people feel connected, supported, and able to grow throughout their careers.

Supporting institutional research integrity and research culture priorities: a cross-institutional exploratory working party on ‘Recognising Contributions in Research’

Professor Karen Spencer; Dr Richard Greenham; Mrs Dawn Cremonese

University of St Andrews

This presentation explains the novel approach to a co-constructive and consultative process taken in setting up and recruiting for a cross-institutional working party to review and propose institutional guidance on recognition of contributions in research at the University of St Andrews. The aim in setting up this working party was to take a bottom-up approach to consulting with the wider research community through surveys and facilitated workshops, to work collaboratively towards the development of institutional guidance for recognition of contributions to research.

Between late 2024 and 2025 the Head of Research Integrity at the University of St Andrews invited research and research-enabling staff (including postgraduates, postdocs, technicians and professional services staff) from across the institution to join a short life working party with the objective of developing guidance on recognising contributions to research, regarding how individuals’ varied and various contributions to research activities can and should be recognised in a variety of outputs. The working party brings together a group representing a wide range of disciplines, career stages and job types (including non-academic staff, such as professional services and technicians) to: 1) explore and discuss what currently is expected and occurs across the institution in terms of relevant, discipline specific guidance and frameworks (e.g. CRediT etc.); 2) discuss and articulate what types of contributions deserve what types of recognition.

The main task of the working party is to arrive at a consensus around guidance (eventually in the form of a toolkit) to propose to the University-level Research Committee, which has oversight and coordination of the activities related to research at the University of St Andrews (reporting to the Academic Court).

The ultimate intention is for this guidance to describe expectations around its proactive use, both in the induction processes at the School/Departmental/team level, and in the process of preparing work for publication/dissemination. The working party’s remit also closely aligns to and reflects one of the four themes of the institutional research culture action plan (published in February 2026) which is ‘Open and Responsible Research and Innovation’ and evidences our commitment to recognising and celebrating at an intuitional level, the wide range of positive and supportive non-authorial contributions to research.

Reflecting on the scalability of research culture interventions: a case study on expectation management workshops for research groups

Dr Luisa Ciampi

University of Cambridge

This presentation shares a successful workshop designed to improve research culture at the University of Cambridge and assesses its scalability. Firstly, we will provide an overview of the workshop design which aims to overcome expectation mismatches between research group members and their PIs on the group’s cultural norms and expectations. We have been trialling an approach to support this by implementing Team Handbook Workshops which use Creative Non-Fiction to support research groups from all disciplines to collectively write and implement their own team handbooks. We are running ten workshops with research groups at the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University, reaching approximately 250 participants by the end of 2026. So far, we have run four workshops. Based on a comprehensive pre- and post-test survey completed by 38 of the participants, initial findings indicate that 84% of participants would recommend the workshop; after the workshop, 71% of participants better understood colleagues’ expectations, and 58% better understood supervisors’ expectations.

As initial indicators suggest that this workshop is effective, the second part of presentation invites audience members to comment on the scalability of this intervention. We will use interactive voting systems on key aspects for scalability based on the Scaling Scan method which has been used in the sustainable development sector to assess scaling pathways for local interventions.

This presentation will help us share our Team Handbook Approach with others, provide insight for us into the perceived scalability of the intervention, and support participants to reflect on the scalability of their own interventions.

From Away Day to Action: A Pedagogically Informed Model for Strengthening Research Culture through the Scholarly Innovation Away Day (SIAD)

Amy Osmond & Dr Derek Lai Teik Ong
Hertfordshire Business School, University of Hertfordshire

How people are shaped as researchers is crucial to the pursuit of research. While Higher Education Institutions have placed preference on producing highly ranked journal publications, creating research culture and a research environment is increasingly being considered when setting institutional strategies or policy frameworks. Exercises like the Research Excellence Framework include Strategy, People, and Research Environment as an assessment strand, noting “inclusive, supportive and collaborative research cultures enable a strong, diverse and dynamic research ecosystem” (UKRI 2026). Strengthening research culture requires pedagogically informed environments that fuel the development of scholarly identity, confidence, and collaborative practice. The Scholarly Innovation Away Day (SIAD) initiative employs a sequenced programme of mentored and collaborative pedagogy drawing on theories of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and collaborative inquiry (Clegg, 2008). Participants are positioned as co-learners and co-producers of knowledge rather than passive recipients. SIAD additionally recognises that identity is shaped by other, sometimes multiple, forms of scholarly activities (SAs), including grants writing, academic publishing, pedagogic research and HEA, doctoral studies, and industry practice, research and engagement. Holistically, SIAD encourages collective growth as scholarly practitioners, not as only high output-producing academic writers.

Framed as a longitudinal intervention, SIAD 1.0 brought awareness to colleagues, introducing the possibilities of the five SAs. It adopted a practice-based developmental model where participants collectively ideated the SAs and then actively worked on outputs within collaborative environments. Collective writing environments can enhance productivity, confidence, and scholarly engagement (Murray and Newton, 2009), while collaborative pedagogical approaches promote shared reflection and collective knowledge-building (Ah Chee Mok and Park, 2022). This approach produced an unwritten agreement that personal work would be ideated, formed, and initiated, and shifted the long-standing research culture from individualised practice towards collective ownership of scholarly development.

SIAD 2.0 operationalised these principles through small mentored developmental workshops. Led by experienced scholars in each SA, individuals received targeted inputs on scholarly progression and set actions to complete prior to regrouping across the five SAs. They reported increased clarity, concrete action plans, establishment of mentoring relationships, and reduced feelings of isolation around writing and scholarly progression. This revealed a cultural shift towards a more connected and supportive research environment, which is critical for fostering sustainable engagement with research (Moran et al., 2020).

Finally, the SAID 3.0 pedagogical architecture followed an iterative and developmental process; subsequent iterations were structured from evaluative data, supporting colleagues from different career stages. It integrated reflective practice, feedback, and scaffolded project-based learning, progressing participants through project incubation, reviewing and managing, and evaluating and producing phases, effectively creating low-risk, mentored spaces for testing, exploring, and collaborating on project ideas. These efforts also provided cross-area dialogue and collaboration that moved participants from capacity-building towards co-produced outputs, improving research conduct, strengthening research leadership capabilities through understanding personal strengths and weaknesses, and developing sustainable career trajectories. By embedding mentoring, evaluation, and output generation within a pedagogical architecture, SIAD offers a transferable and scalable research culture development model that is responsive to local context and produces immediate scholarly outcomes and longer-term cultural change.

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2.4 Inclusive and Diverse Research Environments

Chair: Vicky Strudwick

National LGBTQ+ Mentoring Network for Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science

Dr Daniel Herring¹; Dr Rowland Seymour²; Professor Tyler Kelly³

¹Coventry University; ²University of Birmingham; ³Queen Mary University of London

This talk presents outcomes from the first cycle of a national cross-institutional mentoring scheme for LGBTQ+ early career researchers (ECRs) in mathematics and statistics, developed within the UKRI FLF-Plus Fund Project PSF035: Cultivating and Coordinating Positive Research Culture for LGBTQ+ STEM Researchers. Evidence of disproportionate attrition among LGBTQ+ researchers in STEM was highlighted by the joint 2019 report by the Institute of Physics, Royal Astronomical Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry [1]. Motivated by this evidence, the scheme aimed to support career development, strengthen professional networks, and contribute to talent retention in the mathematical sciences. The pilot scheme brought together more than 40 participants from across UK institutions through a structured mentoring framework supported by training and evaluation events. Feedback from interviews and evaluation surveys indicates that the scheme successfully enhanced mentees' confidence, reduced career-related uncertainty, and fostered a stronger sense of belonging within the research community. Mentors also reported benefits, including increased awareness of LGBTQ+ ECR experiences and expanded professional networks. These findings highlight the value of targeted, inclusive mentoring interventions in addressing systemic challenges in academia and provide a foundation for future expansion and refinement of the scheme across STEM disciplines. The report detailing these results is available online [2]. A second cycle of the scheme was launched in Spring 2026 which includes parallel streams in Mathematical Sciences and in Computer Science and is currently underway. Preliminary results are presented here.

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Taking the next step: evolving our approach to positive action through the PATHWAY programme

Vicky Strudwick and Dr Jamie Burford

University of Warwick

The under-representation of Black academics, particularly at senior levels, remains a pressing challenge in UK higher education. In response, universities are increasingly establishing positive action initiatives to address inequalities in research cultures. However, while growing attention has been paid to the outcomes of such interventions, far less is known about how they are conceived, established and implemented during their formative stages.

This presentation addresses that gap through a developmental evaluation of the Warwick PATHWAY Programme, a university-wide positive action initiative designed to support aspiring Black researchers from undergraduate research through to postdoctoral development. In 2025, researchers from the Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR) at the University of Warwick undertook an evaluation of the programme, funded through Research England's Enhancing Research Culture Fund. Given the early stage of the programme, the project did not investigate participant outcomes but instead examined the institutional processes through which the programme was founded and implemented.

Using a developmental evaluation framework, the research employed a multi-method qualitative design comprising interviews with programme founders, institutional leaders, implementation staff, mentors and programme participants, alongside stakeholder workshops and solicited diaries that documented the experiences of those implementing the programme during its early stages. The evaluation explored the programme's conception, design, governance and implementation while generating evidence to support organisational learning.

The findings demonstrate that establishing institution-wide positive action programmes is a complex organisational process rather than a straightforward 'launch'. While senior leadership and institutional commitment enabled the programme's creation, its development was shaped by a reliance on existing initiatives and temporary structures, evolving governance arrangements, and differing stakeholder understandings of the programme's purpose and intended beneficiaries. The evaluation also highlights the importance of embedding theories of change, evaluation planning and stable institutional governance from the outset if positive action programmes are to become sustainable components of research culture rather than time-limited initiatives.

The presentation concludes by offering practical recommendations for universities, funders and research leaders seeking to establish equitable and sustainable positive action programmes to support the next generation of Black researchers.

From Margins to Methods: Women of Colour Navigating Higher Education

Professor Sukanya Krishnamurthy

University of Edinburgh

This paper presents methodological approaches for engaging with the complex and lived realities of Women of Colour (WoC) PhD students and early-career researchers (ECRs) through a collaborative project between the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. It demonstrates how feminist and participatory methodologies can create spaces for understanding intersectional experiences of structural inequality in Scottish academia. We employ the term "Women of Colour" strategically, while acknowledging its limitations and the irreducible diversity of experiences shaped by race, gender, class, migration status, nationality, disability, and sexuality. Our methodological framework refuses homogenisation, instead foregrounding the multiplicity and specificity of lived realities.

The project centres relational and creative methods designed to engage complexity without reduction. Through collaborative workshops, we utilise storytelling, mind- mapping, and zine-making as research tools that privilege participant voice, embody care-based ethics, and honour emotional and experiential knowledge alongside analytical insight. These methods create conditions for collective sense-making, enabling participants to

articulate challenges across research, teaching, fieldwork, writing, publishing, and institutional navigation in their own terms and through their own expressive forms.

Our participatory approach positions WoC researchers as co-investigators rather than research subjects. Workshop participants collaboratively map the structural and everyday dimensions of their experiences, identify patterns and divergences, and co-design contextually grounded solutions. This process generates knowledge that is simultaneously analytical and actionable, bridging lived experience and institutional change.

The paper details how these methods translate complex, embodied realities into concrete recommendations for transforming EDI strategies, Widening Participation policies, and supervisory practices. By foregrounding methodology, we demonstrate how research design itself can embody principles of equity, care, and solidarity—a replicable framework for engaging with marginalised experiences in ways that honour their complexity while catalysing systemic change.

The Beacon Academy: A qualitative exploration of the impact of co-created internship program for under-represented students on research delivery and research culture.

Chloe Berg; James Frearson; Kirstie Haywood; Thomas Dale MacLaine
University of Warwick

Research culture in clinical professions needs substantial investment. Academic work is required for higher specialty training in all medical fields, however governmental changes have removed the importance of early career research works throughout medical education. Our Beacon Academy internships have been developed in line with Athena SWAN aims and GMC Outcomes for Graduates to aid integration of these throughout UK medical schools. These paid internships are protected for those from under-represented communities, with focus-group co-construction and targeted research skills training. We explore the impact of these internships on both the supervisors and interns through qualitative approaches.

We have delivered pilot internships at one Scottish and one English medical schools, with an end-of-year best-practice and research-sharing conference. We interviewed all supervisors and interns over one pilot year to explore the perceptions around these internships, the internship's value in early career research and the overall research culture difference. This work was thematically analysed and iterative quality improvement changes made to the delivery of these internships.

Overall, these internships provided significant research opportunities and skills to under-represented students. The internships forged longer lasting academic collaborations and created stronger bridges between different research communities. Supervisors found these internships beneficial, increasing their research capacity and noting the improvement of research diversity. This program brought additional connections across university, healthcare, industry and research populations to enhance research culture locally.

Our innovative Beacon Internship program provides unique research opportunities, improving research culture for those actively involved and the overall organisation. Next steps include a collaborative multi-centre qualitative impact assessment of these internships, and exploration of expansion into wider healthcare curricula and other universities. Our aim is to develop a sustainable model for lasting change, allowing a multi-centre grant application for national delivery of this research-culture enhancing initiative.

P2.5 Wellbeing and Belonging in Research Environments

Chair: Elena Riva

Space to belong: Exploring the role of belonging on PGR wellbeing

Anna Butters; Ke Li, Lauren Martin; Richard Cooper; Chris Blackmore
University of Sheffield

Student mental health and wellbeing remains a concern throughout higher education including among postgraduate research students (PGRs). PGRs report higher levels of mental health problems and poorer wellbeing relative to the general population (Levecque et al., 2017; Milicev et al., 2023). Fundamental differences in the experience of taught (undergraduate and postgraduate) and research students means that it is necessary to consider the specific wellbeing needs of this population. A range of factors have been found to influence PGR wellbeing, including supervisory relationships, institutional culture, academic progress, and work/life balance (Casey et al., 2022; Hazell et al., 2020; Levecque et al., 2017). Belonging has emerged as an important influence on PGR wellbeing (Mantai, 2019; Morris, 2021). Separately, work has explored the influence of physical, digital, relational and structural spaces on belonging in higher education (Wong, 2024). The current study, co-produced by PGRs and University Staff, aimed to extend previous work and enhance our understanding of the factors which shape and support PGR wellbeing.

We conducted six focus groups (N=46) with PGRs at one UK university to explore their experiences of wellbeing. Each focus group was facilitated by PGR members of the research team and data analysed collaboratively using inductive thematic analysis. Noting the strong, overarching theme of belonging, we subsequently used a framework of spatial belonging (Wong, 2024) as a means of situating and understanding our findings.

Five themes were identified (specific challenges for international students, fears of not being productive, need for connection, power dynamics in supervisory relationships, student-staff identity struggle). International students faced specific challenges; separation from support networks induced feelings of isolation with effort required to maintain remote relationships. Additional hidden labour included the need to negotiate the cultural practices of UK higher education and unfamiliar systems, practices, and expectations. Navigable digital spaces were considered essential for sustainable productivity; enabling access to information and support whilst maintaining wellbeing. Relational spaces outside the university were also crucial to belonging as PGRs sought to maintain work/life balance and manage existing responsibilities. PGRs described a need for connection but often experienced difficulties in forming relationships and developing networks. Suitable physical spaces were necessary to foster connections. The development of connections and relationships, at least initially, often relied on supervisors. Thus, navigating and managing the power dynamics inherent in this important relationship was crucial. Difficulties accessing appropriate physical space on campus reflected existing hierarchies. This reinforced the notion that PGRs were neither staff nor student and, inhabiting a liminal space were at risk of ‘falling in the gap’.

Belonging had a multifaceted influence on PGR wellbeing. Physical, digital, relational, and structural spaces introduced hidden labour and influenced productivity, connection, and tensions in staff-student identity. Collectively, these factors shaped PGRs experiences, sense of belonging and subsequently their wellbeing.

Understanding researcher’s experiences of “failure” in academia and identifying recommendations to better support research careers in higher education

Dr Celia J Bernstein; Mr Dinesh Passi; Dr Nicky Thomas; Professor Kirstie L Haywood; Professor Felicity Boardman; Dr John I MacArtney
University of Warwick

“Failure” in academic research is often framed as an individual shortcoming rather than a normal and systemic feature of research practice experienced at all career levels. In recent years there have been initiatives to acknowledge the effects of non-success on the individual through the creation of a range of well-being initiatives and resources. However, there is currently very little policy or guidance on how institutions and senior leaders can foster research cultures that destigmatise and normalise non-success. Creating such cultures is essential for improving researchers’ well-being, job quality, and future successes in academia.

Our previous study systematically organised recommendations from a scoping review of the literature on academic "failure" to illuminate what works for whom and when (for further details, please see Developing a Safe to Fail Research Culture:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/culture/safetofail/>). We also asked different academic researchers what they thought about the recommendations framework. Participants reported that the framework did not fully capture the dynamic, experiential, relational and socio-structural elements that shape experiences of non-success.

The aim of our most recent study was to explore researchers’ lived experiences of non-success and use our findings to modify our previous framework of recommendations. We conducted in-depth, remote interviews with UK academics across different career stages and disciplinary and demographic backgrounds. In this presentation, we will discuss the key findings pertaining to non-success in research that relate to individual researchers, research teams, departments and the wider higher education sector. Integral to these findings is the influence of researchers’ diverse needs, experiences and vulnerabilities on non-success in academic life. We will also share our updated recommendations framework that seeks to support academic researchers navigate the challenges and well-being impacts of not (yet) being successful.

Improving Career Development for Research Professionals at a UK Higher Education Institution: a Mixed-Method Study Applying Behavioural Science

Emma Ruby Francis¹; Christopher Vucic¹; Huner Erdinch¹; Sadie Boniface¹; Angel Chater¹; Lucy Dang¹; Hassan Sultan¹; Donna Swann¹; Susan Michie¹; Emma Todd²; Geraint Rees²; Fabiana Lorencatto¹

¹University College London; ²University of Bedfordshire

Research success is contingent on a wide range of staff, including professional services working in research, also known as ‘Research Professionals’ and/or ‘Research Enablers’. For example, Research Professionals working within Impact, and Doctoral Training Entity roles. Research Professionals are increasingly collaborating in research projects due to their high levels of technical expertise. However, they report a lack of recognition and opportunities to develop and progress in these roles. Career development is recognised as key to supporting and building a strong talent pipeline of Research Professionals, resulting in a more sustainable and positive research culture. There is a need to understand the specific behaviours that underpin career development and the actors involved. In using behavioural science, we can identify the behavioural practices and key influences on career development for Research Professionals. This allows us to develop appropriate strategies to address them.

The aims of this study were to 1) define key behaviours and actors involved in career development, 2) identify the barriers and enablers shaping these behaviours, and 3) generate targeted intervention recommendations using the Behaviour Change Wheel to strengthen professional development pathways.

We used a mixed-methods approach involving a survey, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups, with questions informed by the Capability-Opportunity-Motivation-Behaviour model. We identified ~24 key behaviours (e.g., attending training for skill development) and two main actors (Research Professionals and line managers). Thematic analysis identified influences across capability, opportunity, and motivation that shaped their career development. Examples of barriers identified include limited access to external networks (Opportunity), lack of institutional knowledge of career pathways (Capability), and feelings of pessimism (Motivation). Examples of enablers identified include adaptability in uncertain career pathways (Capability), support being the norm from peers, team and line manager (Opportunity), prioritising immediate skill-building (Motivation). These influences informed the selection of intervention functions from the Behaviour Change Wheel. We identified five potential strategies to address barriers to career development and target behavioural practices: 1) a communication campaign to raise visibility, 2) cohort-specific career frameworks, 3) a centralised career development resource, 4) mentoring, coaching, and peer-support programmes, and 5) fostering communities and collaborative learning.

In conclusion, career development in Research Professionals is shaped by a range of reported behaviours and influences across capability, motivation, and opportunity. Our findings suggest that improving career development requires both individual skill development and commitment to strengthening this within institutions and across the sector, towards lasting change. This study contributes to a growing evidence base that applies behavioural science to improve research culture-related practices.

Investigating Research Culture through Personal Interactions: Evidence from a John Fell funded project at the University of Oxford

Jessica Pilgrim-Brown
University of Oxford

Good relationships between stakeholders are the foundation of a positive research culture, which forms a primary area of interest for research assessment and institutional strategic priorities in the coming REF cycle, and has grown in significance over the past decade. Up-to-date experiential evidence in the depth required to make substantial conclusions about the relationships and personal interactions between different staff within higher education, who are all working in different career pathways is currently lacking within the scholarly literature (Caldwell, 2022; Pilgrim-Brown, 2025). Further, explicit connections between these interactions and research culture is still a relatively understudied phenomenon. This presentation reports on preliminary findings from an Oxford University John Fell funded project (2026) that sought to better understanding these relationships, and the mechanisms that lead to positive working environments, and relational research culture. This JFF project uses collaborative storytelling (Davis, 2023) within 10 focus groups (5-7 participants across departments, divisions, levels of seniority) with the primary aim of encouraging dialogue and maintaining a cross-stakeholder conversation about working environments, and behaviours. Participants were invited to take part if they were working on either predominantly academic career pathways and contracts, or predominantly professional services career pathways and contracts, broadly conceived. The project is a specific case study through the lens of one institution and focuses on relationships between staff on different pathways at the University of Oxford. Participants were sampled via a two-stage process; first, an open-call distributed to key networks and HoDs (convenience sampling). Participants were then selected to participate through sampling which optimises diversity (department/role/career stage) (purposive sampling). This JFF project provides a potentially rigorous blueprint for future research projects, with the ambition to expand the project to other UK institutions and to develop a substantial evidence base. The findings may therefore have significant impact both to improve the working relationships, wellbeing and career satisfaction of colleagues within HE and to develop a rigorous, objective, data-informed understanding of research culture. We also derive recommendations from this project in order to improve working relationships at the University of Oxford.

Wednesday 23rd September

Challenge-led Workshops

1. Beyond the bid: accountability for research culture in funded research

Facilitators: Taryn Bell and Hanna Groothuizen

Research culture is increasingly featured in grant applications, but its real impact depends on what happens after funding is awarded. If commitments to team working, career development, inclusion, open research and responsible leadership are assessed only at application stage, they risk becoming part of winning funding rather than delivering research.

Building on Monday's funder panel, this workshop will bring together participants from universities and funding organisations to explore how research culture commitments can be sustained throughout the post-award grant cycle. Focusing on award set-up, project delivery, monitoring, reporting and future funding decisions, participants will consider accountability, incentives and proportionate follow-up.

The session will produce a co-created set of practical principles, accountability mechanisms and shared responsibilities for institutions and funders.

2. Measuring Change: A Research Culture Data Capture and Evaluation

Facilitators: Sarah Masefield, Amy Mayfield, Cathal Rogers

This challenge-led workshop will bring together the research culture community to explore approaches to data capture and evaluation, while providing a peer-learning space for participants looking to build skills and confidence. The session will begin with presentations from Taru Silvonen (University of Bristol) on evaluating research culture projects and support needs; Jayne Hope (University of Edinburgh) on research culture and EDI data, benchmarking and evaluation; and Adam Partridge, Suz Garrard and Maedbh King (Trinity College Dublin) on research culture data capture and evaluation across disciplinary contexts.

Participants will then join a world café discussion on the challenges and opportunities of generating and using research culture evidence and insight. Coordinated by the RCEN Data Capture and Evaluation Working Group.

3. Making the Invisible Visible: Developing Reward and Recognition for Good Research Culture

Facilitators: Rika Nair, Alys Kay, Julia Schoonover

Research depends on many contributions that often remain hidden or under recognised within current research systems. This interactive session will explore how we can make these invisible contributions more visible and valued. It will begin with a facilitated discussion and short panel bringing together diverse perspectives on recognition in research. Speakers will highlight contributors at the interface of academia and society, including independent researchers, community partners, and others whose expertise may not always be formally acknowledged. The session will also recognise the crucial contributions of research professionals and research methodologists.

Participants will hear emerging findings from the Research Culture Enablers Network Working Group, which is examining reward and recognition practices across the UK to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.

A collaborative mapping activity will encourage collective reflection, identify priorities for change, and generate practical actions to support more inclusive, equitable, and comprehensive approaches to recognising the full range of contributions that enable excellent research.

4. Researcher and Research Professional Wellbeing in Healthy Research Cultures: Learning Across Institutions and Contexts

Facilitators: Elena Riva, Amber Tout, Tania Maria Villanueva Cabello

Researcher wellbeing and healthy research cultures are increasingly recognised as global priorities, yet institutional responses vary across contexts. This interactive workshop will bring together researchers, research culture practitioners, professional services colleagues, and institutional leaders to share experiences and learn from one another.

The session will begin with emerging findings from Warwick's Re-Well programme, including a UK study exploring organisational drivers of researcher wellbeing and occupational stress, alongside a mapping exercise of institutional responses across higher education. These findings will provide a platform for discussion and comparison.

Through facilitated discussions and collaborative activities, participants will explore approaches to wellbeing, workload, inclusion, career development, and research culture, identifying lessons learned, evidence gaps, and effective practices. The workshop will foster

international exchange, future collaborations, and comparative research opportunities, and will conclude with an arts-based wellbeing activity led by Warwick's Words4Wellbeing team.

5. Advancing Racial Equity in Research Environments: collaborative action

Facilitators: Vicky Strudwick

Drawing on examples of pilot interventions and emerging frameworks for addressing racial inequity in research environments, participants will explore the structural, cultural and procedural barriers that can limit progress, as well as gaps in existing policies, support mechanisms and institutional approaches. Through facilitated discussion and collaborative problem-solving, they will identify priorities for action and opportunities for shared learning across organisations. These insights will be used to co-create a practical action plan, setting out recommendations, responsibilities and next steps for accelerating collective progress towards more equitable and inclusive research cultures.

6. Safe to fail: A workshop to explore holistic approaches to addressing “failure” in research culture

Facilitators: Rachel Lewis; Miranda Raven; Annie Bryan; Ayten Alibaba; Harriet Richmond; John MacArtney

A positive research culture depends on creating environments where all researchers can thrive. While frameworks such as the Vitae Research Culture Framework recognise that risk-taking, setbacks and failure are integral to research, the systemic impacts of non-success remain underexplored. This workshop will examine how failure is experienced and understood across research environments, moving beyond individual wellbeing to consider relational, structural and cultural dimensions.

Participants will share practical examples of initiatives that address the wider impacts of rejection, setbacks and non-success, and explore how responsibility can be more effectively shared across institutions. Using creative, participatory methods, the workshop will co-produce recommendations for embedding healthier approaches to failure and fostering a more supportive and inclusive research culture.

7. Identifying competencies for high-quality public, patient and community involvement in research within different disciplines

Facilitators: Felicity Boardman, Kirstie Haywood, Helen Luckhurst, Sophie Staniszewska, Helen Wheatley, Julie Roberts

This workshop will begin by reviewing what is known about the competencies required for conducting public, patient and community involvement (PPCI) in health and care research. We will then explore with delegates the similarities and differences to other disciplines. Delegates will discuss the following questions:

- What skills and knowledge are required for PPCI across all disciplines, and which ones are particular to certain fields?
- Which competencies are relevant to professional services roles and do these vary by the area or type of research?
- What factors affect people's confidence in conducting PPCI?
- Which competencies are likely to be more useful in creating sustainable collaboration?

8. AI in Research: The Impact on People, Practice, and Policy

Facilitators: Dr Federica Coluzzi; Jason Snow; Dr Scott Summers; James Parry

Artificial intelligence is already influencing how research is designed, carried out, evaluated and communicated. It is becoming clear that responsible adoption of AI depends on research culture: the relationships, values, practices and policies that shape how AI is understood and used.

In this interactive 90-minute workshop, we will explore how AI is reshaping the ways that researchers and research professionals connect, communicate and collaborate within and across research. Drawing on emerging evidence and shared real-world experiences, we will examine the opportunities, tensions and trade-offs that AI creates for key research culture priorities, including community, belonging, inclusion, and accessibility. Participants will then consider how these changing practices challenge institutions to rethink their approaches to AI practices, policies and governance; to enable them to maintain integrity in research when AI is used.

Through discussion, reflection and practical examples, we will invite participants to explore how their own institutions can shape AI-enabled research cultures and governance that strengthen, rather than diminish, collaboration, human connection and research integrity.

Parallel Sessions P3

P3.1 Embedding Research Culture (Strategy)

Chair: Sophie Staniszewska

From Experience to Evidence: A Service-Design Approach to Measuring Research Culture

Alys Kay

University of London & National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange (NCACE)

As research culture becomes increasingly central to institutional strategy and assessment, sector conversations often focus on policy presence, leadership commitment, and high-level indicators of environment and culture. However, less attention has been paid to how research culture is encountered in practice at moments of transition, vulnerability, and high cognitive or emotional load.

Drawing on cross-institutional qualitative research and applied research culture implementation work across UK universities, this talk explores what a service-design lens reveals about how research culture is experienced and operationalised in practice. The work is grounded in cross-institution collaboration examining major career transitions and how institutional systems are navigated across different organisational contexts.

The analysis suggests that research culture is best understood not only as policy or leadership intent, but as an institutional journey shaped by touchpoints, hand-offs, defaults, and the distribution of responsibility across HR, EDI, research leadership, professional services, and line management. From this perspective, culture is encountered through system design, particularly at points where individuals must make decisions under uncertainty or professional risk.

Three key findings emerge. First, research culture is experienced as a journey rather than a policy event. Support is encountered through real interactions, information pathways, and decision points rather than through policy documentation alone. This has implications for how institutions design and resource support at key career transitions.

Second, policy presence does not guarantee policy safety. Support must be not only available, but findable, usable, and experienced as safe to rely on without fear of professional, financial, or reputational harm. This distinction helps explain variation in uptake of support and uneven outcomes across comparable roles and contexts.

Third, practitioner qualitative research, combined with a service-design lens, can help specify what should be measured if research culture claims are to be empirically meaningful. This includes identifying measurable system properties such as navigation burden, default versus negotiated support, coordination and emotional labour distribution, and disclosure safety pathways. These insights can directly inform the development of more valid and actionable research culture indicators.

These findings have practical implications for research culture evaluation, recognition and reward, and the design of SPRE-aligned research systems that are experienced as reliable, equitable, and safe in practice. The approach contributes to emerging metascience conversations by linking lived experience evidence to the construct validity of future research culture metrics and indicators.

Whose responsibility is research culture change? Insights from researchers and research enablers in UK Universities

Catherine Davies

University of Leeds

Research culture reform has undergone a volatile trajectory since 2020: growing in prominence and resource then facing a devaluation within the research sector, a tightening of institutional funding streams, and a weakening of explicit commitments in research assessment frameworks. Compounded by a broader political assault on progressive agendas including EDI, the field now finds itself fighting for onwards momentum as it works to embed progress. More positively, there are pockets of resilience. Selected funders maintain commitment to improving research cultures (albeit with fragile budgets), and institutions are realising the value of specialist staff in sustaining credibility and evidencing progress.

An urgent question arises against this precarious backdrop: who holds responsibility for setting, maintaining, and improving research environments, and for driving and sustaining reform? Without clear ownership, genuine accountability, or at least clearer roles for reform, the sector risks losing its hard-won progress towards more positive and inclusive cultures.

This study sets out to identify the locus of responsibility for setting and changing research cultures, going beyond the practical advice targeted to stakeholder groups offered in much of the extant literature. We report the results of a reflexive thematic analysis of interviews with UK-based researchers and university professional services staff (n=30), drawn from 18 diverse UK institutions.

Participants articulated a hierarchical model of responsibility, spanning individual researchers, principal investigators, research groups, institutions, and funders. While many favoured a shared responsibility model, findings suggest that systemic change depends disproportionately on funders and research organisations, whose levers operate at scale.

A critical interface for culture change lies between funders and institutions. The research priorities, eligibility criteria, assessment practices, and reporting requirements that funders set cascade into institutional strategies and then onto individual behaviours. Funder interventions are immediately operational: they force universities and researchers to comply in order to be eligible for funding. Where funders have committed to an agenda (cf. the clear precedents of research impact, engaged research, and interdisciplinarity), the sector has demonstrably shifted.

The challenge lies in sustaining that change meaningfully rather than instrumentally. Without an enabling of institutional commitment, as well as a genuine transformation of funders' own hyper-competitive, prestige-driven systems, no amount of institutional policy or individual goodwill will produce lasting change.

At a moment when research culture reform is under pressure, clarity about who is responsible, and who has the power to act, is urgent. Based on participant insights, we offer targeted recommendations for funders and research organisations seeking to protect and advance progress.

Making Strategy Work: Translating Lived Research Culture into Implementable Action

Dr. Chiara Cipollari; Prof. Sharron Dolan
Glasgow Caledonian University

Strategy development in research culture is often approached as a future-oriented exercise, emphasising new frameworks, priorities and performance indicators. Drawing on anthropological approaches to organisational culture and applied research impact practice, Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) has translated a long-standing, values-driven research culture into a coherent and actionable Research Culture Roadmap, which provides a structured, strategic framework for strengthening the research culture at GCU. This presentation offers a complementary, implementation-focused perspective, arguing that sustainable research culture strategies are most effective when they begin with leadership-led recognition of existing cultural strengths.

GCU has historically demonstrated a strongly inclusive research culture shaped by its Common Good mission, with research agendas grounded in social justice, community engagement and real-world impact. Long before formal research culture frameworks were introduced, researchers worked closely with patients, the public and communities locally and internationally, forming sustained partnerships based on trust, relevance and reciprocity. This cultural orientation fostered high levels of researcher commitment, retention and pride, supported by a values-led working environment. It also proved central to the production of meaningful research impact.

The approach adopted acknowledges that such cultures are not static. Like many institutions across the sector, GCU is experiencing significant change, pressure and uncertainty. In this context, current work on research culture is not about inventing values anew, but about recognising, protecting and learning from what has already worked well, while adapting to new realities. In this presentation, we will illustrate how frameworks and roadmaps are most effective when they surface, legitimise and sustain existing cultural strengths rather than overwrite them.

The Research Culture Roadmap at GCU delivers a practical, leadership-enabled approach to strategy development and implementation structured around four stages. First, cultural diagnosis: creating intentional space to surface institutional memory, qualitative insight and impact evidence, resisting deficit-led narratives of culture. Second, strategic translation: mapping lived practices onto four overarching areas - researcher development, inclusive environments, collaboration and innovation, and research integrity - to ensure continuity between values and action. Third, embedding: integrating research culture actions into existing processes such as recruitment, induction, leadership development, impact practice and governance. Fourth, evidence-informed iteration: combining staff feedback, participation data and survey trends while recognising the limits of quantitative metrics in capturing cultural change.

By framing research culture strategy as a form of institutional stewardship, this presentation will contribute to the sector-wide discussion on how universities can navigate change without losing their cultural core, and how research culture work can function as an act of preservation as much as transformation.

What is the role of short-term projects in enhancing research culture? Perspectives from project leads

Hayley Shaw; Katy Butcher; Professor Julie Barnett.
University of Bath

Acknowledgements: Philippa Bayley, Josephine Aidoo-Brown

Since 2021, the University of Bath has invested a portion of its annually determined Enhancing Research Culture (ERC) allocation in competitively awarded short-term projects. As ERC funding is at a critical juncture and financial pressures intensify across the sector, this study asks a timely question: What is the role of short-term projects in enhancing research culture? And what are the conditions under which these projects are most likely to generate sustained impact on research culture?

We report findings from the analysis of semi-structured interviews with 27 recipients of ERC funding across the 2022–23 and 2023–24 funded cohorts, representing c.58% of all funded projects. Interviews were conducted 12–20 months after project completion to move beyond immediate outputs and explore sustained outcomes and impacts. Projects varied in duration, with the majority funded for one year and a smaller portion for two years.

Data were analysed using a framework analysis approach, with inductive coding undertaken in Taguette and subsequently mapped against a Theory of Change model to examine anticipated and realised outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Our analysis to date identifies:

- (1) a set of facilitating conditions associated with sustained impact, including:
 - the capacities, positionality, and change strategies of project leads
 - features of the organisational and funding environment
 - qualities or presence of the funding scheme; and
 - the extent to which projects were ‘system’ versus ‘standalone’ interventions.
- (2) outcomes and impacts (both in relation to the projects aims, and wider previously unanticipated impacts – including on project leads themselves).

Drawing on this analysis, the presentation will share practical principles for funders and research culture/ development professionals, offering evidence-informed recommendations for those designing, funding, supporting, or evaluating research culture initiatives.

P3.2 Career Development and Pathways

Chair: Harriet Richmond

Strengthening Research Culture through involving and supporting Early Career Academics and Researchers at the University of Birmingham

Dr Giuditta Fontana
University of Birmingham

This talk presents insights from the work of the Early Career Academics and Researchers (ECARS) Committee at the University of Birmingham, highlighting the Committee's work to map, evaluate, and support implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat in the Colleges of Social Sciences and College of Arts and Law through the innovative Output Development Scheme and ECARS Fellowship Cohort. Together, these initiatives offer practical evidence of how coordinated, researcher-led interventions supported by committed and invested professional services can strengthen research culture at scale.

The ECARS Committee represents over 200 early career academics and researchers across the Colleges of Social Sciences and Arts and Law at the University of Birmingham. Through representatives in each of the Schools, it amplifies their voice in decision-making, addresses their development needs, and fosters a supportive cross-College community.

Since 2025, the Committee has worked to map and evaluate the university's implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat, including analysis of institutional alignment, identification of strengths and gaps, and support for Schools in developing tailored local actions. This process has raised awareness of the Concordat's principles among research staff and leadership teams and encouraged Schools to integrate Concordat commitments into their own strategic planning and researcher-development activities.

The ECARS committee itself has contributed to devise and deliver a range of activities in alignment with the Researcher Development Concordat. Two examples are the Output Development Scheme and the ECARS Fellowship Cohort.

The Output Development Scheme provides structured, peer-supported opportunities for early career staff to develop publications and other research outputs through facilitated workshops, cross-disciplinary writing groups, and constructive developmental feedback. The scheme addresses sector-wide barriers such as lack of understanding of the requirements of the Research Excellence Framework, isolation, uneven mentoring access, and high workload demands.

The ECARS Fellowship Cohort offers early-career researchers and final year PhDs a six-months long programme combining peer learning, and collaborative writing activities, targeted at shaping an application for a major research fellowship (Leverhulme or British Academy). This contributes to more inclusive research environments and strengthens awareness of grant opportunities in a challenging job market.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate how grassroots-led networks such as ECARS can help translate institutional strategy actions that address enduring challenges around career development and inclusive research cultures. The talk concludes by identifying lessons learned and opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration to support a more equitable and sustainable research ecosystem.

Rewiring the System: Dismantling Research Precarity to Foster Collaborative Research Cultures

Benjamin Ankomah-Appiah
Eötvös Loránd University

Academic structures today trap early- and mid-career researchers in a "precarity trap" of short-term, project-linked contracts. This instability harms individual wellbeing and erodes the research ecosystem by fueling "survival-mode" behaviors, like knowledge hoarding, competitive silos, and low-risk outputs, that stifle long-term collaboration and open practices vital for institutional growth. Constant contract threats destroy the psychological safety needed for cultural change.

This policy analysis critiques the failure to decouple researcher employment from grant cycles. This paper proposes a "Rolling Horizon" model: institutions use bridging funds and centralized "Researcher Pools" to extend contracts annually, shifting from project-based hiring to person-based investment. This stability empowers researchers to pursue high-risk, high-reward collaborations and culture-building efforts that strengthen universities.

Drawing on European Research Area pilots, this paper outlines a roadmap for leaders and funders to co-invest in stability. Such models curb "brain drain," retain institutional memory, and deliver superior returns for funders. Dismantling precarity via rolling horizons isn't just moral, it's a structural must for the "lasting change" our global research community demands. Stabilize the workforce; stabilize the culture.

Fair and Transparent Academic Promotions for UCL Early Career Researchers (ECRs)

Sonja Weirauch
UCL

UCL employs about 2300 Early Career Researchers on Grade 6,6B, and 7 every year. That reflects approximately 40% of the academic workforce. However, UCL's 2021 CEDARS survey found that overall, 50% of all participating researcher and other research staff felt valued for their contributions. Only 34% of researchers and 56% of other research staff believed they were provided with opportunities for promotion and progression. ECRs were amongst the least satisfied. UCL's data shows that in 2021/22, only 3% of ECRs employed by UCL were promoted. That promoted the Research Culture team to conduct investigative work into whether this low percentage truly reflects ECR merit or indicates a lack of consistent and fair approaches to ECR promotions across UCL.

In response UCL Research Culture launched the 'Fair and Transparent Academic Promotions for ECRs' project in 2022/23 (supported by Strive Higher) to identify key challenges for ECRs and departments in the promotions process. The discovery work included five of UCL's most research-active faculties who participated in surveys, interviews, and focus groups conducted with ECRs, ECR line managers, and departmental managers.

The following issues were identified:

- Many ECRs and their line managers are unclear on expectations for promotion.
- Transparent decision-making and feedback are inconsistent across UCL.
- The link between promotions and funding is complex, with financial constraints sometimes influencing promotion options.

These results were validated in November 2024 using six focus group meetings. A set of five workstreams (WS) was agreed as a project pilot blueprint focused on:

- WS1: ECR and line management training and support
- WS2: Fairer and more consistent promotions decision making
- WS3: Feedback and reporting on promotion decisions
- WS4: Demystifying the finance implications of ECR promotions and finding solutions for financial risks
- WS5: Enabling change

Based on these workstreams, the UCL Faculty of Engineering Sciences then agreed to support the pilot design in 2024/25 and to test the recommendations. Subsequently, between January and December 2025 they adopted the following new process:

- Faculty-led process
- 3 application deadlines
- ECRs submit to faculty
- Departmental panel reviews
- Faculty organised ECR training
- Creation of feedback meetings for ECRs and their Line Managers
- Data collection at faculty level

At the same time, to enable necessary changes, UCL Research Culture agreed new process and policy adjustments with central services such as:

- Covering promotion costs within the grant
- Bridge funding
- Increase of promotion effective start dates

Term 1 and 2 of the pilot combined produced a 344% increase in successful ECR promotions. 42% women and 32% ECRs from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority groups were successful. Faculty feedback showed that the process was perceived to be fair and that transparency improved. The small sample of 31 successful applicants showed an overall increase in the number of applications from ethnic minority groups. However, compared to white applicants, ECRs from these groups were less likely to be promoted, especially when they were women between 20—29. Steps have been taken to design long-term solutions for the UCL-wide roll-out in 2026/27.

The Realities of Management in Academic Research: Insights from Postdoctoral Experiences

Dr Barbora Oudova-Rivera; Dr Harriet Richmond; Dr Jessica Lewis; Dr Christopher Rodrigue.

University of Warwick

People management is central to healthy work cultures, yet in academia, this responsibility is frequently assumed by principal investigators who lack sufficient formal preparation in people management, as PhD and postdoctoral training rarely focus on the development of these skills. This creates a culture where people management is overlooked, propagating issues that impact the researchers' experience and performance. Postdoctoral researchers, as emerging research professionals in academia and industry, are profoundly shaped by the quality of people management around them. In environments characterised by short-term contracts, high expectations and uncertain career pathways, effective people management plays a critical role in enabling postdoctoral researchers to thrive, yet their experiences and support needs remain underexplored.

In this work, we bring together findings from a survey of postdoctoral researchers across the School of Life Sciences and Warwick Medical School at the University of Warwick, alongside reflections from a discussion panel on the realities of people management in academic environments. The survey examines experiences of line management quality, communication, career support, managing up, preparedness for supervisory responsibilities, access to leadership training, and the impact of management practices on wellbeing and research culture.

Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the results highlight recurring themes in postdoctoral experiences: unclear expectations, power imbalances, limited formal line management training, and the absence of supportive communication and recognition. Particular focus is given to the often-overlooked skill of managing up and how researchers navigate expectations, boundaries, and communication with their line managers in hierarchical, time-pressured environments.

Collectively, these findings could inform future initiatives in people management in academic research, creating a more holistic research culture that prioritises people management to improve the researcher experience and performance.

P3.3 Doctoral Researchers in Collaborative Research Cultures

Chair: Rhiannon Martyn

Bridging Worlds: Enhancing Research Culture in Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships through Professional Development for Non-University Supervisors

Prof Janet De Wilde¹; Prof Julie Sheldon²

¹*Queen Mary University of London*; ²*Liverpool St John Moores*

The role of the external supervisor is becoming increasingly significant in the co-creation of knowledge within collaborative and vocational doctorates. These external supervisors contribute specialist resources and professional expertise, extending the research environment beyond the university. Although the benefits and challenges of industry–university doctoral collaborations are well documented (e.g. Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2025), there is comparatively limited discussion of such partnerships within the arts and humanities (AHRC, 2025). This paper/talk presents findings from our work on collaborative doctoral partnerships with GLAM organisations (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums). We outline our approach to enhance the research culture through developing external supervisors’ confidence and capability in supervision, relational pedagogy, and effective partnership working.

We argue that a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of the external supervisors working in a collaborative doctorate will help optimise the experience of both doctoral students and external supervisors and maximise the partnership's potential. External supervisors add value, and in turn, the experience enriches a non-HEI supervisor’s professional life. However, the experience can also entail a complex, often unforeseen set of responsibilities. The role can leave external supervisors feeling unsure of what to do, especially amid unprecedented challenges that require bespoke solutions. Hence, we focused on building their confidence and the art of maintaining relationships whilst recognising common pitfalls along the doctoral journey. Furthermore, it is crucial to attend to the external supervisor's identity formation. This identity development can be facilitated through workshops led by facilitators with grounding in and expertise in supervision, relational pedagogy, and partnerships. It is important that, beyond initial training, there is support for continuous professional development. Our participants cited a community of practice model as their preferred means of regular, structured, and responsive interaction. Finally, we reflect on how such initiatives for cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional, and cross-system collaboration can foster research cultures that inspire pride and shared ownership.

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Institutional approaches to supporting doctoral supervision: Insights from UK Doctoral Schools

Dr Hang Li¹; Dr Karen Clegg¹; Prof Doug Cleaver²

¹*University of York*; ²*Sheffield Hallam University*

As a central component of doctoral education, doctoral supervision plays a vital role in shaping doctoral researchers’ experiences (Polkinghorne et al., 2023). In the UK, literature (e.g. Knight et al., 2024) and national surveys, such as UK Research Supervision Survey 2024 (Gower et al., 2024) have explored the experience of academic supervisors, but the voice of Deans and Directors of Doctoral Schools remains largely underrepresented. Drawing on six focus groups, conducted by the Next Generation SuperVision Project (RSVP) funded by Research England (RSVP Collection, 2026 forthcoming), this paper presents insights from these institutional actors across 18 UK universities. Focusing on the institutional approaches to the management, monitoring, support, and expectations around engagement with professional development. This new empirical data provides a window on the challenges and opportunities for culture change in the context of supervision. implications for collaborative actions to support doctoral researchers’ supervision experiences.

Focus group participants articulated that doctoral supervision is a highly contextual, relational, and dynamic practice, with adaptive and candidate-centred approaches identified as central to effective supervision. Across institutions, participants described a range of monitoring and intervention approaches to reinforce effective doctoral supervision, spanning formal review mechanisms, and informal, relationship-based routes. In particular, informal channels were viewed as essential for enabling the early identification of concerns, and the offering of multiple reporting routes for doctoral researchers was highly valued. When concerns arise, intervention is primarily enacted at a local level, drawing on departmental knowledge and line-management structures.

Participants also highlighted a variety of institutional practices for reinforcing good supervision practice, including supervisor training programmes, communities of practice, accreditation schemes, and internal communications. The ongoing review and refinement of these initiatives underscore the importance of a developmental research culture that responds to the evolving needs of supervisors and doctoral researchers.

These findings emphasise the importance of collaborative effort in strengthening effective doctoral supervision. Beyond the role of individual supervisors, effective coordination across institutional roles, relationships, and levels is critical to supporting doctoral researchers’ experiences. By offering institutional perspectives, this study contributes to the discussions on fostering more supportive research cultures.

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Improving collaborative culture and peer support through a cross-programme student-led workshop series

Jenn Yoo

University of Edinburgh

Developing effective collaboration and interdisciplinary skills are important areas of learning during a PhD, but many students report feeling isolated during their doctoral studies. Training and education provided by universities does not always reflect student priorities and rarely provides space for peer-to-peer support and reflections on research culture.

The aim of this project was to foster collaboration across two Scottish doctoral training programmes both themed around health and care in later life: the Wellcome Multimorbidity PhD Programme and the Advanced Care Research Centre PhD Academy. This involved planning and delivering a series of student-led workshops which prioritised network building, resource-sharing and peer-support, while providing a space for critical reflection on research culture.

The content for the three workshops – one each in Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh – was guided by an initial survey of student priorities, with further planning led by a rotating committee of student representatives. Each workshop had a thematic focus and featured a mixture of student-led interdisciplinary knowledge exchange, external guest speakers, structured cross-programme networking and facilitated peer-support. The first workshop focused on policy, dissemination and impact, and featured guests from Scottish Government and policy organisations. The second workshop focused on design and storytelling, introducing students to new concepts within data visualisation, animation and intervention design. The final workshop was themed around inequalities in research, which was explored both in terms of health and social inequalities addressed by research, and inequalities inherent in the methods, culture and practice of research. Facilitated group discussions were a key feature of each workshop. Enhanced by techniques such as the World Café method, these conversations allowed personal, practical and cultural challenges faced early career researchers to be shared and addressed through peer-support.

Each of the three workshops were attended by 25-30 attendees. Initial feedback gathered in post-event surveys spoke to the success of these events in addressing the project's key aims: collaboration, shared learning and peer-support. Attendees particularly valued the opportunity to interact with other students who were conducting research in similar areas but with differing methods, and the safe space that the workshops provided for honest conversations about difficulties faced during a PhD.

A final survey of participants' experiences is ongoing. This will provide us with a more detailed understanding of the of the impact of the workshops in terms of fostering collaboration and improving research culture. We will present these finding along with a framework to support the development of future student-led workshops with similar objectives.

The role of joint doctoral degrees in shaping research culture

Prof Liezel Frick¹; Prof Katherine Wimpenny²; Prof Sibusiso Moyo¹; Prof Elena Gaura² ; Prof Luca Morini²; Dr QueAnh Dang²; Dr Dimitar Angelov²

¹*Stellenbosch University*; ²*Coventry University*

Joint doctoral degrees—spanning institutions, disciplines, and national systems—are often positioned as exemplars of collaboration. Graduates of joint doctoral programmes carry with them a research culture shaped by international collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and openness to diverse perspectives. As they move forward in their careers, they are well positioned to embed and expand these values, contributing to more connected, inclusive, and globally engaged research environments. Yet the implications of these programmes for research culture remain underexplored. While joint doctorates can foster more inclusive, internationally connected, and reflexive research environments by embedding co-creation, shared supervision, and cross-cultural exchange into doctoral training, they can expose and amplify tensions—such as misaligned evaluation criteria, uneven resource distribution, administrative complexity, and conflicting epistemic traditions—that challenge established practices and assumptions about doctoral education. This research culture carousel invites participants to examine how joint doctoral programmes both cultivate and unsettle existing research cultures within higher education institutions. Drawing on emerging evidence and participant experiences from joint programme leads, supervisors, higher degrees researchers and university leaders, the session will explore how stakeholders in such programmes navigate divergent institutional norms, expectations, and power structures. Aligned with the IRCC26 theme, Collaboration for Lasting Change, this interactive session aims to stimulate collective reflections on the opportunities and frictions generated by joint doctoral provision. Through facilitated discussion, participants will consider how institutions can move beyond transactional partnerships toward more equitable, sustainable, and culturally responsive models of research collaboration through doctoral education across institutions. By foregrounding joint doctoral degrees as both a site of innovation and a stress test for research culture, the session aims to generate practical insights for building research cultures that are not only collaborative in principle, but transformative in practice.

P3.4 Who Contributes to Research? Recognition, Roles, and Reward (1)

Chair: Ian Hancox

Do We Belong? Teaching-Focused Academics in a Research-Intensive

Dr Clare Patterson; Dr Adam Jowett
University of Warwick

Teaching-focused (TF) academics make vital contributions to the research eco-system of research-intensive universities. Their involvement in research enhances the reputation of both the University and individual departments and strengthens the integration of research and education. It is essential that their research knowledge and skills remain current, both to maintain credibility to teach and to ensure students receive high-quality, research-informed teaching.

Yet research culture initiatives have rarely focused on TF academics, despite evidence that they often face distinctive challenges within research-intensive universities (Bull et al., 2025). This project addresses that gap by examining how teaching-focused academics experience research culture at the University of Warwick with the aim of generating an institution-wide evidence base and co-created, practical measures that strengthen inclusion, visibility and engagement. Using a mixed-methods design, the project comprises three work packages. First, university-wide survey of TF staff, with participation from staff across 20 departments, captured current engagement with research, perceptions of inclusion, and access to support. Second, in-depth interviews with TF staff across a range of departments and career stages provided richer insight into research engagement and support needs. Third, a co-creation workshop bringing together TF staff and institutional stakeholders developed practical, actionable recommendations for embedding a more supportive and connected research culture. This presentation shares emerging findings from the project and reflects on what universities can do to better recognise and support teaching-focused academics as belonging to the wider research culture of the university.

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Research culture in the UK higher education: the missing perspective of professional services staff

Dr. Zhuo Sun
University of Essex

This study investigates UK university research culture through the underrepresented perspectives of professional service staff. Especially under the premise of the Research Excellence Framework having drastically increased administrative workloads and costs, disproportionately burdening these critical enablers of research. Drawing on 25 semi-structured interviews with professional services staff in six UK universities belonging to different groups (Red Brick, Russel Group, the MillionPlus and Plate-Glass universities), the findings reveal various challenges in the UK higher education research culture. For example, external pressures, such as funding deficits and global competition affect disciplines unevenly. STEM fields face equipment and commercialisation challenges, while humanities require specialised support for partnerships. Furthermore, the fragmented career pathways, lack of recognition for professional services contributions, and technological adaptation gaps requiring sector-wide solutions. By centring professional service staff, this research fills the empirical gap in existing literature, uncovers systemic barriers to research quality and staff wellbeing, advocating for inclusive policy reforms in the research ecosystem.

Recognising the value of technical expertise

Dr Sally Morgan; Dr Natasha Dorling; Dr Jenny Loukes; Dr Endre Putyora.
University of Edinburgh

Technicians are a vital part of the research community, contributing specialist expertise, ensuring continuity, and maintaining operational capability across multiple projects. However, the recognition and costing of technician contributions within research funding applications varies considerably. This inconsistency not only affects financial sustainability but also reflects broader challenges in research culture around visibility, equity, and recognition. This project addresses the question: How can technician time be costed in research funding applications in a way that ensures both financial sustainability and appropriate recognition of expertise and contribution?

To explore this, we conducted a mixed-methods study combining quantitative analysis and qualitative insights. We analysed historical data from our institutional costing system, Worktribe, to understand how technician time has been costed over time across research grants and, to a lesser extent, consultancy projects. This longitudinal analysis enabled us to identify trends, inconsistencies, and gaps in current practice.

Alongside this, we engaged with a wide range of stakeholders—including technicians, Principal Investigators, and professional services staff—through focus groups and discussions. These conversations explored current attitudes towards technician recognition, as well as the structural and cultural barriers influencing their inclusion in funding applications. We also benchmarked our findings against practices at other UK higher education institutions to identify emerging good practice.

The project had two primary aims: first, to establish a clear understanding of how technician time has historically been costed; and second, to use these findings to inform the development of a practical framework for future costing. This framework supports a consistent, fair, and transparent approach to including technician time in research and consultancy applications.

Our findings highlight significant variability in current practice, often leading to the underrepresentation of technician contributions. In response, we have developed a structured approach that not only improves financial sustainability but also supports a broader cultural shift towards recognising the essential role technicians play in research delivery and innovation.

This talk will outline our methodology, key findings, and the development of the proposed framework, reflecting on the challenges encountered and

implications for institutional policy and practice. By sharing our approach, we aim to demonstrate how changes to financial and administrative processes can actively contribute to research culture—supporting a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable research environment.

Valuing Technical Leadership: Evidence and Emerging Policy Lessons from the Scottish Research Technicians’ Professional Academy

Mr Mohammad Ali Salik¹; Dr Sally Morgan²; Mr Jamie Smith³

¹*University of Glasgow*; ²*University of Edinburgh*; ³*University of St Andrews*

Research Technical Professionals (RTPs) play a central role in enabling high quality, innovative and sustainable research, yet their leadership contributions continue to be unevenly recognised within institutional reward, assessment and career progression frameworks. Recent sector developments, including the Technician Commitment and emerging approaches to recognising research enabling staff within REF 2029, have sharpened attention on how technical expertise, leadership and responsibility are understood and valued within research culture.

The Scottish Research Technicians’ Professional Academy (SRTP Academy) was established as a cross institutional initiative to address these challenges across the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews. Delivered over a 12 month period, the Academy aimed to support professional development, strengthen recognition of technical leadership and contribute to research culture change for RTPs working across a wide range of disciplines and roles.

The programme combined targeted development activity, including project management training, leadership and research culture workshops, grant writing support, and sessions focused on evidencing leadership within technical roles, alongside structured opportunities for peer networking and community building. Rather than relying on a single cohort model, the Academy adopted a blended and flexible approach to participation. This enabled technicians to engage in ways that reflected their roles, career stages and capacity, while still fostering visibility and connection across institutions. This design responded directly to well documented barriers to engagement for technical staff, including workload pressures and limited access to development opportunities.

This presentation draws on participant feedback, facilitator reflections and structured evaluation undertaken at the conclusion of the programme. It examines how involvement in the Academy supported changes in confidence, leadership identity and participants’ ability to articulate the value of their technical expertise, as well as the importance of cross institutional networks in strengthening professional belonging and collaboration. The presentation also reflects on delivery challenges, including engagement barriers, capacity constraints and the practicalities of embedding culture focused initiatives within existing organisational structures.

Beyond programme level outcomes, the session focuses on emerging policy and practice insights. Building on evaluation findings, it outlines recommendations relevant to ongoing sector activity, including delivery of the Technician Commitment, recognition of research enabling staff within REF 2029, and international work led through UK ITSS and Universitas 21. These insights address more inclusive definitions of research leadership, improved recognition of technical contributions, and more meaningful involvement of RTPs in grant activity, leadership roles and progression pathways.

By sharing learning from a large scale, collaborative initiative, this case study offers transferable insights for institutions seeking to move from research culture commitments to sustained structural change.

P3.5 Inclusive & Diverse Research Environments

Chair: Kat Grover

The Building Race Equity and Diversity (BREaD) in Research Network: Community Conversations about health research with local communities from racially minoritised backgrounds

Angela Kibia¹; Dr Juliana Onwumere²

¹*King's College London*; ²*South London and Maudsley NHS Trust*

The Building Race Equity and Diversity (BREaD) in Research Network, South London, is a multi-partner network dedicated to embedding diversity, race equity, and inclusive practice within health research.

The BREaD network was established in response to the known under-representation of racially minoritised communities in health research, with several objectives including:

- Serve as a driving force in embedding race inclusion, diversity and equity approaches in research practices
- Ensure inclusive policies and procedures are core features within research
- Encourage broader discussions across partners on race inclusion and equity issues in research
- Promote and disseminate innovation and good practice to enable cross-partner learning and collaboration

The network comprises key health and education organisations across South London, including South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, and the NIHR Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre. It also includes community organisations, Croydon BME Forum, Black Thrive, and the Caribbean and African Health Network. Alongside two local councils, the Maudsley charity, and lived experience research ambassadors.

As part of a core priority to engage directly with local underserved communities, build trust in research, and facilitate a better understanding of what research is and should be, the BREaD network facilitated a pilot public engagement initiative - Community Conversations about health research with local communities from racially minoritised backgrounds.

The Community Conversations were delivered in partnership with voluntary and community organisations. Sessions covered (1) attendees' understanding and thoughts about health research, (2) barriers and facilitators to involvement in health research, and (3) positive actions to reduce barriers to research participation.

This presentation will focus on preliminary findings from the Community Conversations, including key themes of communities' perspectives on health research, insights to reduce barriers to involvement, reflections on cross-sector partnerships with community organisations to develop a collaborative research culture, and practical recommendations that contribute to inclusive and equitable research practices.

Experiences of gender-based microaggressions and microinclusions in research settings

Yihua Chen; Csilla Pákozdy; Nicole Tausch; Gillian R. Brown.

University of St Andrews

Micromessages are subtle, often unintended or unconscious actions or behaviours that send signals about the actor's attitudes towards minority or disadvantaged groups. They can make others feel marginalised and excluded (microaggressions), or they can enhance feelings of belonging (microinclusions). Gender is one of the axes along which people may experience different micromessages, both negative (e.g. sexist jokes) and positive (e.g. use of correct pronouns). The objective of our research is to understand the gender-based micromessages that research and research support staff experience in their workplace. In this qualitative study, we are conducting a set of semi-structured interviews (N=20) lasting around 1 hour with staff members working in Scottish research environments to document the types and valence of experiences in this population. During each interview, different types of micromessages related to gender were described to participants (using classification systems devised by Sue et al., 2007; Capodilupo et al., 2010; Derthick, 2015 and Rowe, 2008), and participants were asked to describe their experiences with each type of micromessage, if they have encountered them. A thematic analysis approach is being used to analyse the anonymised interview transcripts. Although analysis of the data is not yet complete, some patterns are already emerging, for example in the types of micromessages staff are encountering: while most participants did not report experiences with sexist and demeaning language, insinuations of (in)competence in relation to certain tasks and duties seem to be more common. Additionally, preliminary analyses suggest that while many of the micromessages encountered line up with existing taxonomies, some experiences, such as implying and signalling women (and only women) to be interested in research topics relating to gender, and not feeling respected and credited as researchers, could also belong to as yet undescribed categories that may be unique to research environments. Understanding research staff's experiences with both positive and negative micromessages is a crucial step towards identifying barriers to belonging and fostering a more inclusive research culture.

Making Equity an Institutional Responsibility: An In-House Career Development Programme for Global Majority Researchers

Dr Sayema Rahman Khan.

University of Manchester

BACKGROUND: Current sector wide data reveals stark underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in senior roles within Higher Education. A common analogy of this is the 'leaky pipeline' effect, where talent gets lost as it goes up the career ladder. Institutional research culture is an overarching factor that fosters belonging, inclusion and impacts career progression. While research has explored barriers and enablers affecting Global Majority researchers, career development remains frequently framed as an individual challenge rather than an institutional responsibility. Many institutions rely on short-term, externally delivered leadership programmes without sustained organisational ownership, structured career tracking or embedded evaluation. Funded through Research England, RISE@Manchester (Researcher Inclusion and Support for Equity), is University of Manchester's first inhouse project that designs and delivers a comprehensive career development programme for researchers from global majority backgrounds targeting systemic change rather than working via a deficit model.

METHODS: RISE@Manchester is a university-wide project integrating previously siloed efforts and guided by a steering group comprising EDI leaders, Global Majority researchers across faculties and talent development colleagues, ensuring shared ownership from inception to delivery.

Delivered over six months by the Researcher Development team, the programme integrates co-created workshops, action learning sets, culturally aware one-to-one coaching; formalised senior sponsorship to enhance advocacy and visibility; and dedicated line manager sessions to strengthen local developmental support. Evaluation is embedded through a Theory of Change framework, articulating intended short-, medium- and long-term outcomes across personal development, career progression and organisational culture. Touchpoints are embedded throughout the programme for coaches, sponsors and cohort members to reflect on progress and adapt delivery.

IMPACT: By engaging researchers, sponsors and managers simultaneously, RISE distributes responsibility for progression across individual, relational and organisational levels. The programme aims to strengthen leadership identity, confidence and intra-institutional networks, while influencing sponsor practice, managerial awareness and institutional research culture for recognition and progression. By retaining ownership of design, delivery and evaluation internally, RISE@Manchester offers a transferable model for other institutions seeking to embed equitable career development within research culture strategy. Insights from design, delivery and evaluation can inform sector-wide practice enabling iterative development and positioning progression of underrepresented researchers as a sustained institutional commitment.

P3.6 Who Contributes to Research? Recognition, Roles, and Reward (2)

Chair: Jamie Burford

Invisible researchers: A cross organisational perspective of professional and technical services researchers

Ms Helen Curtis¹; Dr Ellis Ryan²; Dr Charlotte Verney¹

¹University of Bristol; ²University of Warwick

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 remains little visibility of university professional services staff who are actively researching (Verney and Curtis, 2025).

Since the 2023/24 funding cycle, the University of Bristol Enhancing Research Cultures funds have supported an exploratory project to understand the experiences of professional services staff at the University who research (<https://psresearchers.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/>). The initial phase ran an internal survey, interviewed key informants of the research process, and developed a working conceptual definition of professional services researchers. The second phase established an internal network, developed video profiles of existing professional services researchers at Bristol, and piloted some training. Now in its third year of funding, the project is focusing on developing resources to support professional services staff navigating ethical considerations in research and collaborating with human resources to explore how research skills can be embedded in the University's skills framework as part of the innovation and continuous improvement skills profile.

In 2025/26 the University of Warwick Enhancing Research Cultures funds have supported a similar project, to replicate and build on the project at Bristol. Both projects have involved a survey to identify professional services staff doing research, and their experiences, and Warwick plans to establish an internal network for interested professional services staff.

In this presentation, we share initial insights and reflections from these two projects exploring common themes and challenges, including terminology as a barrier to inclusion and self-identification, practical barriers such as access to communities, and a strong desire to connect and support one and other. We discuss the implications of our findings, drawing from the data and insights from both institution's surveys to explore the experiences of professional services and technical staff who are conducting research in higher education. We offer recommendations on how organisations can take practical steps to increase the inclusion of these researchers.

References:

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- Verney, C., & Curtis, H., 2025. Enabling an Inclusive Research Culture for Higher Education Professional Services Researchers. *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 12(3), 50-71. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.31273/eirj.v12i3.1838>.
- <https://hidden-ref.org/>

Championing technical advancement by aligning with research culture strategy and funding

Bethan Upex; Andrew Moss.

Durham University

This presentation will demonstrate the value of aligning Technician Commitment Action Plans with institutional research culture strategy.

It will:

- Identify how embedding the TC action plan with research culture strategy creates conditions which enable technical staff to be visible and recognised within the research ecosystem.
- Showcase how enhancing research culture funding can support diverse research, leadership and development opportunities for technician professionals.
- Share practice on how the aligned strategy and funding to support technicians across different roles and career stages has influenced career pathways.

Using data from 2022-2026 of Durham University's Technician Enhancing Research Culture Fund (TERC) it will illustrate the benefits of having a dedicated enabling fund for technical professionals. This will include the approach to funding and inclusive governance practices; data insights on the development opportunities undertaken, and how a ring-fenced fund enables career development and progression. It will report on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the funding based on quantitative and qualitative data from recipients and share learnings of the adaptations that have been made to support inclusion and innovation.

Through three case studies it will demonstrate how funding has enabled technicians to develop innovative programmes of work and leadership roles which have advanced the University's research strategy from:

- The Early Career Technician's Network
- Reimagining Technical Pathways into Environmental Science Project
- Heads of Technical Development Roles

These case studies reflect the impact of TERC funding both personally and institutionally and demonstrate the diversity of technicians and roles which have benefited from this structured support and funding. Following insights from these case studies, the presentation will conclude with the

sustainability of the TERC funding in financially uncertain times for universities and how embedding research culture and technical strategy together have long-term organisational benefits for technical professionals.

Recognising What Counts: Rethinking Leadership, Reward and Contribution in Research Culture

Zain Ul Abidin; Kay Guccione; Charlotte Bonner-Evans
University of Glasgow

Research culture is increasingly understood as the collective result of how people think, feel, and act within research environments, shaped by everyday behaviours, relationships, and by how success is defined, supported, evaluated, rewarded, and recognised (University of Glasgow, n.d.). Yet an ongoing sector challenge remains: many institutional reward and promotion systems have historically placed greater emphasis on outputs, grant capture, and formal seniority than on enabling relational and collaborative contributions that sustain research environments (Macfarlane, 2007; Wellcome Trust, 2020, Bennett et al., 2023). These contributions may include mentoring, collaboration, technical expertise, professional support, advocacy, kindness, and the everyday labour of enabling others to thrive (Waddington, 2018).

This paper presents learning from three cross-institutional positive recognition projects delivered through the InFrame programme: People Make Research (University of Glasgow), Seek, Find, Celebrate (University of Edinburgh), and Together, Research Excels (University of St Andrews). Building on the original People Make Research project at Glasgow (Bonner-Evans et al., 2025), the initiative invited colleagues across academic, research, technical, professional, and postgraduate communities to recognise individuals making positive contributions to research culture. Rather than rewarding a small number of winners, the initiative prioritised inclusive visibility, peer voice, and broad celebration of contribution across the research ecosystem.

Using a mixed-methods secondary analysis of 685 nominations submitted across three partner universities, the study applied three complementary analytical lenses to address a key question: how can institutions better evidence the people and practices that create positive research cultures? (a) Visibility analysis examined which roles and settings appeared most often in recognition data. (b) Relational analysis explored who recognised whom across peer, supervisory, and cross-role relationships. (c) Network-informed thematic analysis linked recognised values, behaviours, support, and reported impacts with these relationship patterns, identifying practices that were frequently praised and widely shared, cross-boundary, or central to healthy research environments (Borgatti et al., 2024; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings indicate that colleagues most frequently recognised care, kindness, collaboration, generosity, mentoring, role modelling, technical contribution, and the creation of supportive environments. Recognition was distributed across multiple job families, with substantial visibility for Research Professional Staff alongside Academic colleagues, postgraduate researchers, research staff, technicians, and professional services colleagues. This challenges narrower assumptions that leadership is primarily academic, senior, or positional. Network patterns further suggest that recognition frequently travelled through peer relationships while also crossing supervisory and professional boundaries, indicating that everyday leadership often operates through trust, reciprocity, brokerage, and enabling connections rather than hierarchy alone (Burt, 2005; Elkins-Tanton, 2021).

We argue that recognition initiatives can function as low-burden institutional intelligence systems: surfacing hidden labour, revealing the practices communities genuinely value, and identifying where formal reward structures diverge from lived research culture. InFrame is now using these insights to inform an Inclusive Research Leadership Framework, with wider implications for promotions reform, leadership development, and more inclusive research culture strategy across the sector.

Bridging Divides: Teaching-Focused Staff and Their Place in Research Culture

Dr James Burford; Dr Gill Frigerio; Fatima Alhaj-Hasan; Milena Cuccurullo.
University of Warwick

Teaching-focused academic staff represent a growing proportion of the UK higher education workforce, yet their relationship to research and research culture remains insufficiently explored within ongoing debates. This presentation reports on a project which examines how teaching-focused staff in the social sciences understand and engage with research, and how they perceive their place within institutional and local level research cultures. While there is growing emphasis on fostering inclusive research environments, much of the existing discussion continues to prioritise recognisably research-intensive roles, with less attention paid to the experiences of those on teaching-focused academic pathways in HE. The study reports on findings derived from a series of focus group discussions with teaching-focused academics across social science disciplines at the University of Warwick. These discussions were designed to explore participants' perspectives on research engagement, including how they define and value research and scholarship, what opportunities exist for involvement, and what challenges or barriers may shape participation within research cultures. Particular attention is given to how institutional structures, expectations, and cultures influence these experiences. Rather than presuming a uniform relationship to research, the project has sought to capture a range of perspectives and practices, recognising that teaching-focused staff may engage with research in diverse ways. By centring the voices of teaching-focused academics, the project aims to contribute to broader conversations about research culture and academic work. It offers insights to inform ongoing efforts to create more inclusive and supportive research environments, and to better understand how teaching and research roles are conceptualised and connected within contemporary higher education.

P3.7 Research Professionals Futures Workshop

Rika Nair/Katie Reynolds

This interactive session will provide a forum to delve into who Research Professionals (RPs) are and the role they play in shaping positive research cultures. This is a chance for colleagues to help shape our next engagement activities, including our upcoming community of practice.

RPs are a diverse and highly skilled community whose work helps research happen effectively, ethically, securely and with impact. Working across research development, programme management, research strategy, libraries, innovation, partnerships and many other areas, RPs contribute specialist expertise throughout the research lifecycle. Yet despite their significant contribution, RP expertise is often under-recognised and underutilised across the sector.

This is a co-creation workshop where we want to hear from colleagues leading on research culture change at their institutions and to learn from each other what has worked and how progress can be measured to ensure lasting culture change. We will explore how different institutions are currently recognising and supporting Research Professionals and identify opportunities to strengthen collaboration across the wider research ecosystem.

Join us to share insights with peers and to contribute to a growing national conversation about the future of RPs.

3.8 Responsible Research Practice

Chair: Carole Harris

Recognising wiki contributions as collaborative research outputs: Towards an open research toolkit

Dr Guilherme Fians
University of Manchester

Communication and publishing are fundamental to academic practice – research becomes impactful and socially relevant when widely and openly shared. This principle aligns with the growing importance of co-production, where those formerly labelled “informants” become recognised as collaborators who meaningfully shape research directions and co-author outputs (Bourke 2008; Weiss 2021). However, a critical mismatch persists between rhetoric supporting collaboration and co-production (at both institutional and national levels) and the mechanisms used to evaluate and recognise research outputs. In REF assessments, for example, academic-authored publications are consistently submitted for assessment, whereas community-led outputs tend to be restricted to the label “impact” (Marzi and Pain 2022). Relatedly, explicit authorship attribution remains crucial for evidencing research excellence. This creates perverse incentives: researchers are discouraged from producing outputs pseudonymously or that cannot be easily evidenced, even when such contributions might align more closely with open research principles.

This paper examines this tension through the lens of wiki-based knowledge production. Platforms like Wikipedia, Internet Archive, and OpenStreetMap represent some of the most ambitious attempts to democratise access to reliable, open knowledge at scale: they prioritise scholarship as their most trusted source, subject content to continuous community-based editorial scrutiny, and provide transparency through detailed public records of each contribution/contributor. A Wikipedia article can reach more people in one week than many journal articles do in years – yet researchers who invest their expertise translating scholarship into impactful wiki knowledge receive no formal recognition for it. The result is a structural misalignment: some of the best open research practices are precisely those that institutional frameworks are least equipped to acknowledge.

I approach this misalignment by asking: What are the attitudes of researchers from different fields towards wiki-based contributions? How do researchers navigate – or avoid – the challenges of collaborative and pseudonymised authorship when seeking formal recognition for their work? And what practical frameworks might enable institutions to recognise collaborative online outputs as legitimate research contributions? To answer these questions, I have conducted a sequential mixed-methods project with researchers and research support staff at the University of Manchester. Based on a survey, interviews, and a participatory workshop, I have explored individual experiences of navigating recognition systems, with a particular focus on the opportunities and barriers researchers encounter when contributing to wikis and seeing their contributions legitimised within research culture and academic evaluation frameworks.

My preliminary findings point to a gap between outputs researchers feel pressured to produce (typically journal articles and monographs) and those they perceive as most impactful for society (such as wiki contributions and co-produced engagement activities). While most research participants perceive knowledge contributions to wiki platforms as an “intellectual pastime,” others seek ways to see their wiki authorship academically recognised. Discussing these findings, this paper also outlines how this ongoing project will culminate in a co-produced, hands-on toolkit for evidencing wiki-based contributions, ultimately arguing for collaborative, digital, and publicly engaged scholarship to be recognised as legitimate outputs.

Cross-institutional Ethics for Culture Change: A Culture Catalyst Fund Case Study

Dr Caitlin McDonald
University of St Andrews

Building positive research cultures relies on the highest standards of integrity and ethical responsibility. Given that many research projects now cross both disciplines and institutions, this creates the question of which panel should be responsible for the review and approval of ethical proposals. Indeed, this was the case with the InFrame Culture Catalyst Fund (CCF), which funded 26 short-term, diverse and interdisciplinary projects across the universities of St Andrews, Glasgow and Edinburgh designed to create cultural change within the sector, primarily by using methods aligned to social sciences such as surveys, focus groups and interviews. Many of the CCF project leads were either in disciplines with panels who were not suited to the type of activities that would be undertaken (e.g. physics) or were in central professional services units without dedicated ethics committees. There was also the challenge that going through local ethics processes could cause delays, leading to CCF projects receiving approval at different times, leading to challenges with tight project delivery deadlines and creating disparity among the project leads.

To solve these challenges and ensure that all CCF projects received the same standard of review, with those trained in scrutinising projects with human participants, the InFrame project created a bespoke, cross-institutional short-term subcommittee to act as reviewers. This paper will delve into the reasons why it is important to attain ethical approval for internal culture change projects, discuss the setup of the subcommittee, and evaluate the outcomes of this experimental approach to research ethics. Our findings show that challenges with cross-institutional working, such as firewalled local ethics systems, can be overcome with cost-effective shared solutions, that a shared system ensured all projects were reviewed fairly and received the same scrutiny of ethical standards, and that this ethical review upskilled project leads who did not normally go through ethical review processes in their normal working life.

As the rapidly changing sector tries to find efficient solutions to challenges with collaborative working, the InFrame CCF ethics panel serves as an example of a collegial and positive method of managing ethics for cross-institutional projects, with both the project leads and committee members benefitting from this approach and being able to share the learnings from this trial within their own teams.

<https://inframeproject.org/>

P3.11 Navigating the Politics in Research Culture

Facilitators: Karen Stroobants, Ben Bleasdale, Emily Ennis, Ashley Collins & Jess Adams

Research culture is often discussed in terms of values, behaviours, and systems, but less frequently as a political space shaped by structural forces and everyday practices. For many working in this area, it can feel isolating and frustrating to navigate power dynamics and ownership spread across different levels.

Join us for a highly participatory session to connect the conceptual political frameworks shaping research culture reform, our shared experiences of “small p” politics - how research culture is negotiated, resisted and reshaped in daily practice - and the “big P” political landscape of government strategy and funding priorities which shape our environment.

We will explore our collective experiences, knowledge and questions, and work together to move towards collective sense-making and action - aiming to leave us better positioned, individually and together, to navigate and influence research culture politics.

P3.10 Research Culture Carousel

Facilitator: Adele Kenny

Transforming Supervision Culture and Practice: The Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP)

Dr Heather Sears, Dr Victoria Ríos Castaño.
Coventry University

Funded by Research England (2023-2027), the Next Generation Research Supervision Project (RSVP) is a large collaborative, cross-disciplinary, translational research project into doctoral education, led by a consortium of five UK organisations working with partner practitioners (58 research organisations) and other business and industry partners. Based on four pillars –the role of team supervision, supervision practice in different disciplines, contexts and types of research degrees, and combatting bad practice–, RSVP is currently developing, co-creating, piloting, and evaluating a phased programme of Initial and Continuing Professional Development interventions for doctoral research supervisors. These range from sessions on the experience of being a research supervisor (e.g. “Exploring supervisor approaches: Becoming a flexible supervisor”), and on the provision of effective support (e.g. “Giving feedback on PGR writing”), to session on team supervision (e.g. “Enhancing collaboration and aligning expectations”), and on working with a varied landscape of candidates (e.g. “Supporting international doctoral candidates”).

Aside from supporting supervisor development with adaptable workshop materials and the opportunity to engage in dynamic communities of practice, RSVP is also facilitating:

- institutional reflection on supervisory practice through two programmes: peer mentoring circles and a peer observation scheme, covering all disciplines and levels of experience.
- strategies to recognise supervision practice and to reward supervisors for their work.
- further training for the sector, for instance, by equipping researcher developers with new skills and pedagogy training.

Finally, RSVP is also keen to share best practice in their “RSVP Collection”, a repository of commissioned reports from experts in the field, position papers detailing major findings in UK’s research supervision across the sector, and a data-informed and pedagogical grounded blog. Thus, the “RSVP Collection” is intended to offer professional development, the championing of policy changes, and the driving of culture change in the supervision landscape.

For further information, please visit <https://www.rsvp.ac.uk>.

Role modelling through the CIRCLE (Championing Interdisciplinary Research CuLTurEs) fund

Lucy Newman
Queen Mary University of London

Interdisciplinary research is increasingly looked at as a potential solution to some of the largest research challenges of our times. Funding calls such as UKRI’s Cross Research Council Responsive Mode scheme have shown sector wide support for ideas that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. But conversations with our researchers at Queen Mary showed that they face many challenges and barriers in undertaking this type of research and revealed a desire for role modelling of how to do it well.

The CIRCLE fund is a year-long pilot project designed to support and showcase new interdisciplinary teams at Queen Mary, leading to a culture change where individuals feel inspired and empowered to pursue research projects across boundaries. Following an open call to our research community at the end of 2025, nine teams from across our three faculties were appointed. The scheme provides teams with a funding pot, which researchers had identified as a key enabler in coalescing expertise and galvanising new activity. But as well as distributing funding, the project will also showcase the work of these teams across the university through a series of communications and events. This will provide opportunities for the wider research community to learn from their experiences at key stages of the project such as forming a team, finding ways of working together, and reflections on the benefits and challenges of this way of working. The role of the Research Culture team is to both manage the relationship between role models and the research community in a sustainable way, and to capture the insights from this pilot year into a useful resource for those looking to start an interdisciplinary research project in future.

Through raising the visibility of these teams, we hope to celebrate the benefits of interdisciplinary research as well as identifying how to tackle some of the challenges, with the overall effect of encouraging colleagues who would like to undertake this type of research in future but are unsure how to begin. This presentation will share the progress and plans of the scheme so far, and any early learnings.

Planning and supporting community-based research: useful tools and insights from practicing researchers

Ms Catriona Gold; Ms Becky Gordon
Lancaster University

Done right, collaborative and community-engaged research can be hugely beneficial to researchers, research institutions and wider communities. Done wrong, community research can negatively impact both researchers and community members and cause reputational damage for institutions. With community research increasingly central to HE strategy, it is important for research culture professionals to understand the specific considerations and risks associated with this research type, and the support and training needs of researchers and other professionals involved in it.

In this Research Culture Carousel session, the Reimagining Research Practices project team at Lancaster University will outline some of these considerations and showcase useful tools and prompts intended to address them. These will be relevant for researchers and related professionals involved in, supporting or considering community-based research.

Our tools include the Community Research Digital Toolkit (CReDiT), a set of card-based prompts and an octahedral die intended to support robust,

ethical and beneficial practice in this field. These resources have been developed via a series of focus groups, interviews and co-design workshops held with researchers spanning the breadth of community research at various scales and disciplines - from co-designed arts projects to large scale citizen science projects.

One recurring theme among our researcher participants was surprise at the specific hurdles involved in and groundwork required for successful community research projects: for example, gaining skills in public relations. The tools we have created will help researchers, research enablers and participating community members to realistically plan and collaboratively design research to maximise inclusion and pre-empt and address common challenges arising in this area of work.

Resources:

- CReDiT Toolkit: <https://credit.library.lancs.ac.uk/#/>
- Working prompts: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/research-culture/reimagining-research-practices/inclusion/working-prompts-for-community-centred-research/>
- Project homepage: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/research-culture/reimagining-research-practices/inclusion/>

Using peer power and ripple effects to spread an inclusive writing culture

Rosie Wadman¹; Dr Jess Macpherson¹; Dr Kate Jones²

¹University of Southampton; ²Manchester Metropolitan University

The Time to Write (T2W) programme at the University of Southampton supports the development of healthy and inclusive writing cultures. Originally a funded research culture project and now an established part of our academic professional development programming, T2W is rooted in collegiate, social approaches that support connection and community (Murray & Newton, 2009; Zihm & Reid-Mackie, 2021). The programme is inclusive by design and provides a variety of structured opportunities to help participants develop positive writing habits and explore different methods of protecting time for themselves – as they get their writing done.

T2W has been hugely successful in supporting staff who otherwise struggle to prioritise their writing within the working week. While open to and promoted to all staff engaged in academic activity, evaluation shows most participants identify as women and/or carers and/or neurodiverse and that many of them are writing publications and grants that wouldn't have otherwise happened.

As impactful as T2W has been to both individuals and the institution, it is now being joyfully eclipsed by the ongoing ripple effect of the community of practice (CoP) and wider network which has grown around and alongside the programme. Collectively run using a blend of community of practice and Art of Hosting principles (Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Corrigan, 2019), the T2W CoP includes cross-disciplinary academics and HE professionals working in widening participation, research & innovation, and corporate communications. We are working to support inclusive, healthy writing cultures for staff and students across the whole institution – and the length of the research pipeline. After 18 months of practice sharing and resource development, we are using creative evaluation techniques (Christou et al, 2023) and ripple effect mapping (Nobles et al, 2022) to track the ongoing impacts of our CoP on ourselves, our colleagues, the university, and our wider networks across the sector.

Our object for the Carousel will be three 'pebbles' from the T2W community and its wider network. Each literal pebble will represent a project that has created ripples across and beyond the university: our Unplugged Retreat (reimagining academic writing), the UoS Academic Advocacy project (giving colleagues permission, skills and confidence to write for public audiences) and the Researcher Developers' Career Development Writing Group (dedicated time for writing and peer mentoring). Each group who joins our table will be invited to pick one as a prompt for discussion about the crucial role of peer support in creating a community that crosses the divides in academia, and the importance of ripple effects for embedding positive culture change.

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P3.9 Research Culture Carousel

Facilitator: Harbeena Lalli

Unlocking creative potential beyond the lab

Ana M. Ribeiro; Andreu Gual; Holly Blondin; David del Álamo; Thiago Carvalho; César Serrano; Fran Martínez Jiménez; Guillermo Villacampa; Mate Maus; Óscar Llorián-Salvador; Tian Tian; Johannes Jaeger; Imma Falero
Vall d'Hebron Institute of Oncology (VHIO)

Short summary:

VHIO's five-day induction training for first-year PhD students shifts a knowledge acquisition mindset to an innovative, problem finding, problem-loving and problem-solving approach grounded in creativity and critical thinking. It is our mission at VHIO Academy to nurture the art of asking questions and to equip future philosophy doctors with skills to intentionally and responsibly decide which questions to pursue, using frameworks widely applied in other sectors to navigate modern biomedical research and connect scientific excellence with impact. The week is structured around the theme of Scientific Thinking. It begins with a dive into creativity as a driving force for knowledge generation, critical thinking, and individual and collective growth. Participants expand their view of creativity beyond artistic expression to recognize it as central to hypothesis generation and experimental design and learn new tools to face scientific challenges. On the second day, participants move from merely solving predefined problems to actively identifying and formulating new, meaningful questions, fostering a proactive and innovative research mindset. These two days serve as the backbone of the Induction journey, providing intellectual strategies and practical tools for reflection to be used during the week. The third day traces the rationale behind the fundamental biomedical research to new therapeutics pipeline, using real case studies who "fail to cross the valley of death". On day four, VHIO researchers showcase complementary approaches in basic, pre-clinical, and clinical cancer research, emphasizing the key questions, models, methods, and impact of their work at different levels. The final day introduces modern philosophy of science, inviting participants to question assumptions, uncover biases and knowledge gaps, and critically evaluate the scope and trustworthiness of scientific claims. The main learning outcome of this programme is to apply creative and problem-solving tools in professional settings and to develop the mental agility needed to turn setbacks into breakthroughs.

This collaborative initiative brings together the expertise from different professional backgrounds and sectors, creating a fertile ground that nurtures forward-looking researchers who will remain firmly committed to ethical rigor and reflective practice during their PhD and beyond. We hope conference participants recognize the importance of intersectoral educational programmes that inspire the next generation of biomedical scientists to spend most of their time and effort thinking critically, responsibly, and creatively about their projects, and how this scientific-thinking mindset can reshape research culture and transform how science is done, evaluated, funded and translated into healthcare solutions for everyone.

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Community of Practice as Collective Action on Research Culture at University of Oxford

Lindsey Spriggs; Sarah Mallet

University of Oxford

The University of Oxford's Research Culture Community of Practice (CoP) serves as a dynamic, collaborative space for professional services colleagues across various roles within the University to advance its research culture by connecting, sharing knowledge and experiences, and co-creating practical, inclusive and lasting solutions. The primary aims of the CoP (whose membership includes, but is not limited to, research managers, grant managers, project managers, governance managers and those with management or policy functions) are to: facilitate networking, communication, collaboration and the sharing of knowledge, events and experiences across the professional services community; to enhance the understanding of research culture at Oxford; and to enable members to consider the impact of research culture and encourage discussions in this area. This Research Culture Carousel presentation will share the experience of University of Oxford's Research Culture CoP in engaging a wide cross-section of professional services colleagues to participate in institutional efforts to support research culture.

Two of the CoP's current co-leads (Lindsey Spriggs and Sarah Mallet) will share insights into how Oxford's Research Culture CoP has enabled the development of supportive research cultures across multiple and diverse local contexts; helped to address research culture-related challenges; and facilitated the sharing of good practices. As the CoP celebrates its 6-year anniversary, the presenters will also discuss how its work has begun to benefit from increasing formalisation, senior advocacy, evaluation and cross-collaboration with other University CoP leads.

The presenters will discuss practical and transferable considerations that have been factored in throughout the evolution of the initiative, whilst also welcoming feedback and alternative perspectives on their approach from attendees. The presentation will aim to be informative to both academic and administrative staff who are interested in communities of practice as a means of facilitating collective action on research culture challenges, and who may be considering implementing or enhancing a similar initiative at their own institution.

The Integrity Quest: an interactive way to explore ethics and integrity principles

Cosmin Mudure; Dr Jacob Barker; Fran Baber; Dr Filipa Vance; Oli Schofield

University of Bath

Developed through Enhancing Research Culture funding at the University of Bath, we collaborated to design a board game to support doctoral researchers in engaging with research ethics and integrity in an active, collaborative, and exploratory way. In this session, we will bring 'The Integrity Quest' board game as our object and use it to tell the story of its development. The game is built around cooperative play, using ethical dilemmas and research integrity scenarios to prompt conversation, challenge assumptions, and explore decision-making in context. We will share the rationale behind moving away from traditional training formats towards something more experiential. We will also reflect on the process of

designing a resource that can work across disciplines, as well as lessons learned from our pilot gameplays and grand launch at the Bath Festival of Ideas at Bath.

We will demonstrate how the game is applied in interdisciplinary workshops, where participants collectively navigate scenarios, drawing on disciplinary norms and values. The goal of The Integrity Quest is to make ethics and integrity principles more tangible and relevant, while also highlighting the diversity of perspectives within research communities, recognising the many research cultures that exist.

We hope to inspire others to think differently about how research ethics and integrity can be explored within their own contexts, and how similar approaches might be adapted or reimaged across institutions.

CIRCLE: Built From the Inside Out

Dr Cleo White
University of Leicester

Efforts to improve research culture often result in frameworks and guidance developed at a distance from the people they are intended to support. This project took a different approach: designing with the research community, not for them.

The CIRCLE (Creating Inclusive Research Cultures through Leading with Empathy) Toolkit was co-designed with researchers, research leaders, and research-enabling staff through a series of iterative workshops and collaborative sessions. Participants were brought together across roles, career stages, and disciplines, not to validate decisions already made, but to shape the work as it developed. What they shared about their lived experiences of research culture directly informed the direction, content, and structure of the toolkit at every stage.

Co-design was used as a guiding principle throughout. Creative and participatory approaches, including adapted body mapping and collaborative prototyping, enabled honest conversations about the realities of research leadership. Each phase built on the last, with community input continuously feeding back into the process. At the same time, the process surfaced practical tensions, including how co-designed ideas could be meaningfully translated into existing institutional structures and ways of working. When something didn't resonate, it was reworked.

The result is CIRCLE, a set of practical, adaptable resources designed to support research leaders in navigating the complexities of research leadership. Rather than prescribing behaviours, the toolkit offers flexible tools to support reflection, dialogue, and action, grounded in both lived experience and evidence.

The process itself also mattered. By actively involving voices that are often not included in these conversations, the co-design process modelled the kinds of relational, inclusive practices the toolkit seeks to promote, bridging the gap between strategy and lived experience. CIRCLE highlights both the value of designing with the research community and the challenges of embedding co-designed approaches within existing research systems.

The Bridge of Possibility: How to co-create research culture through drawing together.

Laura Evans-Hill
Nifty Fox Creative

Research culture change depends on shared purpose, inclusive participation and translating dialogue into collective action. But HOW do we build that a) together, b) when you are sat in a room of researchers staring back at you and c) equitably. The Bridge of Possibility is a structured co-design workshop grounded in backcasting theory. It brings researchers, professional staff, leaders and external partners together to define a preferred future, assess current conditions and agree practical steps towards defining research culture, and change. Refined over ten years across 150 institutions, the approach has supported cross-sector collaborations, funding applications and co-created strategies, demonstrating how facilitated futures thinking can strengthen trust, alignment and sustainable research ecosystems.

Poster Abstracts

1. From Away Day to Action: A Pedagogically Informed Model for Strengthening Research Culture through the Scholarly Innovation Away Day (SIAD)

Dr Amy M Osmond & Dr Derek Lai Teik Ong
Hertfordshire Business School, University of Hertfordshire

How people are shaped as researchers is crucial to the pursuit of research. While Higher Education Institutions have placed preference on producing highly ranked journal publications, creating research culture and a research environment is increasingly being considered when setting institutional strategies or policy frameworks. Exercises like the Research Excellence Framework include Strategy, People, and Research Environment as an assessment strand, noting “inclusive, supportive and collaborative research cultures enable a strong, diverse and dynamic research ecosystem” (UKRI 2026).

Strengthening research culture requires pedagogically informed environments that fuel the development of scholarly identity, confidence, and collaborative practice. The Scholarly Innovation Away Day (SIAD) initiative employs a sequenced programme of mentored and collaborative pedagogy drawing on theories of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and collaborative inquiry (Clegg, 2008). Participants are positioned as co-learners and co-producers of knowledge rather than passive recipients. SIAD additionally recognises that identity is shaped by other, sometimes multiple, forms of scholarly activities (SAs), including grants writing, academic publishing, pedagogic research and HEA, doctoral studies, and industry practice, research and engagement. Holistically, SIAD encourages collective growth as scholarly practitioners, not as only high output-producing academic writers.

Framed as a longitudinal intervention, SIAD 1.0 brought awareness to colleagues, introducing the possibilities of the five SAs. It adopted a practice-based developmental model where participants collectively ideated the SAs and then actively worked on outputs within collaborative environments. Collective writing environments can enhance productivity, confidence, and scholarly engagement (Murray and Newton, 2009), while collaborative pedagogical approaches promote shared reflection and collective knowledge-building (Ah Chee Mok and Park, 2022). This approach produced an unwritten agreement that personal work would be ideated, formed, and initiated, and shifted the long-standing research culture from individualised practice towards collective ownership of scholarly development.

SIAD 2.0 operationalised these principles through small mentored developmental workshops. Led by experienced scholars in each SA, individuals received targeted inputs on scholarly progression and set actions to complete prior to regrouping across the five SAs. They reported increased clarity, concrete action plans, establishment of mentoring relationships, and reduced feelings of isolation around writing and scholarly progression. This revealed a cultural shift towards a more connected and supportive research environment, which is critical for fostering sustainable engagement with research (Moran et al., 2020).

Finally, the SAID 3.0 pedagogical architecture followed an iterative and developmental process; subsequent iterations were structured from evaluative data, supporting colleagues from different career stages. It integrated reflective practice, feedback, and scaffolded project-based learning, progressing participants through project incubation, reviewing and managing, and evaluating and producing phases, effectively creating low-risk, mentored spaces for testing, exploring, and collaborating on project ideas. These efforts also provided cross-area dialogue and collaboration that moved participants from capacity-building towards co-produced outputs, improving research conduct, strengthening research leadership capabilities through understanding personal strengths and weaknesses, and developing sustainable career trajectories. By embedding mentoring, evaluation, and output generation within a pedagogical architecture, SIAD offers a transferable and scalable research culture development model that is responsive to local context and produces immediate scholarly outcomes and longer-term cultural change.

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2. Researcher Career Development (Bridging) Scheme

Chris Atkinson & Amy Mayfield
Lancaster University, UK

Lancaster University has been running an institutional bridging scheme for the last 4 years. This offers financial and tailored support to researchers/research-related staff who are coming to the end of their contract and expect a gap before starting a new contract at Lancaster. By providing a period of financial security and allowing an opportunity for professional and career development, it helps to address the challenges faced by researchers on time-limited contracts. For Lancaster, the scheme supports the retention of talented researchers, a focus of our Research Excellence Culture Action Plan.

This poster will provide details on the researchers supported through the scheme, how selection onto the scheme has been made fair and transparent and the impact of the scheme. It will be useful starting point for any institutions mindful to set up a similar scheme.

3. Embedding a Positive Research Culture in Translational Genomics: Practical Interventions from the MRC CoRE in Therapeutic Genomics

Ms A. de la Horra¹, Ms K. Fletcher¹, Ms M.S. Willson² and Dr D. Gill³

¹ Department of Paediatrics, University of Oxford, UK; ² Medical Sciences Division, University of Oxford, UK; ³ NDCLS, Radcliffe Department of Medicine, University of Oxford, UK

The MRC Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) in Therapeutic Genomics is a multi-institutional initiative aiming to accelerate the development and clinical translation of genome-targeted therapies for rare genetic disorders. Delivering this ambition requires not only scientific innovation but also a research culture that enables effective collaboration, responsible research practices, and sustainable career development¹. Evidence on how to operationalise research culture in pre-clinical, laboratory-based, translational settings, however, remains limited^{2,3}.

In its first year, the CoRE implemented a structured, data-informed approach to embedding research culture across pre-clinical laboratory settings. A baseline survey (n=53; ~40% response rate) assessed perceptions of leadership, collaboration, inclusion, and development. The findings revealed a 100% agreement on the importance of research culture. Mentorship appears informally embedded in daily practice with 87% respondents reporting having mentored or supported colleagues in the past year. Fewer respondents (77%) agreed that contributions from all roles and career stages are valued equally, with 15% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Only 53% agreed that PPIE meaningfully shapes research within the CoRE. To complement this, a co-creation approach was used through an interactive poster activity, engaging staff and students across different roles and career stages to define shared values and behaviours. Patient-centred purpose, collaboration, innovation, and excellence emerged as collective priorities, alongside behaviours such as open communication and knowledge sharing.

Building on these insights, the CoRE has established a network of Research Culture Champions with representation across research themes and groups, initially within the host institution (University of Oxford). This model aims to facilitate two-way communication between leadership and teams, supporting the implementation of practical research culture improvements within individual laboratories and research groups. Current interventions include improving access to training, promoting inclusive team practices, and addressing the visibility and recognition of diverse roles. In this way, the CoRE enables local ownership of research culture, empowering individual teams to shape their own environments.

The CoRE has also begun developing innovative workforce approaches, including discussion of a “roving researcher” model to promote research continuity and support flexible career pathways for research staff^{4,5}. These interventions have been complemented by a structured training programme addressing key gaps identified through the baseline analysis, including open research practices, use of FAIR data, patient and public involvement, and translational competencies such as intellectual property.

This work highlights three key insights: (1) embedding research culture requires integration with scientific leadership and delivery structures, rather than parallel initiatives; (2) combining baseline data with co-creation accelerates engagement and collective ownership; and (3) addressing structural issues (e.g. career pathways, workforce models) is critical to achieving sustained change. Ongoing evaluation will track changes in participation, training uptake, and cultural indicators over time. These findings contribute to emerging evidence on how to implement practical, scalable interventions to support a positive research culture in translational research environments.

4. REC HURDLES: Tackling Institutional and Individual Career Precarity and Professional Development

Ashley Collins, Richard Graham, Kirstin Barnard, Lucie Whitfield, Fiona Frost, Kim Rodgers, Hannah Cook
University of Nottingham

The University of Nottingham’s Wellcome-funded REC HURDLE project has investigated methods of reducing the incidence and impacts of employment precarity across research-related roles in higher education, at an institutional, individual, and collaboratively, a national level.

This poster will detail the activities undertaken on REC HURDLE and their evaluation, including:

- A pilot for an institutional database to support the movement of staff between projects for, post-docs, PRISMs and PIs.
- A bespoke professional development scheme for research staff from underrepresented groups, with a focus on the learnings of the project team of running and evaluating such an individualised programme, and on the contributions of the participant community to ongoing and future culture change at the organisation.
- Institutional career development support for researchers, technicians and PRISMs, noting the similarities and differences in experiences between these groups, and next steps for the sector

The poster will detail some learnings of the project on

- Driving change on employment precarity at organisational and individual levels in a time of turbulence for the research culture ecosystem.
- Engaging collaboratively at a sector-wide level to learn from and contribute to activity across other institutions and networks.
- Combining research and policy change approaches, and working across job families, to engage action research and systems mapping approaches when designing, planning, actioning or evaluating research culture projects, from theories of change to reporting and dissemination.
- Drive progress regionally and nationally in reducing employment precarity across the sector.

5. Professional Services: The secret ingredient for turning research findings into functionality?

Becky Gordon
Lancaster University, UK

Research projects produce valuable insights but can face challenges in embedding them into practice. This poster highlights the transformative role of Professional Services (PS) staff within Lancaster's Reimagining Research Practices project (funded by the Wellcome Trust). By involving PS colleagues from the design of the proposal, we ensured that emerging findings were translated into practical changes throughout the project - updating guidance, sharing insights and developing training resources in real time. This approach avoided common issues such as uncertainty around implementing recommendations or sustaining digital outputs, like hosting and maintaining training materials. PS expertise in governance, operations, and policy enabled the project to anticipate and resolve these challenges as they arose, creating outputs that were both impactful and sustainable. I will share concrete examples of how PS involvement accelerated action and improved long-term viability, demonstrating why research managers should advocate for integrated PS roles in future suitable projects.

6. Reimagining research practices: findings and tools for addressing new challenges in sustainability, ethics and inclusion

Ms Catriona Gold & Ms Becky Gordon
Lancaster University, UK

Changes in the way researchers and research enablers operate – in particular the use of new forms of digital data and tools – are introducing the HE community and research participants to new complexities and risks. In light of these, our interdisciplinary professional services and academic team at Lancaster University has undertaken a Wellcome Trust-funded project to re-focus and re-imagine working practices for our research community, whilst enhancing and building resilience into our research culture.

We focus on three interlinking pillars: 1) sustainability of research practices, 2) mitigations for ethical risks arising from new forms of digital data and tools, and 3) enhancing inclusion in our practices. Through these lenses, we are:

- investigating internal and external current practices and innovative ideas
- developing support mechanisms, new resources, strategies and policies for researchers to adapt to recent changes and ready them for future developments
- evaluating and communicating our activities, identifying best practice for sharing across the sector and optimising further development opportunities.

Our deliverables include:

- Training tools for researchers on sustainability, citizen science and inclusion
- Pilots of safe spaces to discuss complex ethical issues relating to digital data
- Mobile sensing device (Micro:bit) prototypes for citizen science research
- Recommendations for policy and practice changes

Our project concludes in October 2026. As our project nears completion, this poster showcases and provides access to our toolkits, training packages, Micro:bit prototypes and other deliverables. (A parallel submission will reflect upon the experience of working as an interdisciplinary team of professional services and academic staff, and the strengths and challenges of this approach.)

Project website: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/research-culture/reimagining-research-practices/>

7. Research culture is complicated: empathy doesn't count, but it still matters

Dr Cleo White
University of Leicester

Research cultures are under scrutiny, and researchers are leaving academia. Not because academia isn't interesting enough but for many reasons: job precarity, funding instability, a system that often asks for more than it gives back and how people are treated by those who lead them (1,2). Yet, while research leadership is increasingly recognised as important, how it is experienced in practice, through every day interactions, still remains overlooked(1). This project asked a simple question: what does empathic and inclusive research leadership look and feel like in higher education?

Working with 48 researchers, research leaders, and research-enabling staff through creative workshops and in-depth interviews, this project examined how empathy and inclusion are experienced, enacted, and constrained in practice.

Researchers don't experience leadership through policies or frameworks. They experience it through people. Whether their contribution was noticed. Whether they felt trusted. Whether their leader saw them as a whole person navigating a difficult system, not just someone delivering outputs. These everyday relational moments shape confidence, belonging, and resilience and they shape how people feel about their place in research.

At the same time, research leaders are not operating in isolation. Many described a genuine commitment to empathy and inclusion, but highlighted working within systems that stretch them thin, prioritises outputs, and offer little recognition or development for relational leadership practice. Empathy doesn't appear in promotion criteria. There are few mechanisms to identify or address its absence.

This reveals a clear misalignment between what research culture claims to value and what it rewards in practice. While empathy is often treated as a personal attribute, these findings position it as a critical component of effective research leadership with implications for retention, engagement and researcher experience.

If research culture is to be meaningfully strengthened, we need to pay closer attention to the relational side of leadership, how its experienced and what it means for those who stay, who thrive and who leave.

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8. Examining lab handbooks use as a tool to improve local research culture

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Research culture operates at several levels; from the wider community to individual groups. Local group culture influences research success, career development and wellbeing. Poorly communicated research cultural expectations lead to a ‘hidden curriculum’ of unwritten rules, particularly disadvantaging first-generation academics, neurodivergent individuals, and interdisciplinary researchers.

Lab handbooks define a research group’s culture: by clearly outlining roles, behaviours, and best practices they offer equitable access to information. By making local cultural expectations explicit, handbooks have the potential to disrupt the passing on of poor research cultural practices.

Implementation of lab handbooks is currently low, despite templates already existing. Limited resources are available to support group leaders understand their value, overcome implementation barriers, and ensure handbooks effectively improve local research culture.

We have sought to firstly examine how research culture is communicated within research groups by conducting focus groups discussing implicit and explicit modes of intra-group communication. We have looked at various career stages and roles to compare and contrast experiences.

Secondly we have carried out case studies on researchers who already make use of lab handbooks to investigate the barriers to implementation and the successes they have encountered when instigating lab handbook roll out.

Our findings will inform on whether, and in what capacity, lab handbooks can be useful as a tool to improve local research culture.

9. Reinvention: valuing student research through collaborative student-led publishing

Fiona O'Brien

University of Warwick, UK

Positive research cultures are built through sustained, practical interventions that redistribute power or expertise, value diverse contributions and enable meaningful collaborations across roles and career levels. Reinvention: an International Journal of Undergraduate Research offers one such intervention, placing the student as producer at the centre of research culture through partnership, co-creation and collective action. This poster presents Reinvention as a long-standing, collaborative approach to embedding inclusive research practices through student-led publishing.

Established in 2007, Reinvention publishes undergraduate research papers and reflective pieces twice a year, alongside special issues, and is open to students from any institution and discipline. The journal provides a structured yet supportive environment in which undergraduate researchers contribute original research to a global, open-access platform. The work challenges assumptions about who produces knowledge and at what career stage, reframing undergraduate research as a legitimate and valuable component of the wider research ecosystem.

A distinctive feature of Reinvention is that it is led by an Editorial Board of students from the University of Warwick alongside guest editors from international partner institutions. Students collaborate with academic and professional services staff sharing responsibility for editorial decision making peer review processes and the ongoing strategic development of the journal. The student as producer model continues to challenge hierarchical norms within academic publishing, fostering cultures of trust, reciprocity and mutual learning. Editorial practices are intentionally designed to embed co-creation, enabling students to develop leadership, editorial judgement, and confidence while shaping the journal collectively.

For student authors, Reinvention functions as an interdisciplinary developmental space. Through editorial screening and rigorous academic double-blind peer review, students receive constructive feedback on their research, academic writing, and capacity to communicate complex ideas to non-specialist audiences. The process encourages reflection, resilience and engagement with scholarly standards, while demystifying academic publishing.

This poster reflects on Reinvention's contribution to lasting research culture change by demonstrating how undergraduate-focused publishing initiatives can operate as practical, scalable interventions. By treating student research as public scholarship, the journal broadens participation in knowledge production and supports more inclusive and equitable research cultures. Its open-access model further facilitates collective knowledge exchange beyond institutional and disciplinary boundaries. Through its sustained commitment to partnership, co-creation, and the recognition of student research value, Reinvention offers an example of a framework for institutions seeking to embed collaborative, inclusive, student-centred and impact-oriented research practices, contributing to more socially engaged and sustainable research environments.

10. Beyond “How Did It Go?”: Evaluating Research Culture Using Theory of Change

Jamal Kinsella

University of Manchester, UK

Evaluation of research culture initiatives often relies on simple feedback questions such as “how did it go?”. While useful, this approach does not capture meaningful change, due to focusing on general satisfaction rather than meaningful impact. This poster presents a step-by-step approach to evaluation using Theory of Change. This approach was used to evaluate RISE@Manchester, a researcher development programme focused on equity in research careers.

We begin by outlining the limits of traditional evaluation. Many approaches prioritise outputs over outcomes. This creates gaps in understanding what actually drives change. We then introduce Theory of Change as a practical alternative. Theory of Change supports clear links between activities, outputs, and outcomes. It also strengthens accountability and shared understanding.

The poster follows a structured process. Step 1 maps activities such as workshops, coaching, and peer learning. Step 2 defines outputs that can be measured. Step 3 identifies short-term and longer-term outcomes. These include confidence, clarity, and sense of belonging. Step 4 develops a shared vision of long-term impact. For RISE@Manchester, this centres on a more equitable and inclusive research culture.

After sharing these steps, we then show how stakeholder input shaped the model. Workshops and thematic analysis were used to identify key themes. These included visibility, professional identity, and community. The final steps translate the Theory of Change into a visual framework and evaluation tools. This includes outcome-focused survey design.

This approach moves evaluation beyond description towards explanation. It helps teams understand what works, for whom, and why. It also supports learning, adaptation, and sustainability. This poster offers a practical model for others seeking to evaluate research culture initiatives in a more intentional and outcomes-driven way.

11. The AI Commons - exploring the impact of AI on communication and community across the research ecosystem

Jason Snow

University of Warwick, UK

(We are interested in taking part in any/all of the above activities, but the form only allows a single selection).

We would like to share and discuss the findings from The AI Commons, a research culture project which took place from January to July 2026, supported by Warwick's Enhancing Research Culture Fund.

Research culture thrives when every role is visible, valued, and understood. Yet communication across disciplines, job families, and hierarchies often breaks down. Our project explored the extent to which AI tools might help - or hinder - our attempts to navigate disciplinary, professional, and linguistic gaps, in order to strengthen community and connection across the whole research ecosystem, as part of our institutional research culture commitments.

The project was designed to be participatory and community-driven, involving a range of knowledge sharing, community building and data collection activities. We engaged with a diverse variety of internal stakeholders across the research ecosystem, including academics, professional services, PhD students and technicians, to better understand their usage of - and attitudes towards - GenAI in the workplace. We were particularly interested in its application for communication-based tasks, and the extent to which this has - or could - impact our sense of community and our connections with colleagues and collaborators. We are looking forward to discussing our findings.

12. Tackling Local Social Issues through Community-Informed Participatory Action Research: A case study of attainment gaps in Leicester schools

Professor Julia J.A. Shaw: Director of the Centre for Law and Social Justice, De Montfort University

Holly Swift: Doctoral Researcher, De Montfort University

Last year De Montfort University was awarded external funding to work with a Leicester multi-academy trust, Loughborough University and a community-based non-traditional postgraduate researcher, to support an inclusive community-informed project to critically address the causes behind poor educational outcomes in Leicester's schools, titled Transformative and innovative strategies for improving social support, educational outcomes and opportunities for children, young people and families in Leicester.

The project rationale and context arise from recent data showing more than 4.5 million children are living in poverty in the UK and many Leicestershire children face additional barriers to learning and participation that compromise their safety and wellbeing. Those with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), from low socio-economic status backgrounds and in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding (PPF) and with special educational needs (SEND) are particularly at risk. These children are also disproportionately more likely to be excluded or suspended, with negative implications for short-term academic achievement and long-term life chances. The research will examine local risk factors and develop distinctive knowledge and expertise in the local context with the potential to empower local educational trusts, schools and communities in developing both evidence-based and solution-oriented responses that combine lived experiences with best practice data analytics. We also aim to trial new methodologies and innovative practice strategies to improve the educational and social outcomes of vulnerable children.

This paper discusses some key examples of good practice in equal partnership recognition, shared ownership and co-creation, fostering civic agency as well as how we are learning to overcome structural barriers such as time constraints and competing agendas, and to reach agreement on what constitutes meaningful and sustainable outputs beyond traditional academic publications. More generally and rooted in ethical and moral imperatives, it is our experience that inclusive research cultures not only enhance research quality but also foster more tangible and measurable equitable outcomes. The active engagement of a collection of diverse voices, perspectives and experiences in the co-production of knowledge has not only enhanced the research process, but also positively impacts how the research outcomes are usefully integrated into broader policy and practice.

13. White Rose Established Researchers Hub

Monica Busse-Morris¹, Tracey Stead¹, Steve Joy¹, Karen Hinxman² & Amy Shaw³

¹ *Independent consultants who conducted the project;* ² *White Rose University Consortium;* ³ *University of Sheffield, UK*

Established researchers, also known as mid-career, lead teams, win grants, shape disciplinary direction, and mentor the next generation, but remain among the least well-supported groups in higher education when it comes to tailored professional development. Addressing this long-standing gap, the White Rose University Consortium, a partnership between Leeds, Sheffield and York, has launched the sector's first dedicated Established Researchers Hub, a freely accessible developmental resource for the wider academic community.

The hub brings together three types of content. Curated resources are organised by persona and topic, so researchers can find what is most relevant to their situation and needs. Peer discussion guides offer a structured way for small groups of colleagues to explore common challenges together, without the need for an expert facilitator. And a collection of career stories presents honest, grounded reflections from established researchers on the decisions they made, the trade-offs they navigated, and what they would tell their younger selves. These are not polished success narratives. They are the kind of frank, practical perspectives that researchers told us they rarely find.

At the heart of the hub are five researcher personas developed through the project. The Juggler captures a shared experience described by almost every researcher the team spoke with: holding multiple responsibilities, identities and expectations all at once, with limited space to think or plan. Built around that foundation are four distinct personas reflecting different research leadership models: the Lab Builder, the Independent Scholar, the Project Architect, and the Boundary Spanner. Researchers are invited to find themselves in the personas and navigate from there.

The Hub is underpinned by original research led by Monica Morris, Steve Joy, and Tracey Stead, developed in collaboration with Amy Shaw and the University of Sheffield's Established Researcher Forum. Drawing on 27 interviews, two focus groups, and a cross-institutional review, the project identifies established researchers as occupying a "squeezed middle", requiring nuanced, practical, time-efficient support. The Established Researchers Hub directly translates these findings into a sector-leading, high-value developmental resource.

14. Growing research culture at a discipline level, co-creating change from the ground up

Karen Edwards,
Coventry University, UK

This research explores the intricate relationship between research culture and performance in the Research Excellence Framework (REF). While no direct link was found between REF outcomes and culture types, the study did reveal the complexities of how working towards REF success can shape and influence the culture within research environments, and how these environments may not be getting the best out of the researchers working within them.

The study was conducted within a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI), spanning multiple disciplines to investigate whether a homogeneous research culture existed or if distinct sub-cultures emerged across fields. Using mixed methods, a quantitative culture diagnostics tool and in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to measure both the current and preferred culture for each discipline.

Key findings included how diverse the different discipline cultures were, but also how the researchers, across disciplines, shared a common vision for a more unified, inclusive culture particularly in the areas of collegiality, innovation & creativity, and communication. These insights are not isolated to one institution, echoing broader sector-wide concerns.

Building on these findings, the researcher has developed practical tools to help research groups collaboratively address the culture gap. By empowering researchers to take ownership of their research environments and co-create change from the ground up.

This work contributes to ongoing efforts to enhance research environments in alignment with SPRE for REF 2029.

15. Shaping Research Culture through Shared Experiences

Mrs Kelly Louise & Ann Jeffery
Keele Doctoral Academy, Keele University, UK

This study focuses on the implementation of a Shared Experience Series as a strategic intervention aiming to support and strengthen postgraduate research culture at a Higher Education Institution. The series was designed to create opportunities for Post Graduate Researchers (PGRs) to hear genuine and honest shared experiences from the institutions wider research community, improving confidence, and wellbeing and decreasing isolation in the PGR community. The series allowed PGRs to recognise that they are not alone in the potential struggles they face, contributing to an increased sense of belonging. The ultimate aim was to demonstrate "we are all human" and will have faced our own challenges. The series also provided PGRs with some of the tools which will help them tackle research challenges confidently and competently.

The Shared Experience Series included monthly workshops on a specific topic in which a researcher shared their experience (e.g. "Do I Belong Here? Imposter Syndrome, Self-Doubt, and the Reality of Academic Life") and a series of short films in which PGRs provided advice, hints and tips for their peers (e.g. "Amy and Katie's Advice to New PGRs").

This poster outlines the rationale and implementation of the Shared Experience series, includes examples of sessions and films used and provides preliminary feedback received from PGRs alongside an outline for future work. The intervention feeds directly into the institutional HR Excellence in Research and Research Culture strategy and demonstrates the value shared experiences can bring to institutional research culture and student belonging.

16. Embedding Research Activity into Routine Clinical Workflows to Support Inclusive and Interdisciplinary Research Culture in Healthcare Settings

Dr Nazneen Naveed Sait¹ & Dr Vignesh Krishnadoss²
¹University of Warwick, UK; ²Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Background

Embedment of research activity within clinical practice is widely recognised as an indicator of high-quality healthcare organisations. There has been growing policy emphasis on fostering research-active clinical environments that are inclusive, interdisciplinary, and operationally sustainable within the National Health Service (NHS) in England and comparable international health systems. Despite these efforts, there is a significant gap in how

research participation can be practically integrated into routine clinical workflows without compromising patient care or staff wellbeing.

Objective

This systematic review aimed to combine evidence from primary peer-reviewed studies on approaches used to integrate research activity into routine clinical workflows. Secondary objectives were to identify facilitators and obstacles and to construct a framework for real-life implementation.

Methods

Following PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), a systematic search was conducted across PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Ovid MEDLINE, and Google Scholar. Systematic reviews were excluded from inclusion; only primary peer-reviewed studies (qualitative, mixed methods, survey, cohort, case study, service evaluation) were eligible. Quality appraisal was conducted using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). Thematic synthesis followed Thomas and Harden (2008).

Results

Nineteen primary studies fulfilled the inclusion criteria, out of which five major themes emerged: (1) structural and governance processes for accessing research in clinical settings; (2) protected time, career pathways, and capacity building; (3) interdisciplinary and clinician-researcher collaboration; (4) inclusive and participatory research engagement; and (5) operational and attitudinal barriers. Studies demonstrated that integration of research requires multi-level action, not just individual motivation alone. Differences in research access between medical and non-medical staff were a constant finding.

Conclusion

Integration of research in clinical workflow is achievable but requires organised investments in five domains, which include workflow integration, access, support, incentives and participation (the WASIP framework). Implications of policies for the NHS and equivalent health systems are reviewed, with particular relevance for healthcare operational management and workforce strategy. This review offers a transferable, policy-relevant framework to support the systematic embedding of research within routine clinical care across diverse healthcare systems.

17. From PPIE to Practice: Building a Collaborative Research Culture Through Patient Partnership in the Multicentre STIM-HD Study

Niamh Quann ¹, Faizan Awan ², Nicole Bausch ¹, April Kong ¹, Pricilla Moreira ¹, Meghan Tanel ³, Tamara Valenčič ³, Emma L Watson ^{1,3}, James O Burton ^{1,3,4}

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Introduction

STIM-HD is a multicentre randomised controlled trial evaluating neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES) to improve muscle strength in people receiving haemodialysis. Initially, NMES sessions required up to 45 minutes of researcher time for intervention set-up, limiting capacity for recruitment. To address this, the study team partnered with patients to co-design a transition from researcher-led delivery to participant self-delivery of NMES.

Collaborative Approach

Haemodialysis patients were invited to review a draft NMES self-delivery participant guide and provide structured feedback via a short electronic questionnaire. This collaborative process identified practical barriers to self-management, including electrode placement, clarity of instructions, and comfort during use. The STIM-HD patient co-applicant worked alongside the research team to redesign participant-facing materials. Feedback was documented on patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) impact logs, which functioned not only as a record of changes, but as a mechanism for two-way accountability, enabling patient partners to see how their input shaped the study and to understand the rationale where feedback could not be adopted.

Co-Created Outcomes

Through collective refinement, the NMES session log was redesigned with clearer spacing, simplified headings, embedded stimulation parameters, and prompts to support accurate and confident recording.

The participant guide evolved from a three-page draft into a visually rich, step-by-step resource featuring photographs taken from a participant's perspective to demonstrate accurate electrode placement. Technical standard operating procedure (SOP) language was transformed into accessible, participant-friendly guidance. Additional content addressed comfort and inclusivity, including clothing guidance, reassurance for participants with hairier legs, and advice on checking for skin irritation. Knee support guidance incorporated photographs illustrating optimal knee angle across different set-ups (dialysis bed, chair, or sofa) to support consistent positioning. PPIE partners reported improved understanding and confidence in delivering NMES independently.

Conclusion

Meaningful partnership and co-creation revealed practical needs that researchers alone may not have anticipated. Embedding this feedback supports more sustainable study processes, increased staff capacity across sites, and a research culture grounded in transparency, shared decision-making, and respect for patient expertise.

18. Enhancing End of Trial Dissemination Through Patient Co Creation: Design of the NightLife SWAT

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Introduction

Effective dissemination of trial results to participants is ethically important; however, there is limited consensus on how best to communicate findings in ways that are meaningful, accessible and acceptable to diverse participant groups. A Study Within a Trial (SWAT), embedded within the NightLife study evaluating extended nocturnal haemodialysis versus standard care, aims to address this gap by co-creating and evaluating a patient-designed results dissemination method. Trial Managers were actively involved in shaping the SWAT design, contributing operational insight and qualitative research expertise that enhanced feasibility, relevance and practicality.

Proposed Methods

The SWAT will adopt a mixed-methods, two-stage design.

Stage one will involve semi-structured focus groups with up to 10 participants purposively sampled from previous NightLife study participants, current haemodialysis patients, and members of the NightLife patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) group. Guided by the Consensus Orientated Decision-Making (CODM) model, participants will collaborate with researchers to design a patient-centred dissemination approach addressing format, content, language, visual presentation and level of detail. Discussions will also inform refinement of health literacy and patient satisfaction measures for stage two.

Stage two will comprise a randomised comparison involving 100 previous NightLife study participants. Participants will be allocated 1:1 to receive either the standard results report or the patient-designed dissemination method. After reviewing their allocated version, participants will complete validated questionnaires assessing acceptability, comprehension and satisfaction via JISC online surveys. At the conclusion of the SWAT, all participants will receive access to both dissemination formats to support transparency.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

This SWAT represents an innovative, co-created approach to improving dissemination of trial results to participants. By embedding patient partnership within trial processes, it aims to generate practical, evidence-based recommendations to enhance end of trial communication.

19. Creating gender-inclusive research cultures: the role of micromessages

Dr Nicole Tausch, Jinwen Xie, Dr Csilla Pákozdy and Prof. Gillian R. Brown

School of Psychology & Neuroscience, University of St Andrews, UK

The way in which people socially interact with each other can either create a positive, collegial atmosphere or can create situations in which some people feel marginalised or excluded. Individuals are not always aware of how these day-to-day social interactions (which are referred to as ‘micromessages’) can make others feel. For example, individuals might not appreciate how small, positive interactions can improve the experiences of others and, similarly, they might not be aware of how their own biases or prejudices are revealed during social interactions. Our research project has focused on micromessages that are specifically related to gender, given that women and non-binary individuals experience numerous barriers to their research careers. Previous studies have shown that women cite interpersonal relationships and institutional culture as key reasons for leaving, or considering leaving, academia. In our project, we have used questionnaire studies to examine which psychological variables (e.g., gender role attitudes, zero-sum beliefs) influence how people appraise these subtle social interactions, with the goal of understanding some of the potential barriers to practicing and adopting inclusive practices. Here, we describe the aims, methods and quantitative findings of our research in more detail (e.g., data from a questionnaire study that asked participants to evaluate fictionalised scenarios involving male and female coworkers). We also describe how the findings of our research are being used to create sets of educational resources about micromessages for use in research settings. Attempts to create welcoming research cultures will be aided by understanding micromessages and the factors that influence how people appraise these subtle acts of inclusion or exclusion. This project was facilitated by InFrame, the Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture (grant number 228092/Z/23/Z), which was led by University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh and University of St Andrews.

20. From Competition to Collective Success: Building a Collaborative Pre-Award Culture from Chalk Talks to ERC Interview Preparation

Petra Vaculíková

Palacký University Olomouc, Czechia

Aligned with the theme Collaboration for Lasting Change, the poster presents a faculty-level case study demonstrating how pre-award support can become a driver of research culture transformation. The initiative was developed within a Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) faculty in a widening country context, where Research Management and Administration (RMA) roles are still often perceived as primarily administrative rather than strategic partners in research development. Against this backdrop, we designed and implemented a collaborative pre-award model that repositions RMAs as facilitators of co-creation, trust, and excellence.

The model focuses on structured preparation rounds for competitive Horizon Europe calls, including ERC grants, and is built around chalk talks as its central element. These interactive sessions create a psychologically safe space where researchers present early-stage project ideas and receive feedback from a diverse group of peers. By intentionally encouraging openness and iterative thinking, chalk talks shift the emphasis from individual competition to collective refinement of ideas. Participants engage in mutual learning across disciplines and career stages, strengthening both proposal quality and community cohesion.

This co-creative phase is complemented by targeted internal peer review, involving experienced grant holders (including ERC awardees), former evaluators, and external or internal mentors. Crucially, these reviews build on concepts already shaped through collaborative discussion, resulting in more focused and competitive proposals. The process is delivered in a hybrid format, accommodating both local and international applicants, which further enriches the diversity of perspectives and expands institutional networks.

A key feature of the approach is the heterogeneity of participants, particularly in ERC-focused preparation rounds, where early-career researchers interact with advanced scholars. This vertical integration facilitates the transfer of tacit knowledge and demystifies elite funding schemes within the SSH context.

Despite initial scepticism and structural constraints typical for widening environments, the initiative has led to a measurable cultural shift: sharing ideas is increasingly valued over guarding them, and RMAs are becoming recognized as enablers of research excellence rather than administrative intermediaries. It has contributed to a shift in mindset, from protecting ideas to improving them collectively, and has strengthened trust, collegiality, and internal collaboration. Tangible outcomes are now emerging, including increased success in highly competitive funding schemes such as Horizon Europe funding, including ERC grants.

A particularly strong manifestation of collective practice emerges in the final-stage preparation of ERC candidates (Step 2 interviews). At this stage, preparation becomes a faculty-wide effort involving typically 30–40 colleagues. Participants take on roles as mock panel members, interdisciplinary challengers, and critical friends, collectively stress-testing both the project and the candidate’s presentation. This intensive, community-driven process not only increases candidates’ readiness for high-stakes evaluation but also reinforces a shared sense of ownership over success, making excellence a genuinely collective achievement.

This case illustrates how even in resource-constrained and recognition-limited settings, collaborative pre-award practices, when thoughtfully designed and facilitated, can foster lasting cultural change and strengthen institutional capacity for competitive research funding.

21. Building Bridges not Barriers: Helping to INTEGRATE the Biomedical Data Science Community

Cadman S¹, Casci T², Davies P³, Etherington RE⁴, Gavaghan D⁵, George C⁴, McLean C⁶ & Sims D⁴

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As technological advances have led to a significant increase in the amount of data available, there is a pressing need for those with computational skills to be involved with the research and for the development of interdisciplinary research teams. However, previous work by the X-NET team has identified that interdisciplinary researchers face a number of barriers to their career progression, ultimately leading to a skills gap within the sector. To tackle the lack of data skills capacity within the sector, it is more important than ever to ensure our research environments enable the careers development of interdisciplinary researchers and effective collaboration across disciplinary boundaries.

The INTEGRATE project has launched a series of initiatives with the aim of providing evidence to support the adoption of practical activities that encourage interdisciplinary knowledge exchange and network building. These include a national career development survey, development of an online career development workshop, and the UK-wide ‘Bytes and Bench’ interdisciplinary peer mentoring programme. The Bench and Bytes programme is a 6-month fully online mentoring scheme aimed to connect early career researchers from laboratory-based and computational backgrounds in order to encourage interdisciplinary communication and network building, while also giving researchers a space to reflect on their career journeys in a supportive environment. We are also engaging with researchers, research professionals, and industry partners to understand the barriers and enablers to different models of career mobility schemes (e.g. workplace shadowing, secondments, mobility fellowships).

To provide evidence to support the impact of these activities, we have utilised qualitative research methods (surveys and focus groups) to identify key themes and quotations to supplement quantitative data obtained from surveys.

Here we will share findings from our survey and our initial career mobility focus groups, along with interim findings from our peer mentoring scheme which will run until October 2026. We also welcome engagement from the community around the scalability of these initiatives outside of the context of biomedical data science.

22. Tacit Evaluation-Rethinking Evaluation in Community Settings

Dr Raheela Shaikh
University of Warwick, UK

This contribution draws on learning from the CLARITY+ project (NIHR School for Public Health Research), which brings together 17 community organisations serving minority ethnic communities in Sheffield, Rotherham, Birmingham, Dudley and Coventry to collectively reframe how public health research is evaluated and enacted. Our findings highlight a critical tension in research culture: while formal organisations often adopt compliance-driven approaches shaped by funders, informal and grassroots groups engage in fluid and embedded forms of evaluative practice that remain largely unrecognised.

I introduce the concept of ‘tacit evaluation’. It refers to immediate, practice-based reflection embedded in everyday activity, where feedback is shared verbally and informally as work unfolds. Every day, practice-based reflection woven into conversations, decisions, and relationships. This includes storytelling as evaluation, where communities use narratives to interpret change, assess impact, and guide action. Although rarely documented, these approaches support continuous learning, adaptation, and accountability in resource-constrained settings. They also capture relational outcomes such as trust, connection, and resilience, which are often excluded from formal frameworks.

Through CLARITY+, we argue for expanding what counts as valid evidence in research culture by recognising these community-led practices as legitimate and valuable. By positioning communities as evaluators and knowledge producers, this approach challenges deficit framings of “hard-to-reach” populations and underscores the importance of equitable, participatory, and locally driven evaluation in public health practice. Genuine co-production requires recognising community expertise as equal to academic knowledge, positioning grassroots evaluation as a legitimate and essential component of public health research, policy, and practice.

Chosen object:
A cup of tea- “evaluation is post-session chat while enjoying a cup of tea”

This cup represents where most evaluation actually happens in community settings, not in reports, but in conversations after activities. These informal reflections, what we call tacit evaluation, shape decisions, learning, and accountability, yet they are rarely recognised as valid evidence.”

23. Building Civic Futures: Exploring Reciprocal Community–University Partnerships for Sustainable Research Impact

Dr Rebecca Morris, Prof Briony Jones & Daeun Jung
University of Warwick, UK

In an era of geopolitical uncertainty, widening inequalities, and increased scrutiny of higher education, universities are being called upon to articulate and evidence their civic purpose. This paper presents findings from a recent mixed-methods research project exploring how higher education institutions can strengthen their “third mission” through reciprocal, sustainable, and effective community–university partnerships that enhance local and regional research collaboration and social impact.

The study is informed by scholarship on the civic or “anchor” university (Goddard, 2016; O’Farrell et al., 2022), knowledge exchange, and research-informed policy and practice in higher education (Boaz et al., 2019; Mihut et al., 2025; Perry and Morris, 2023) and is situated within wider debates about the evolving social contract between universities and society (Grant, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). It conceptualises knowledge exchange as relational, place-based, and shaped by the interaction of top-down policy frameworks and bottom-up community initiatives. Methodologically, the project combines a scoping review of literature on civic universities with regional mapping, focus groups with academic and professional services staff, interviews with non-academic partners, and a series of public discussion events.

Findings highlight a range of structural, relational, geographical, and cultural factors that enable or constrain effective partnership working. These include the influence of funding environments and institutional systems, differing expectations and capacities among partners, and the challenges of sustaining long-term, equitable collaboration. The research also reveals how mono- and interdisciplinary approaches shape engagement and impact pathways differently, and identifies tensions between strategic, metrics-driven priorities and locally responsive, co-created practices. Importantly, the study surfaces critical questions about whose knowledge is valued, how engagement and impact is understood by different actors, and the extent to which existing frameworks allow for truly sustainable and reciprocal partnerships to be formed.

Positioning the university as a civic anchor institution, the paper outlines emerging recommendations for policy and practice, including the development of institutional infrastructures and resources to better support sustainable collaboration.

Designed as an interactive session, the presentation will combine a concise overview of key findings with opportunities for audience engagement and Q&A. Participants will be invited to reflect on their own experiences of community–university partnerships and contribute insights through structured discussion. These contributions will feed into the next steps for this work, supporting the co-creation of practical tools and strategies to strengthen civic-focused research cultures across diverse institutional and regional contexts.

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24. Circle practice and powerful questions: a community-led peer mentoring model to support research culture

Rosie Wadman SFHEA¹, Alison Monkhouse², Dr Hanan Fara³, Dr Heather Mackenzie¹, Lisa Thompson SFHEA⁴, Dr Loice Natukunda⁵, Dr Susan Black⁶, Dr Vani Naik FHEA⁷

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Many HE staff engaged in research culture work are operating in the ‘third space’ between academic and professional domains (Whitchurch, 2008). As the need for our roles continues to grow, particularly amid current sectoral challenges, finding time and resources to articulate and support our own professional development and progression is difficult. Finding spaces to do this work can only help the success of the culture change we are working towards.

As researcher developers (RDs) we found the increasing complexity and significance of our work tends to be hidden beneath the surface (Mackenzie et al., 2021), while the ambiguity of our status within our institutions means opportunities for professional development and progression are hard to identify and navigate (Freeman & Price, 2024). RDs also tend to be isolated, with few or no colleagues with similar roles within their institutions.

In 2023 Dr Heather Mackenzie and Rosie Wadman (University of Southampton) recognized a need for an intentional development space to support their own professional development, identifying peer mentoring circles as mechanism for turning the diversity of RD roles into a strength. Working with Vitae, they recruited a diverse steering group from HE institutions across the UK and Ireland to develop and launch the community-led Vitae Peer Mentoring Circles scheme.

Building on an earlier action learning initiative for researcher developers organised by Dr Saneeya Quereshi, the Vitae Peer Mentoring Circles scheme is designed to harness the diversity of roles, institutions, career paths and lived experience the researcher developers bring to the table. The VPMC pilot in 2025 brought together 62 researcher developers across 11 circles, generating 39 meetings in total. Encouragingly, 91% said they

would recommend the experience to colleagues. Participants valued the protected time to explore challenges, the psychological safety of the space, and the opportunity to gain greater clarity around their own strengths and development areas.

Our poster will present the evaluation of the pilot scheme (2024/25) and reflect on further lessons learned as we near the end of the second year of delivery. Members of the steering group are already adapting the model to support the researchers we work with, and we would like to share our practical insights with the rest of the research culture community.

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25. Neurodivergent Researchers: How to Get the Best of your Neurodivergent Colleagues and the Best of Your (Neurodivergent/Neurotypical) Self

Sara Lemos

University of Leicester, UK

Do you know anyone - colleague or student or friend or family member - who is Neurodivergent? Think again.

Neurodivergents comprise 20% of the general population, and potentially more in the university population.

Neurodivergents bring a wealth of skills that are now being actively sought by employers.

Yet, working with Neurodivergent colleagues and (graduate and undergraduate) students requires a different outlook and framework that many of us lack.

The world is Neurotypical, made by Neurotypicals, for Neurotypicals, and it is often hard for Neurodivergents to navigate.

Discussing researching and teaching interpersonal skills that enable Neurodivergents to be the best version of themselves is sorely needed. These might well also be the very skills that make us seek the best version of ourselves as researchers and teachers.

This session will start the conversation on many of these issues. There will be a short presentation followed by interactive activities with the wider group, with the option of working on smaller groups

26. Co-Designing Trauma-Informed Wellbeing Support for Researchers Conducting Emotionally Challenging Research

Shaoyu Yang & Yanyan Li

University of Warwick, UK

Research across disciplines increasingly involves engagement with emotionally challenging material; however, structured support for researchers remains limited. This research culture project investigates researchers' experiences of emotionally challenging research (ECR) at the University of Warwick and seeks to develop practical, trauma-informed approaches to support wellbeing and ethical practice.

The project adopts a collaborative, co-creative methodology. In Phase 1, three 90-minute online focus groups (FGs) were conducted via MS Teams with fifteen researchers from disciplines including Law, Politics and International Relations, Education, English and Comparative Literary Studies, Modern Languages, and Theatre and Performance Studies. Participants had varying levels of exposure to emotionally challenging research materials (e.g., crime, war, abuse, sexual violence, and diaspora). The focus groups explored the emotional impacts of conducting ECR, institutional culture related to researcher wellbeing, gaps in wellbeing and peer support provision, and researchers' challenges and unmet needs

Preliminary findings from the focus groups indicate three key themes. First, regarding researchers' experiences, boundaries between ECR and personal life are often blurred, with emotional demands extending beyond the workplace. There exist both psychological and physical impacts, including fear, loneliness, anxiety, insomnia, and headaches, alongside compounding pressures from external sources. Second, several gaps in support structure were identified. Supervisory support appears uneven: postgraduate researchers require more tailored guidance, while supervisors may find it difficult to elicit open discussions about the emotional challenges their students face. Although departments are often perceived as supportive environments, institutional-level provision seems sometimes unclear or ineffective. Moreover, the emotional burden of ECR can be difficult to articulate, contributing to isolation, and awareness among non-ECR academics remains limited. Third, regarding needs and support, participants highlighted the value of targeted training and practical coping strategies, such as taking time after emotionally demanding work, engaging in physical activity, reflective writing, talking with others, and seeking support from personal and professional networks.

Findings from this exploratory phase directly inform Phase 2: the co-design of tailored wellbeing workshops and open-access resources, developed in collaboration with institutional services and external specialists with expertise in trauma, wellbeing, and creative reflective practice. The workshop series comprises three sessions: a trauma-informed training session for researchers conducting ECR, a creative writing workshop, and a speaking and storytelling session. Drawing on researchers' feedback and specialist input, these workshops adopt preventative and expressive approaches to build awareness of emotional risks, equip researchers with coping strategies, and support emotional processing and wellbeing. The project also includes an evaluation component, comprising pre- and post-workshop measures, post-workshop reflections, and follow-up assessments to examine changes in awareness, coping strategies, emotional resilience, and perceived preparedness for conducting ECR.

The project is currently at a mid-stage. By refining and publishing the wellbeing programme and open-access resource repository, the project aims to establish a sustainable, inclusive support system. Ultimately, it seeks to normalise conversations about the emotional dimensions of research, strengthen researcher wellbeing, reduce risks of harm or re-traumatisation, and enhance the long-term sustainability and ethical integrity of emotionally challenging academic work across the University.

27. Exploring An Ideal Research Culture in Psychology

Ying Guo & Prof. Sotaro Kita
University of Warwick, UK

Research culture expectations vary significantly across disciplines and institutions. To enhance the research culture within a specific department, the important first step is to find out what community members consider the ideal workplace for research. To date, psychology departments have never systematically explored their own community's views. The current study aims to fill this gap by exploring what constitutes an "ideal workplace" for research from the viewpoint of the Department of Psychology at Warwick's own community. Specifically, we intend to investigate what kind of place the people in the Department of Psychology would like to work in, as researchers or research enablers. This would inform us about what type of interventions in the future are appropriate to enhance the research culture of the department. To achieve this, we will first organize Workshop 1 to identify current strengths and challenges and define what an ideal research culture looks like. Second, we will carry out a department-wide survey to investigate the opinions of the department regarding the outcome of Workshop 1. Third, we will organize Workshop 2 to explore practical steps to move toward that ideal. In addition, we will interview key leaders in the Department (HoD, Director of Research, PGR Director) to gather information about how interventions could be implemented. The results from the current study could inform departmental strategy, inspire future initiatives, and contribute to sector-wide understanding of research culture in psychology.

Keywords: Psychology; Research culture; Workplace

Note: The current study will be finished by the end of July.

28. Action to improve equity and inclusivity in research funding

Stephanie Perrin; Dr Tanita Casci; Dr Lotte Boon; Dr Thandiwe Hara-Msulira; Dr Anne Mortimer; Dr Mary Muers & Members of the Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding Working Group
University of Oxford, UK

Securing research funding is one key element of a successful career in UK academic research. However, inequities arise at many stages of research funding cycles. Data show that marginalised researchers apply for funding at lower rates than their non-marginalised counterparts and their applications are less likely to result in funding awards. Marginalised researchers include women, racially minoritised, and/or disabled researchers, and, despite more limited data, researchers who are LGBTQIA+.

The University of Oxford is implementing an action plan to address some of the barriers to securing research funding experienced by researchers in marginalised groups. We will present practical tools and reflections. These examples will aim to inspire collaborative and constructive dialogue on the practicalities of improving equitable and inclusive funding in higher education institutions.

Background:

In 2023, the University of Oxford published a sector report on Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding (hereafter, the report), with findings and recommendations based on examining sector-wide funding schemes as well as internal funding and institutional practices. The purpose of the report and follow-up work has been to identify the barriers to securing research funding experienced by researchers in marginalised groups and to propose solutions: internally, and with the sector.

Oxford action plan and resources:

Oxford is advancing inclusive and diverse research environments through the Action Plan for Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding, which has been delivered through a thriving cross-institutional Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding Working Group.

For example, we have developed an EDI Responsiveness Matrix and Toolkit for self-assessment and step-wise improvement of our internal funding schemes.

The poster will highlight practical tools and reflections, which could include:

- A comprehensive searchable funding map of 66 internal funding schemes
- An external grant applications library
- The EDI Responsiveness Matrix and Toolkit

Reflections from reporting on diversity data for research funding and delivering two new pilot programmes to enhance inclusive leadership development.

Collaborating with the sector:

Following the report, Oxford led an engagement process with 30+ Universities and 11 funders (including UKRI, BHF, CRUK, NIHR, Leverhulme Trust). In February 2024, 60+ delegates met as the Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding 'Forum' and a public joint statement was shared in June 2024. Collaborative action has continued through three sector groups – co-led by colleagues from other HEIs and funders – pursuing priority areas:

The positive action group (King's College London, Edinburgh, and Nottingham) is developing a framework to build confidence and capacity around developing and delivering positive action initiatives related to research funding, at HEI and funder level.

The demand management group (Birmingham, Nottingham, and York) has developed principles and best practices for managing demand, parameters for equitable demand management, and funder guidance to enable better implementation of demand management practices across the sector.

The support mapping group (University of Oxford and NIHR) is gathering information from major funders about the support they provide and to compare this information to identify areas for mutual learning.

We will share learning and experiences to encourage others to build on this programme of work in their own institutions.

29. From Setbacks to Success (a pilot workshop series at the University of Reading)

Rachel Lewis, Tristan Glenn, Sophie Lane & Miranda Raven
University of Reading, UK

This poster showcases a pilot workshop series run by research culture and development teams at the University of Reading. The workshop aims to destigmatise and open up conversations about unfunded research applications, providing a supportive and constructive framework to allow researchers to build resilience and support forward planning.

Context & Challenges Faced

It is commonly acknowledged that good quality fundable grant applications outnumber available grants. Unsuccessful research proposals are a universal part of academic life, yet they are often hidden, underdiscussed, and can be draining and emotionally challenging.

A number of local research leads and research development managers across disciplines at Reading had identified this challenge as having a negative impact on staff morale and motivation to keep applying for grants. Yet there was a gap in mentoring and guidance available about how to repurpose unsuccessful grants, build resilience, and maintain good wellbeing while facing this common experience.

Our workshops therefore aimed to address this gap, improving research culture, staff wellbeing, skills development and productivity by destigmatising and recontextualising unfunded research applications.

From Setbacks to Success Workshop Series

To understand how academics across Reading deal with these challenges and encourage open conversations about this, in Autumn 2025, the University of Reading's Research Engagement & Innovation Office launched a series of pilot workshops.

This series aims to reframe unfunded research applications and destigmatise setbacks to create a culture that normalises setbacks and sees them as valuable learning tools. These emphasise that effort invested into unfunded applications is not 'wasted' but can be repurposed for future submissions and contribute to researchers' learning and career development.

A small working group facilitated the sharing of subject-area-specific case studies with valuable input from academics working within these fields. This initiated discussions revealing both subject specific and broadly generalisable insights to help understand how setbacks can become powerful catalysts for growth. Academics fed back on how to improve practice and strengthen future applications, leading to future discussions around how to take this forward.

Outcomes

These sessions have been well-received and trialled with ~100 academics from a range of career stages. Sessions ran across three different sized groups: a research group (psychology), a department (agriculture) and a research theme (all arts and humanities subjects). Outcomes included:

- Follow-up discussions with applicants and research division leads about where/how to repurpose previously unsuccessful applications and creating a supportive research culture.
 - Increased academic engagement with funding review processes, either through joining their pools of assessors, sift panels or other peer review practices.
 - Academics being better equipped to capture learnings from unsuccessful applications within their Capability to Deliver Resume for Research & Innovation (R4RI) sections of future applications and building personal and collective resilience.
 - Realising the strategic benefits from unfunded proposals, as re-iteration and resubmission often lead to stronger, more competitive proposals.
- We are planning to continue this workshop series more widely along with targeted follow-up activities.

30. Evaluating and evolving the Warwick PATHWAY programme: a positive action

Dr James Burford, Vicky Strudwick
University of Warwick

The under-representation of Black academics, particularly at senior levels, remains a pressing challenge in UK higher education. In response, universities are increasingly establishing positive action initiatives to address inequalities in research cultures. While growing attention has been paid to the outcomes of such interventions, far less is known about how they are conceived, established and implemented during their formative stages. This poster summaries the findings of a developmental evaluation of the Warwick PATHWAY Programme, a university-wide positive action initiative designed to support aspiring Black researchers from undergraduate research through to postdoctoral development.

In 2025, researchers from the Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR) at the University of Warwick undertook an evaluation of the programme, funded through Research England's Enhancing Research Culture Fund. Given the early stage of the programme, the project did not investigate participant outcomes but instead examined the institutional processes through which the programme was founded and implemented.

Using a developmental evaluation framework, the research employed a multi-method qualitative approach comprising interviews with programme founders, institutional leaders, implementation staff, mentors and programme participants, alongside stakeholder workshops and solicited diaries that documented the experiences of those implementing the programme during its early stages. The evaluation explored the programme's conception, design, governance and implementation while generating evidence to support organisational learning. The findings demonstrate that establishing institution-wide positive action programmes is a complex organisational process rather than a straightforward 'launch'.

While senior leadership and institutional commitment enabled the programme's creation, its development was shaped by a reliance on existing initiatives and temporary structures, evolving governance arrangements, and differing stakeholder understandings of the

programme's purpose and intended beneficiaries.

The evaluation also highlights the importance of embedding theories of change, evaluation planning and stable institutional governance from the outset if positive action programmes are to become sustainable components of research culture rather than time-limited initiatives.

31. Researching Multilingually: Challenging Monolingualistic Ideologies to Build Inclusive and Sustainable Research Culture

Dr Yanyan Li
University of Warwick, UK

As research culture is increasingly shaped by global mobility, transnational collaboration, and internationalised education, multilingual researchers whose first language is not English routinely navigate linguistic, epistemic, and institutional tensions. These challenges, however, often remain obscured within Anglophone-dominant research environments. While multilingualism is frequently framed as an individual asset, less attention has been paid to how research culture structurally enables, or constrains, multilingual research practices, decision-making, and legitimacy.

This poster presents findings from an autoethnographic case study based on my ten-year trajectory of researching multilingually across applied linguistics and related fields, spanning diverse geographical, cultural, and institutional contexts. Drawing on a linguistic ecology and sustainability-informed framework, the analysis identifies critical moments in which language choice shaped research design, ethical decision-making, researcher-participant relationships, data interpretation, publishing practices, and researcher wellbeing. Rather than positioning multilingualism as a methodological complication, the poster reframes it as a site of ethical negotiation, epistemic resourcefulness, and institutional power within research culture.

Moving beyond purely reflection, the poster highlights practical leverage points for improving research culture. These include: (1) recognising everyday multilingual research practices that foster epistemic inclusion, trust, and richer knowledge production; (2) revisiting institutional policies and norms, such as ethics review processes, supervision, and publication expectations that may unintentionally reinforce monolingual ideologies; and (3) creating actionable strategies for researchers, supervisors, and researcher developers to legitimise multilingual ways of knowing and researching.

Aligned with efforts to reduce structural inequalities in research culture, this work argues that an inclusive and sustainable research culture depends on recognising multilingual researcher agency, normalising multilingual research trajectories, and reframing linguistic diversity as a shared responsibility rather than an individual burden. The poster offers critical reflections, transferable insights, practical tools, and discussion prompts for researchers, supervisors, research leaders, researcher developers, and those engaged in research culture development across institutional and international contexts.

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32. Understanding When Postdocs Leave: How Contract Design Shapes Retention

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Postdoctoral researchers are central to research delivery, yet their employment is often insecure. For institutions, this raises practical questions about early departure and how it might be managed. In this study, we use detailed contract data from the University of Cambridge to examine when postdocs leave, and which features of their contracts influence those decisions.

Most postdoctoral researchers are hired directly onto projects by principal investigators (PIs), while a smaller group holds independent fellowships. When we compare these groups, we find that postdocs on fellowships are more likely to stay in their roles than those hired onto PI-led projects when contracts are short (one to two years). Differences in retention are not explained by gender or academic field. In the data, contract length is the main observable factor associated with quitting risk, suggesting that the structure of the role itself (for example, independence or funding security) plays a key role.

Postdocs can leave at any point during their contract, but departures increase sharply as the end date approaches. This pattern follows a predictable trend: as contracts near their end date, the risk of early departure rises sharply. An important consequence is that many new positions are created because people leave early, so the actual time postdocs spend in roles depends not just on the official contract length, but also on how likely they are to leave at different points. Given the relatively high rate of early departures, a central question is whether observed contract durations are primarily driven by the initial contract lengths or by the timing of exits over the course of those contracts.

To address this, we simulate how different initial contract lengths shape the distribution of time postdocs actually spend in their roles. The results

show that longer initial contracts do lead to longer average time in post, rather than simply resulting in earlier departures.

This work allows institutions to estimate how many postdocs are likely to leave at different points in time under different contract arrangements. In practice, this gives research leaders and policy teams a way to test the impact of changes (such as extending standard contract lengths or increasing the number of fellowships) and to make more informed workforce planning decisions.

33. Building Consensus for Change: Advancing Gender Equity in UK Higher Education through the Women in Academia Project

Dr Talar Moukhtarian, Dr Marie Sams & Najma Moalin
University of Warwick, UK

Despite sustained efforts to promote gender equality in higher education, women continue to experience barriers to progression, retention, and recognition throughout academic careers. The Women in Academia (WinA) project was established to better understand and address these challenges. Phase I of the project explored the experiences of early and mid-career women researchers through surveys, interviews, and co-production activities, identifying key themes including job insecurity, limited progression pathways, and work-life balance pressures. These findings informed a roadmap of recommendations for action.

This poster focuses on Phase II of the project, which shifts attention from understanding barriers to building national consensus around practical priorities for change. Drawing on the recommendations developed in Phase I, Phase II brought together a diverse panel of experts from across the UK higher education sector, including EDI leaders, funders, and academic and professional service leaders, to identify shared priorities for advancing gender equity for women in research.

We will outline the rationale for the study, describe the consensus-building methodology, and discuss emerging insights into how the sector can move from isolated initiatives towards coordinated action. We will also consider the opportunities and challenges of developing common priorities in a complex and diverse higher education landscape. By identifying areas of broad agreement, the project seeks to support institutions, funders, and policymakers in creating more inclusive and equitable academic environments for women and, ultimately, contribute to wider improvements in research culture across the sector.

34. Safe to Fail – To follow

35. PPCIE – To follow

36. Wellbeing – To follow