

## NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH CULTURE

### RESEARCH CULTURE CAROUSEL – SESSION BRIEFING PACK



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## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Research Culture Carousel (RCC) is an interactive, dynamic session designed to foster meaningful dialogue between presenters and conference delegates. It emphasises creativity, storytelling, and peer learning, using physical objects as conversation starters. The session, and all related materials were designed by Dr Harriet Richmond, Dr Marie Sams and Adele Kenny for the International Research Culture Conference in 2025 at the University of Warwick.

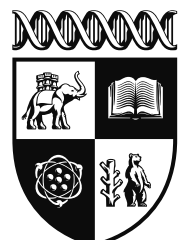
Carousel activities, commonly used in teaching and learning (Lipson Freed, 2013; Gray, 2016), involve rotating between stations that prompt movement, questioning, discussion, and reflection. Our approach adapts this well-established method by having speakers move in small groups between tables. This format is already used widely across the sector, including by the University of Leeds research culture team.

The use of objects as reflective prompts in the activity draws on object-elicitation methods developed in Richmond's doctoral research, where personal objects were used in focus groups to surface embodied, narrative, and memory-linked meaning (Richmond, 2018). This was informed by sociological and material culture work on memory and objects (e.g. Bell & Bell, 2012).

Given the positive feedback and subsequent interest in using this approach at other events, we are sharing the materials to enable wider adoption. We would appreciate an acknowledgment where these materials are used or adapted.

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## SESSION OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

### OBJECTIVES

- To create a relaxed, informal environment where delegates can explore diverse research culture topics, projects and initiatives.
- To provide presenters with a platform to share their work creatively.
- To encourage peer learning, dialogue and opportunities for networking through structured but open-ended conversations.

### SESSION STRUCTURE

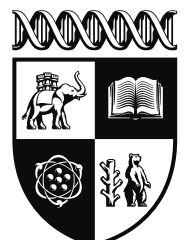
- Total session time: 1 hour [5 minutes introduction/settle; 3 x 15-minute rotations; 10 minutes reflection/wrap up]
- There may be several RCC sessions running in parallel, or it can be run as a stand-alone session.
- Each room should have a dedicated facilitator to lead the session.
- For a typical 1-hour session, 3 RCC leads (presenters) will sit at a large table each with their object (guidance on *objects are detailed below*).
- Table rotations: 3 rotations per presenter

### Additional considerations/lessons learned:

- Having more than 3 tables in one room can make the session overly noisy and affect time, so please consider the layout of the room and the timing you have.
- Optimally, table participants should be no more than 8, so 24/25 participants in one room at a time.
- Consider the acoustics of the room and how easily noise travels. The session is likely to be very interactive and quite loud, so you may want to run other sessions in parallel to accommodate different preferences.

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## RCC PRESENTER GUIDANCE

To prepare your RCC presenters to lead discussions at each table, here are some useful notes:

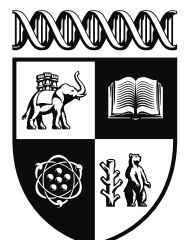
- **Object selection:** Choose an object that symbolically or literally represents your research culture work/initiative/programme. This could be as simple as a flyer, a promotional mug, or something more creative that symbolises the work that you have undertaken and want to share. Consider objects that are tactile, visually interesting (and that you can travel with)! Inspiration can be found from the [IRCC25 book of abstracts](#).

**Alternative approach:** The facilitator for each session could bring with them a 'box of objects' for presenters to select from on the day!

- **Introduction:** After the facilitator has introduced the session and the first rotation has begun, please introduce yourself and your object succinctly to the group. For example: *Hi everyone, my name is Carly, and my project is about supporting researcher wellbeing at the University of X.* Don't have introductions for everyone around the table – remember you only have 15 minutes!
- **Questions start:** It is then the turn of the delegates around your table to start to ask you questions using some prompt cards that will be displayed on the table (or they could choose their own). Please use your answers to tell people about your project – but remember to be succinct so you can answer as many questions as possible – this will be key to getting across lots of information in a short space of time!
- **Additional materials:** Feel free to bring with you any business cards, QR codes or other material that delegates may want to take away at the end to read more about your project.

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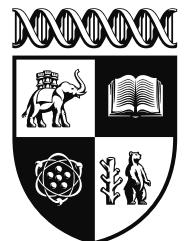


## Delegate Engagement

- The room facilitator will ask delegates to:
  - Use the coaching question cards as conversation starters if discussions stall.
  - Actively listen, share perspectives, identify common themes across the projects, and draw connections to their own experiences.
  - Take away any material or take photographs of name badges so that they can connect with you after the event.

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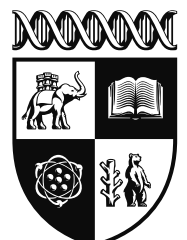
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## Role of the Facilitator

Each room should have a dedicated facilitator responsible for:

- **Introduction/Setting the tone:** Outlining the aims of the session, creating a welcoming atmosphere, encouraging open conversation, keeping everyone on track. PowerPoint slide overview can be used to aid instruction. Where there are more objects/presenters than there is time, the expectations of the group need to be managed, explaining that they may not have an opportunity to learning about every project.
- **Encourage** delegates to engage and remind RCC presenters to keep their answers to questions concise.
- **Time management:** Keeping the session on schedule, signaling when to rotate tables. Suggest using a 15-minute timer, sound bowl or other alert.
- **Room logistics:**
  - Ensure room is appropriate for layout.
  - Direct participants to sit at one of the three tables.
  - Ensure coaching cards are available to delegates (see section of this guide for suggested coaching cards).
  - Ensure objects are appropriately placed, and the room setup is conducive to conversation.
  - It is important to note that it is the presenters who move from table to table, and not the wider group. This helps to minimize any disruption with timing from people moving around the room.
- **Session wrap-up:** Thanking participants, acknowledging the presenters, and sharing any final reflections/announcements.



## Facilitator Notes

### Introduction (5 minutes)

*Hello everyone, and welcome to this Research Culture Carousel session. My name is [name], and I'll be guiding you through this interactive part of the [event].*

*Today's session is all about exploring the diverse and inspiring work being done to shape research culture. Our presenters have each brought an object that represents their project or perspective on research culture, which they'll use as a starting point for conversation.*

***Here's how it will work:*** *each presenter will spend 15 minutes at three different tables. They'll kick things off with an introduction of who they are and the object they have brought with them. After that, it's over to you! Ask them questions about their object to better understand their research culture initiative/project and use the question cards on the table if you need a prompt to get the conversation going.*

*After 15 minutes, I'll signal presenters to rotate to the next table (Table 1 to table 2, table 2 to table 3 etc.), so you'll get to hear from different presenters during this session.*

*Our goal is to create a relaxed, open space for meaningful conversations, so don't worry about making it perfect. Just be curious, share your perspectives, and most importantly have fun! You may not be able to learn from all the projects, but this is a good opportunity to be exposed to as many as possible. If you see an object across the room that intrigues you but you do not have the opportunity to hear about it, there will be an opportunity over coffee to find out more.*

### Rotation Announcements

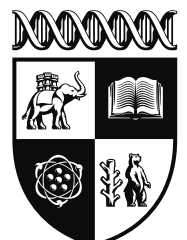
*That's time for our first round. Presenters, if you could please move with your object to the next table. Let's keep the energy going. Remember, it's all about learning from each other!*

### Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

*That's our final rotation. Feedback and observations from the audience?*

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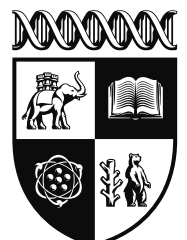


Note - you may want to take audience questions, or you may want to give your own reflections on the session (time-dependent). The latter is probably more realistic.

*A big thank you to our presenters for sharing their work and objects with us. I hope you've had some inspiring conversations and made a few new connections. If you want to continue these conversations (suggest continuing over break times). Any final announcements about your event.*

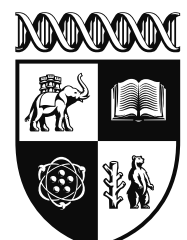
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(Credit: Dr Harriet Richmond)

<p><b>Understanding the Object</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's the story behind this object?</li> <li>• If this object could talk, what would it say about your project?</li> <li>• How did you choose this object? Was it instinctive or strategic?</li> <li>• Does the object represent a personal or professional connection for you?</li> <li>• Was there another object you considered bringing instead?</li> <li>• How do you think others perceive this object?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Exploring the Why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What gap or issue in research culture does your project aim to address?</li> <li>• What values or beliefs underpin your project?</li> <li>• What does research culture mean to you, personally?</li> <li>• What problem are you most passionate about solving?</li> <li>• What motivated you to begin this project?</li> <li>• How does your personal experience shape your approach to this work?</li> <li>• Why is now the right time for this project?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Growth, Learning, and Change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's changed in your thinking since you began this project?</li> <li>• Has your object come to symbolise something different over time?</li> <li>• What's one thing you've learned that surprised or challenged you?</li> <li>• What obstacles have you faced and how have you navigated them?</li> <li>• What feedback has shaped the direction of your work?</li> <li>• How has your understanding of research culture shifted during this project?</li> <li>• What would you do differently if you started again?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Making it Relevant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How could this work be adapted in a different research context?</li> <li>• What do you wish more people understood about your project?</li> <li>• Who benefits most from your initiative—and why?</li> <li>• What institutional changes would amplify your project's impact?</li> <li>• What communities or groups have you collaborated with?</li> <li>• How is your project aligned with broader research culture priorities?</li> <li>• What barriers have you encountered when trying to share or scale your work?</li> </ul>




Connections and Reflections	Looking Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does your object make *you* feel?</li><li>• How does your project connect to wider cultural or institutional change?</li><li>• If your object were replaced with something else tomorrow, what would it be?</li><li>• What kind of conversations has this object sparked in the past?</li><li>• How do you think your object would be received in another research setting?</li><li>• What part of your project resonates most with others?</li><li>• Does your object embody a tension or contradiction?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What's next for your work?</li><li>• What kind of support or collaboration would help take your project further?</li><li>• If this object could inspire action, what would you want that action to be?</li><li>• What would success look like for your project in a year's time?</li><li>• Where do you hope this conversation leads?</li><li>• What questions are you still exploring in your own mind?</li><li>• How can others take this work forward in their own contexts?</li></ul>

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**[Event Title]**

**Research Culture  
Carousel – Briefing**



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## **Research Culture Carousel**

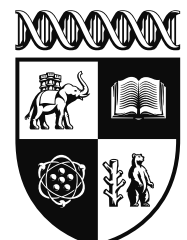
### Objectives

- To explore a diverse range of research culture projects through a creative lens
- To encourage peer learning through open-ended conversation in an informal environment
- To provide an opportunity for networking and connection
- Be fast-paced, interactive and fun!

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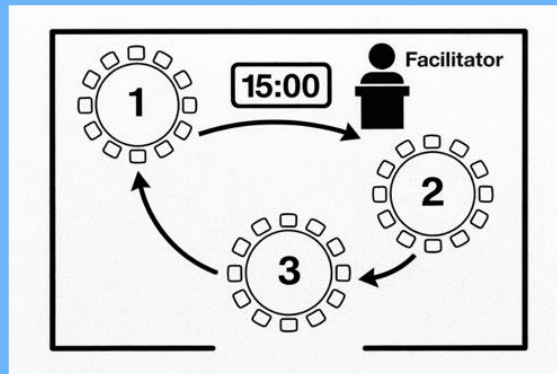
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## Research Culture Carousel

### Structure

- [Date and timings]
- X sessions running in parallel, 3 tables in each room.
- Each RCC presenter will sit at a numbered table (any)
- Delegates will come in and sit at tables (any)
- Make a note of your **room / facilitator name**: [DETAILS]



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## Research Culture Carousel Session

### RCC Presenters

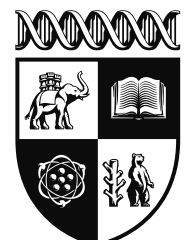
- Choose an object that represents your project (**no PowerPoint presentations will be used**)
- Photograph your object for book of abstracts/events info!
- After the facilitator has started the session, introduce yourself and your object succinctly to the group. For example: *Hi everyone, my name is Marie Sams from the University of Warwick, and my object is a mug that says 'empowering women empower women'*. (**Don't have introductions for everyone around the table – remember you only have 15 minutes**)  
Keep answers succinct
- Delegates will start to ask you questions using card prompts on the table.
- Bring any QR codes or further information about your project to make connections.



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## Research Culture Carousel

### Facilitation

#### Role of the Facilitator

- Will introduce the session aims, format and how it will run (5 mins)
- Will start the first 15-minute rotation, and signal when time is up
- Presenters will move (with their objects) to another table when signalled
- 3 rotations
- Facilitator will close the session, with reflections (10 minutes)
- Time keeping will be the main challenge in the room! (Use of countdown/alarm signal)

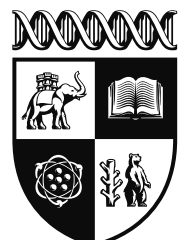
#### Facilitators

Names/Photos here

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## REFERENCES

Bell, M.E and Bell, S.E (2012). "What to do with all this stuff?: Memory, family, and material objects." *Storytelling, Self, Society*, 8(2): 63-84.

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