UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Research Culture



A Progress Review 2025

Contents

01
Introduction 4

02
Meet the Research Culture Team 6

03
The Story so Far 8

04
University of Warwick Initiatives 10 – 25

- 4.1 **Grassroots Funding** 10 – 15
- 4.2 **PATHWAY** 16
  A positive action programme aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of early career Black researchers at Warwick.
- 4.3 **Early Career Researcher Wellbeing** 18
  A scoping project to identify the support needs related to early career researcher wellbeing.
- 4.4 **Research Professionals** 20
  Recognising and valuing the people who contribute to research.
- 4.5 **Research Celebration Awards** 22
  Recognising the work of our community.
- 4.6 **Interdisciplinary Research Culture** 24
  Developing interdisciplinary communities across the institution.

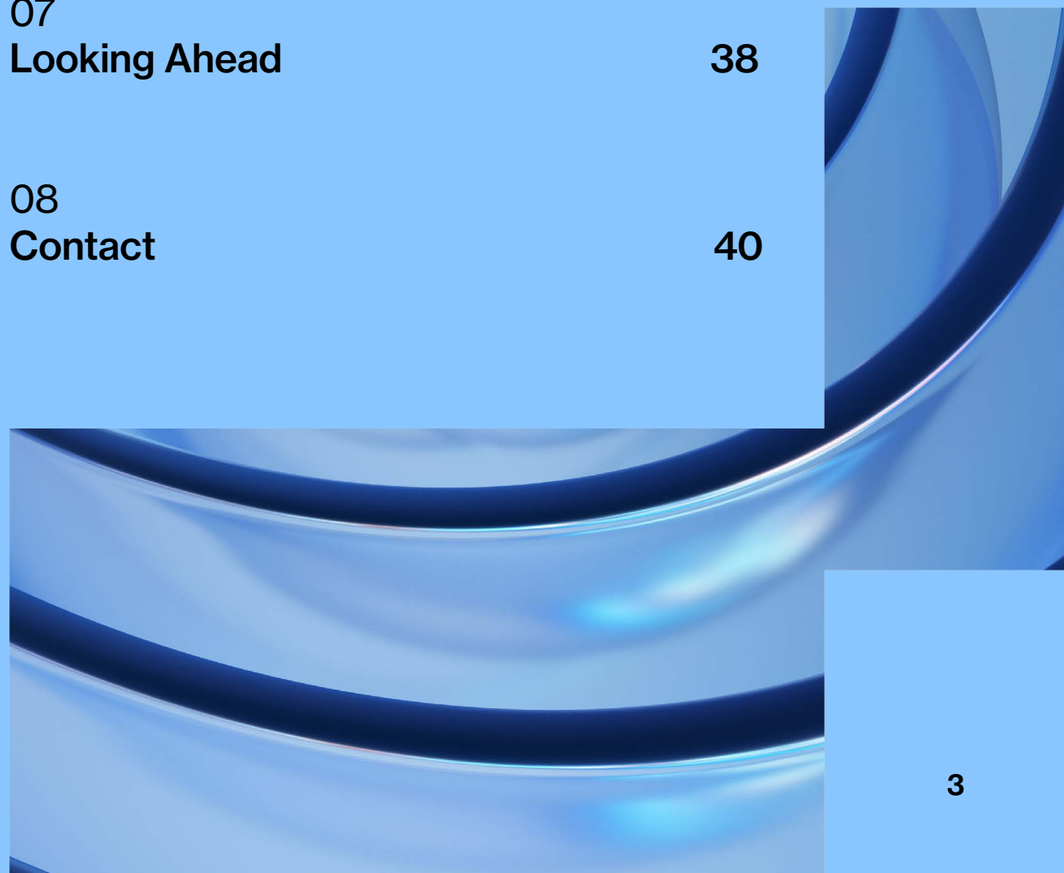
05
National Centre for Research Culture 26 – 35

- 5.1 **International Research Culture Conference** 28
- 5.2 **Research Culture Enablers Network** 32
- 5.3 **NCRC Conversation Series** 34

06
External Engagements and Collaborations 36

07
Looking Ahead 38

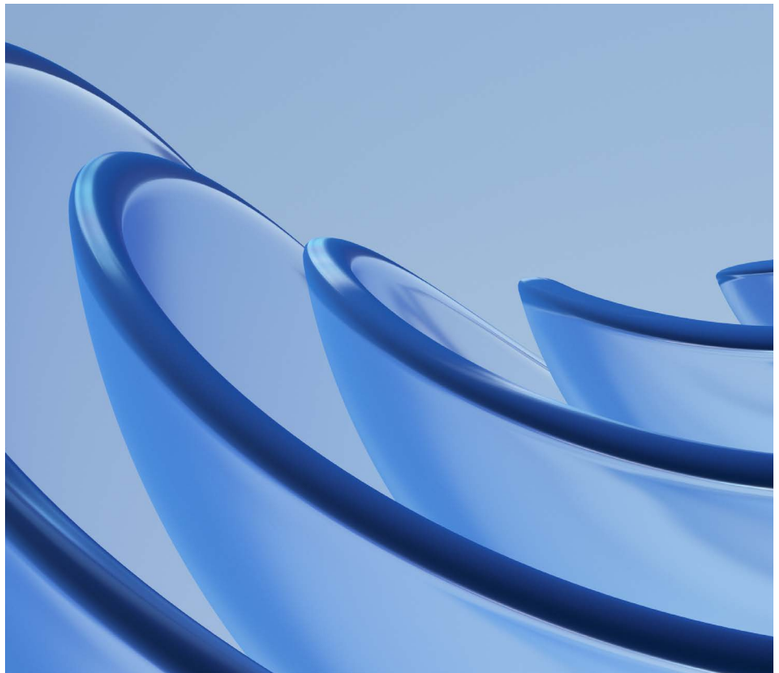
08
Contact 40



01—Introduction

What do I think about when I think about Research Culture and the University of Warwick?

A positive research culture isn't just a 'nice to have' – it is essential to developing and delivering innovative, impactful and inclusive research which changes lives and society for the better. Moreover, the culture within which we work substantially influences how (and why?) we work, our career pathways, access to collaborative opportunities, and ultimately what we produce.





Prof. Kirstie Haywood at the International Research Culture Conference 2024

Research culture is a multi-faceted concept, underpinned by personal and professional behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms. Put simply, it embraces everything a researcher or research enabler does that isn't the research!

Recent years have seen a remarkable evolution in both our understanding of what matters in research culture and how change can be initiated with new initiatives that span research culture priorities including career precarity, diversity, wellbeing, open research, and valuing diverse contributions to research.

A commonality across many of these initiatives is the centrality of 'people' – working in active collaboration to enhance understanding of 'what matters', exploring how change can be meaningfully instituted, and seeking to define change that can be 'measured' in a way that resonates and further enhances understanding. Such engagement helps us to unpack some of the complexities and interdependencies of research culture into actionable, transferrable initiatives that can result in real, meaningful progress. Warwick has been at the leading edge of this advance, and I am delighted to share our progress to date with you through this report.

Through continued community engagement, connection, collaboration, and co-creation our goal is to achieve a future where an inclusive, responsive, and positive research culture is embedded across all that we do – ensuring that people, as well as their research, thrive.

PROFESSOR KIRSTIE L HAYWOOD
DPhil. BSc(Hons). PGCertLaTHE. MCSP. SRP.

DEPUTY PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR RESEARCH
(Research Culture)

DIRECTOR
National Centre for Research Culture

02— Meet the Research Culture Team

What does Research Culture mean to me?





PROFESSOR KIRSTIE L HAYWOOD
DPhil. BSc(Hons). PGCertLaTHE.
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A positive research culture isn't just a 'nice to have' – it is essential to developing and delivering innovative, impactful and inclusive research which changes lives and society for the better. The culture within which we work substantially influences how (and why?) we work, our career pathways, access to collaborative opportunities, and ultimately what we produce.



CAROLE HARRIS
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR RESEARCH CULTURE, GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

To me, Research Culture is about having the right environment, working conditions, support and training in place to enable researchers to produce excellent high-quality research, developing a system that encourages good behaviours and promotes best practices and integrity to produce robust and impactful outputs.



DR MARIE SAMS
HEAD OF THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH CULTURE

Within the broader context of research culture, for me it means breaking down barriers and building systems where everyone - regardless of role, background, or career stage can thrive, contribute meaningfully, and be valued. When equity and inclusion are embedded in how we conduct and reward research, it becomes more impactful, trusted, and truly collaborative.



VICKY STRUDWICK
HEAD OF RESEARCH CULTURE PARTNERSHIPS

For me, research culture means sharing platforms and power, acknowledging contributions, being honest and open about successes and failures, and collaborating rather than competing so that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the research effort and be valued and recognised for their contribution, and society trusts and benefits from research.



DR RIKA NAIR
RESEARCH CULTURE MANAGER, LEAD OF THE RESEARCH CULTURE ENABLERS NETWORK

To me, research culture means reimagining how we think about research and who we see as part of it. It's about enabling the best research to take place by recognising and addressing the factors that hold it back, and by creating environments where diverse skills and talents are valued. At the heart of good research are the multifaceted teams behind it.



ADELE KENNY
RESEARCH CULTURE OFFICER

Research Culture can mean different things and have different priorities for us all. For me, at the heart, are people and the need to be supported to achieve our full potential in a respectful, safe and nurturing environment that values all contributions, fosters collaboration and is underpinned by the common cause in the delivery of research excellence and impact.

03—The Story So Far...

2012

Warwick obtains first **HR Excellence in Research Award**

2014

Research Technology Platforms launched

First **Research Integrity Annual Statement** published

2017

Founding signatory to the **Technician Commitment**

2020

Warwick co-leads £3m **TALENT programme**

Undergraduate Research Support Scheme (URSS) is launched

First Research Culture Strategy and Action Plan launched

2021

Pro Vice Chancellor Research establishes Research Culture Forum

Warwick re-affirms its commitment to revised **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**

First research culture officer appointment made

Grassroots Projects supported through Research England 'Enhancing Research Culture Funding' (25 projects)

Warwick technician wins **£1.5M grant** from EPSRC to lead national research facility

2022

Research culture project showcases **Technical Talent at Warwick**

Grassroots Projects supported through Research England 'Enhancing Research Culture Funding' (19 projects)

2023

£5.5M UK Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy established, with Warwick as co-lead

Warwick establishes the **National Centre for Research Culture (NCRC)**

NCRC hosts its first annual **International Research Culture Conference (IRCC)**

Research Culture Enablers Network established

Grassroots Projects supported through Research England 'Enhancing Research Culture Funding' (37 projects)

PATHWAY programme launches, aiming to address underrepresentation of Black Researchers at Warwick with support for the early career stages

2024

NCRC external Advisory Board established

First institutional **Research Celebration Awards** event

Grassroots Projects supported through Research England Enhancing Research Culture Funding (19 projects)

Early career researcher wellbeing scoping review commences

A searchable database of **100+ research culture initiatives** established

University joins **UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN)**

University joins the **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)**

Warwick interdisciplinary research **Spotlights initiative** launched

2025

Community engagement project commences to refresh the research culture roadmap and action plan

Research Culture Enablers Network highly commended by Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA)

£4.5M project **'Research Professional Futures'** funded by Research England

The University of Warwick recognised the importance of research culture as early as 2012, laying the foundation for a sustained institutional focus. In 2022, it became a core pillar of the University's Research Strategy, highlighting its role in delivering world-leading, impactful research and reflecting growing national recognition of the vital contribution of positive culture towards the achievement of research excellence.[1]

Underpinned by strong foundations of institutional progress and evidenced by achievements such as Advance HE's Athena Swan Silver Charter Mark and the Race Equality Charter, the following selected milestones reflect Warwick's sustained and strategic commitment to cultivating a vibrant, inclusive, and forward-looking research culture.

This report highlights the approaches and initiatives that have shaped the progress of our research culture work to date. From institution wide projects to providing external opportunity for collaboration, our efforts have been driven by a shared vision to enhance the conditions in which research is conducted and supported.

1. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology & Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. (2021). Research and development (R&D) people and culture strategy. GOV.UK. www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-and-development-rd-people-and-culture-strategy

04—Initiatives

4.1 Grassroots Funded Programme

At Warwick, our research community is full of innovative solutions, driving our collective efforts to enhance research culture. We reinvested the Enhancing Research Culture funding from Research England into our community through internal funding opportunities.



Catherine Louch and Rachael Kirwan with Words 4 Wellbeing exhibition, funded through ERCF.

Through the call, we posed a simple but important question:

" What are the key research culture priorities of the groups you represent, and how would you use up to £10K or £50K to address them? "

To make this opportunity as inclusive as possible, we explicitly highlighted and encouraged applications from underrepresented groups, and provided tailored support including drop-in sessions, research development advice to refine bids, and guidance on alternative routes for proposals not suited to the call.

Our projects were led by diverse teams of postgraduate researchers (PGRs), technicians, research enablers, and researchers at all career stages.

To date, more than 100 projects have been supported across six key themes:

01	Creating Routes to Collaboration
02	Diversifying Reward and Recognition
03	Furthering Open Research
04	Improving Research Leadership
05	Securing Research Careers
06	Widening Access to Research

The teams involved are now key champions spearheading the ongoing development of research culture at Warwick, sharing their insights and experiences through our growing communities of practice. The Research Culture team has convened the project teams with complementary expertise to share best practice, support peer evaluation and explore opportunities for sustainability. This has led to wider adoption across the University - for example, a funded neurodiversity project led by a PhD student Lauren Wilkinson, has inspired the creation of a **neurodivergent PGR network**; and the Faculty of Arts has introduced changes to their viva process alongside new mentoring support for monographs as a result of a project led by **Professor Alison Cooley**. Several projects have also scaled up in scope or successfully applied for external funding. For example, a **work experience programme to enhance social mobility in STEM** led by Dr Craig Carnegie, has now been extended to other Midlands universities in partnership with Midlands Innovation, enabled through links fostered by the Research Culture team.

We are capturing the recommendations and outputs of these projects in our **Research Culture Catalogue**, providing a valuable resource for anyone looking to explore and implement best practices in research culture within their own institutional, disciplinary, or career-stage context.

4.1 (Continued)

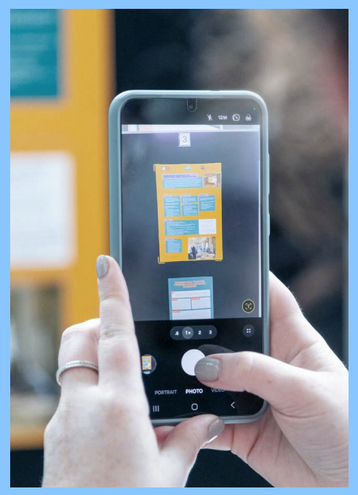
14
templates

28
publications

57
workshops & events

14
conference outputs

27
methodological approaches



7
podcasts

27
videos

9
event programmes

185
total outputs

Grant Award Categories

102
total projects

38
Securing and supporting the careers of researchers and associated professions

27
Improving access and participation in research

12
Improving research leadership skills across all career stages

7
Furthering open research practices

4
Diversifying recruitment, reward and recognition at all career stages

14
Creating routes for external collaboration and exchange

4.1 (Continued)

Voices from the community

" Funding through the Enhanced Research Culture (ERCF) scheme has allowed me to create leadership roles, enable staff development, produce and share open access resources and provide opportunities within STEM for those that would not otherwise have them.

All of these activities have been under the topic of work experience. ERCF has enabled me to create and explore a project that has helped define my role within the department.

Without the resources and support I would have struggled to juggle the responsibilities of my academic role, which would have been at the detriment to the objectives I had for the future of work experience models within a university environment.

I am passionate about the topic; however, it is difficult to find funding routes that will support staff training, workplace culture and the ability to make real embedded change within a department's practices.

This year it has allowed me to connect with a wider audience, I have hosted and visited other Universities in the UK, sharing my guides and models, which I now see implemented into their own work experience outputs. To continue this work, I have launched the W.E.Inspire network, to learn and share good practice between one another."



CRAIG CARNEGIE
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

" Funding through the Enhancing Research Culture scheme allowed us to organise two 'Working with Publishers' workshops and a pilot mentoring scheme to support the development of book proposals.

Together, the workshops and mentoring scheme created a more inclusive research environment, within which all early-stage researchers can access the support they need to revise their thesis for publication and to find out how to put together a book proposal for an edited volume or monograph.

With the support of the Doctoral College, a new box has been added to the PhD Joint Examiners' Report inviting examiners to identify the publication potential of the PhD thesis in terms both of a monograph and journal article(s).

This innovation now makes available to the student and their supervisor(s) an objective assessment of potential next steps. Monograph proposals were submitted to publishers by 3 of the 8 mentees, with mentoring of the other 5 mentees still ongoing.

The HRC also supported preparation of book proposals for 3 edited volumes during the year. Overall, we engaged 41 PGRs and ESRs from the Arts and Humanities + Social Sciences over the course of the year. As one of the workshop participants wrote in feedback, 'One of the most beneficial, collegiate and informative sessions I have attended at Warwick'. We are grateful to the ERC fund for enabling this."



PROFESSOR ALISON COOLEY
PROFESSOR IN CLASSICS
& ANCIENT HISTORY AND
DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE
FOR ADVANCED STUDY

In addition to the funding allocated to grassroots projects led by community members, the Research Culture team mobilised several institutional initiatives.

These included:

4.2 **PATHWAY**
A positive action programme aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of early career Black researchers at Warwick.

4.3 **Early Career Researcher Wellbeing**
A scoping project to identify the support needs related to early career researcher wellbeing.

4.4 **Research Professionals**
Recognising and valuing the people who contribute to research.

4.5 **Research Celebration Awards**
Recognising the work of our community.

The research culture team collaborates with the interdisciplinary research team to support an interdisciplinary research culture at Warwick through:

4.6 **Interdisciplinary Research Culture**
Supporting interdisciplinary research across the institution.

Further details on these initiatives are provided in the following section.

4.2 PATHWAY Programme

PATHWAY is a positive action programme designed to address the underrepresentation of Black researchers, both at Warwick and elsewhere in UK higher education.

This initial iteration of the programme focuses on the early stages of a research career pathway, providing financial support and networking opportunities for Black students and early career researchers (ECRs) at the following career points:

i) as an undergraduate through the Undergraduate Research Support Scheme (URSS) scheme;

ii) as a doctoral student;

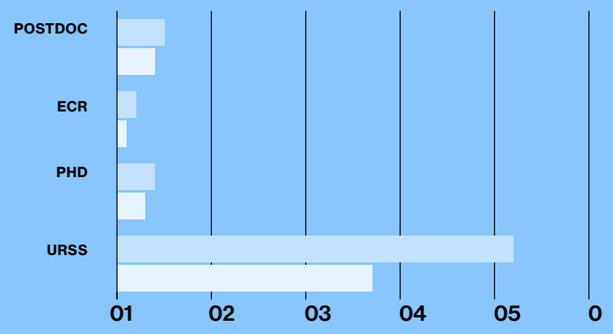
iii) as an ECR; *and, finally,*

iv) as a post-doctoral fellow.

Since its launch in November 2023, we have supported two student cohorts, supporting a total of 85 Black students and ECRs *(Figure 1)*.

FIGURE 1:

PATHWAY
Participation to date



Enrichment and networking activities have included:

01 A welcome event and talks from Warwick alumni now working at the British Geological Survey, GSK and University of Oxford.

02 In July 2025, two ERCs received funding to attend the Black and Minority Ethnic Early Career Resesarcher Conference in Canterbury

03 In July 2025, two doctoral students received funding to visit Stellenbosch University to build international career networks; supported by the Stellenbosch-Warwick joint seed fund and British Geological Survey, respectively.

04 Series of on-line lunchtime seminars with Stellenbosch mid-career researchers (e.g., research career development; accessing non-government research funding opportunities; and international collaboration).

Programme Evaluation
The PATHWAY programme is being evaluated by the Doctoral Academia and Education Research (DEAR) Centre at Warwick, with a report and evaluation toolkit for positive action programmes released in November 2025.

We continue to work with colleagues in the Doctoral College, Institute for Advanced Study, Social Inclusion, and Student Opportunity teams to explore opportunities to sustain and embed the programme, and to explore options to extend it to support mid-career researchers.

External Collaborations
We have engaged with other UK organisations and initiatives supporting Black researcher careers to share experiences, resources and good practice, and to explore opportunities to maximise the impact of individual initiatives through collaboration. These include the British Geological Survey, the Equity and Inclusion in Research Funding Forum (Positive Action Working Group) founded by Oxford University, and the Medical Research Council's 'Black in Biomedical' project and its Advisory Group.

At an international level, we secured support from the Stellenbosch-Warwick Joint Seed Fund to support mobility and networking activity between PATHWAY participants at Warwick and mid-career participants in the SUNRISE and Future Professor Programmes at Stellenbosch. The seed fund award, together with generous funding from British Geological Survey, has enabled two PATHWAY PhD participants to visit Stellenbosch in 2025, hosted by aspiring senior researchers at Stellenbosch. The visits helped them to build international networks and understand a different research context, as well as learning about the career development of their hosts.

" The Warwick PATHWAY Programme has been a truly life-changing experience, shaping my journey as a researcher and academic. It has opened doors to meaningful collaborations and networking opportunities with scholars across the UK and beyond.

Through its well-structured activities, including insightful talks, trips, conferences, and visits to research institutes, I have gained invaluable knowledge that continues to enrich my research.

The programme has also provided me with crucial access to information on research grants and career development resources, empowering me to advance confidently in academia.

As a Black researcher, I deeply value how the PATHWAY Programme has illuminated a clear and visible career pathway, fostering both representation and growth.
It has not only strengthened my professional skills but also reaffirmed my belief that with the right support and opportunities, diversity in research can truly thrive. "

USORO AKPAN
PATHWAY PARTICIPANT

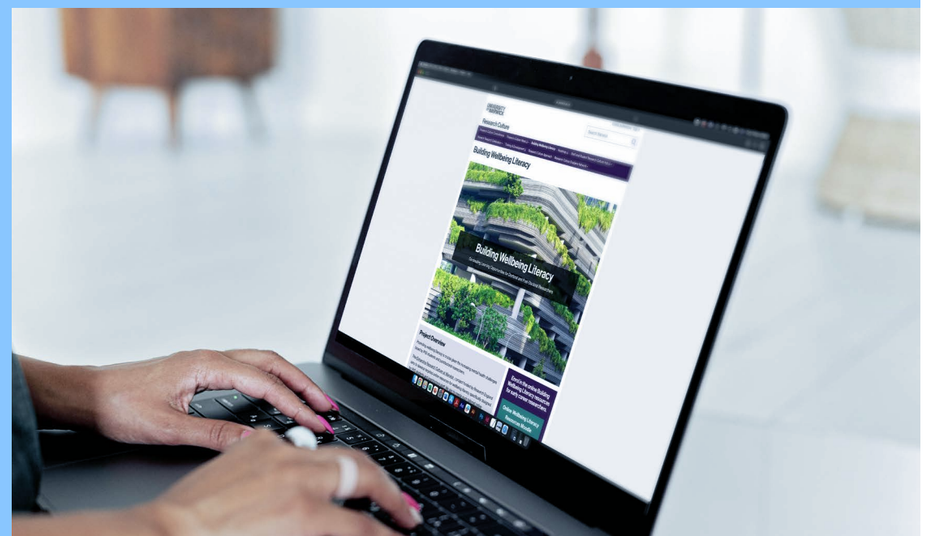


4.3 Early Career Researcher Wellbeing

A scoping project to identify the support needs related to early career researcher wellbeing.

Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are particularly vulnerable to mental health and wellbeing challenges due to the demanding and uncertain nature of this career stage, alongside the personal development pressures they face (Fisher, 2024[2]; Nicholls et al., 2022[3]; Satinsky et al., 2021[4]).

In March 2024, the University of Warwick identified this as an area for improvement and as such, initiated a review to better understand the nature of these challenges and to help guide future priorities and actions.



The Wellbeing Literacy Module developed by Prof. Elena Riva and team, as viewed on a laptop during online engagement with wellbeing resources.

2. Fisher, F. (2024). Unleashing the Power of Postdocs: Improving the postdoctoral experience to enable improvements in research culture. Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal. 11. 321-332. 10.31273/eirj.v11i3.1571.

3. Nicholls, H., Nicholls, M., Tekin, S., Lamb, D., & Billings, J. (2022). The impact of working in academia on researchers' mental health and well-being: A systematic review and qualitative meta-synthesis. PloS one, 17(5), e0268890.

4. Satinsky, E. N., Kimura, T., Kiang, M. V., Abebe, R., Cunningham, S., Lee, H., Lin, X., Liu, C. H., Rudan, I., Sen, S., Tomlinson, M., Yaver, M. & Tsai, A. C. (2021). Systematic review and meta-analysis of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among Ph. D. students. Scientific Reports, 11(1), 14370.

5. Fletcher, S., Tout, A. F., Jackson, T., Mitchell, C., Riva, E., Toro, C., Moukhtarian, T.R., Sams, M., Kita, Predictors Associated with Early Career Researcher Wellbeing: A Systematic Scoping Review (manuscript in preparation).

Our aims were to better understand:

A **The existing provision at the University to support wellbeing among Early Career Researchers (ECRs);**

B **The specific challenges faced by this group;** ***and***

C **The opportunities for further development and action.**

Our approach

01 Scoping the evidence base

A key strand of work involved the development of a systematic scoping review (Fletcher, S., Tout, A. F., Jackson, T., et al – manuscript in preparation[5]) to explore the risk and protective factors affecting ECR wellbeing within Higher Education Institutions. Using an exploratory thematic approach, the review identified 17 distinct themes and subthemes, highlighting sector-wide concerns such as poor wellbeing, limited access to support, isolation, and career uncertainty. These findings provide a foundational evidence base to inform future developments.

02 Stakeholder engagement

Two consultation events were held in March and June 2024 to explore wellbeing challenges faced by ECRs. The first workshop brought together a meeting of key institutional stakeholders; and the second workshop engaged 17 ECRs across 15 disciplines.

Key challenges identified included unrealistic workloads, career precarity, limited access to support, and feelings of isolation, particularly among international researchers, with findings shared back to workshop participants for further checking and verification. Suggestions for improvement focused on mentorship, clearer communication, and better opportunity for connection and community-building.

03 Mapping available central support

Between September and November 2024, further engagement was undertaken with central departments including the Institute for Advanced Study, Doctoral College, Researcher Development, Wellbeing Services, Report and Support, and Faculty Research Leads, to map existing provision related to ECR wellbeing. This work aimed to identify current initiatives, gaps in support, and opportunities for alignment.

An audit of projects funded through the Enhancing Research Culture Fund was also conducted to assess wellbeing-focussed initiatives with potential for broader learning and future scale-up. For example, one project that received funding in 24/25 was the development of a **Wellbeing Literacy Resource**. This initiative was developed by a Warwick team led by Professor Elena Riva (Principal Investigator). Developed through active collaboration with early career researchers, this resource is designed to support the wellbeing of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers. It aims to foster a culture of care and empower individuals to access meaningful support throughout their academic journey. Looking ahead, we plan to build on this work by evaluating its impact, tracking progress, and sharing outcomes more widely across the sector.

Next steps: Whilst this work identified several strands of excellent provision in working to support ECR wellbeing, it has also resulted in a greater understanding of the challenges, and opportunities for where interventions can be further scaled up and evaluated. These different strands of work have informed the development of an Early Career Researcher Wellbeing: Planning for the Future Working Report. It is intended that the results from this collaborative activity and resulting recommendations will be built into the new Research Culture Roadmap and action plan.

4.4 Research Professionals

Recognising and valuing the people who contribute to research

At Warwick, recognising the diverse contributions that underpin research excellence has long been a priority. The Research Culture team has increasingly highlighted the role of 'Research Professionals' (RPs), whose strategic and relational skills are central to high-quality research in collaboration with academic colleagues.

A key focus has been building strong links with the UK network for Professional Research Investment and Strategy Managers (PRISMs). PRISMs are colleagues who coordinate major research programmes, often involving multiple universities, industries and communities. Even though PRISMs are key to research success, their work is often overlooked. Most are women (93%) and many hold PhDs (43%), yet only a third feel valued by their institutions. More than half have never received formal induction or training.

Rika Nair has chaired the PRISM funding working group and has delivered research culture training to PRISM members. Engagement has extended to UKRI, through collaboration with the EPSRC student team and presentations on the role of PRISMs to wider UKRI networks. In November 2025, Warwick hosted the national PRISM Conference, that brought together over 100 PRISMs from across the UK. **Announced in October 2025, we have been successful in being awarded a £4.5 million Research Professional Futures (RPF) project**, funded by Research England which aims to transform how research is supported and sustained across the UK.

The project is led by an experienced team of research professionals, including Rika Nair (University of Warwick), Isabella von Holstein (Imperial College London), Stephanie Bales (Teesside University), and Lorna Wilson (Durham University). Work packages are research-informed, supported by the Department of Education, University of Oxford, and Research Consulting Ltd.

The RPF project will:

A **Audit the current landscape and develop a shared vision for RP roles.**

B **Establish a unifying sector-wide framework for skills, behaviours, and career progression.**

C **Pilot initiatives to futureproof roles, exploring emerging technologies and shared service models.**

D **Co-create a strategic blueprint to embed sustainable change across the sector.**

The RPF will involve over 750 participants from 75 organisations, generating data, tools, and guidance to help universities invest in and empower their research professional workforce. It will also establish a national Commission, chaired by Professor Shearer West (Vice Chancellor and President, University of Leeds), to represent diverse stakeholder perspectives and provide ongoing sector leadership. The project begins in January 2026 and will run until December 2029. Its impact will continue through an open-access digital platform, hosted by ARMA, and a national community of practice to sustain meaningful change.

Through this collaborative effort, Warwick is leading the way towards a more inclusive research culture, one in which RPs are recognised as essential members of 'Team Research', and as drivers of excellence and impact.

How will RPF deliver change?

Professionalised RP Community with clear career pathways and recognition as experts in research

Institutions equipped to develop and sustain a skilled, motivated workforce ready for evolving research needs

Sector enriched by a bank of innovative case studies driving best practice and future ways of working

RP BLUEPRINT

01 CONTEXT (WP1)
- > Sector-wide commission, evidence and datasets
- > Actionable recommendations

02 COMPETENCIES (WP2)
- > RP Professional development Framework
- > Digital tools and recruitment materials

03 CONCEPTS (WP3)
- > Scalable projects; evidence on AI and shared services
- > Support for emerging RP Communities

04 CULTURE (WP4)
- > Develop RP blueprint research-informed case studies to support research culture change
- > Sector engagement

4.5 Research Celebration Awards

Recognising the work of our community

In 2024, we introduced a new annual event, the 'Research Celebration Awards' which celebrates and honours the outstanding achievements and contributions of individuals and teams to research excellence and impact.

The research awards provide an opportunity to evidence the commitment in the University's Research Strategy and recognises the talent and ambition of the research community, with recognition being an important activity contributing to a positive research culture.

Research Celebration Awards 2025



Six award categories celebrate excellence across the research community.

01 Research Collaborations and Partnerships – Celebrating innovative and impactful cross-disciplinary or cross-sector research partnerships.

02 Research Impact – Recognising research that has made a demonstrable difference in society.

03 Research Communications – Excellence in engaging diverse audiences with research.

04 Excellent Supervision – Acknowledging supervisors who provide exceptional guidance and support to researchers.

05 Research Enabler – Highlighting vital contributions from those who support research outside academic roles.

06 Research Culture – Celebrating individuals or teams who champion inclusive, supportive, and positive research environments.

The 2024 and 2025 Research Culture Award winners are showcased below, with highlights of their contributions.

2024

Developing the Warwick Medical School (WMS) Research Culture Roadmap
Professor Kirstie Haywood and Adele Kenny

Staff and students at WMS co-developed a vision for research culture, resulting in the WMS Research Culture Roadmap - a framework to support success, personal growth, and wellbeing, enabling researchers to thrive and reach their full potential throughout their journey.

Also highly commended were:

The Student Research team for empowering undergraduates to pursue original research, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity and diversity ensuring that opportunities are accessible to all students, regardless of their academic background.

Sarah Bennett as a driving force in shaping the research culture for technical specialists at Warwick, and externally, fostering a collaborative environment where individuals in previously isolating roles can thrive.

2025

MRC-funded Doctoral Training Programme in Interdisciplinary Biomedicine (IBR) Team

The MRC-funded doctoral training programme in interdisciplinary biomedicine at WMS fosters world-class research and a supportive culture. With over 60 students, it champions inclusivity through initiatives like mental health training and LGBTQ+ coffee mornings. It has attracted multimillion-pound funding from national and international agencies.

Also highly commended were:

Guido van Meersbergen for their outstanding leadership in decolonising Global History at Warwick, bringing together scholars from around the world to shape new directions for the field.

Ehsan Ghadim for their courageous advocacy in highlighting the mental health challenges of PhD students, driving essential conversations on research culture and wellbeing.

Other nominations for our 2025 Research Celebration Awards, highlighting the diverse roles, approaches, and collaborations that underpin Warwick's research excellence, can be explored in the **Nominees Catalogue.**

Looking forwards, the 2026 Research Awards will be a central feature of Warwick's inaugural Research Culture Week; designed to celebrate and elevate the diverse contributions of the University's research community. This week-long programme will showcase the breadth and depth of research culture initiatives across disciplines, while also highlighting the values, practices, and people that shape Warwick's vibrant research culture.

By embedding the awards within this celebration, the University aims to foster a more inclusive and collaborative environment that recognises not only outstanding research outputs but also the many ways researchers contribute to a positive and thriving research ecosystem.

4.6 Interdisciplinary Research Culture

Supporting interdisciplinary research across the institution.

Alongside wider research culture activities, The Research Culture team has collaborated with the Interdisciplinary Research team in supporting Warwick's transition from the long-standing Global Research Priorities initiative to the re-focused strategic Interdisciplinary Research Spotlight Programme.

Led by Prof Fabienne Peter, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Interdisciplinary Research), and managed by a dedicated programme team, the Spotlights build capacity for excellent interdisciplinary research and strengthen communities across faculties, particularly where connections have historically been harder to establish.



Screenshot from 'Introducing Warwick's Interdisciplinary Research Spotlights' Source: University of Warwick, YouTube video, 2025.

The programme is guided by three objectives:

A **Foster a vibrant interdisciplinary research culture through inclusive networks, mentoring, and engagement activities;**

B **Support excellence and impact by enabling collaborative projects, securing funding, and generating high-quality outputs;** *and*

C **Raise national and international visibility through high-profile events, media engagement, and demonstrable growth in public and online reach.**

Connecting the Spotlight programme team with the Research Culture team aligns institutional priorities with the needs of interdisciplinary researchers, recognising interdisciplinarity as a distinct research culture challenge. Colleagues working across disciplines face unique barriers in navigating differing expectations, developing shared methodologies, and securing recognition through high-impact publications.

Six thematic Spotlights – *Behaviour; Health; Business, Manufacturing and Innovation; Sustainability; Digital, Data Science and AI; and Society and Culture* – are each led by a Chair and cross-faculty academic team, supported by the programme team. Together, they form a dynamic cross-faculty structure that engages researchers at all career stages.

In its first year, the programme established strong foundations for interdisciplinary collaboration. Activities have included defining each Spotlight's vision and priorities, mapping research interests, developing ECR-focused initiatives, delivering seminars and small-grant schemes, and engaging external stakeholders to enhance impact. A review of the first year was highly positive, noting significant achievements and a clear commitment to culture-building. The Spotlight teams have also collaborated on networking events, funding sandpits, and shared learning sessions. To complement the programme, tools have been developed to enhance connectivity, including a university-wide interdisciplinary research survey, an EDI questionnaire, and an online Interdisciplinary Research Directory, with over 400 profiles helping staff and students identify potential collaborators by keywords, research themes, and faculty.

A review of Research Centres, again led by Prof Fabienne Peter and supported by the Interdisciplinary Research team, highlighted strong enthusiasm among centre leads to connect across disciplines, signalling Warwick's capacity and appetite for interdisciplinary engagement. This insight will inform the next phase as the Research Culture and Spotlight teams continue to strengthen networks and nurture a vibrant interdisciplinary research culture across the University.

05—The National Centre for Research Culture

"A positive research culture is critical to ensuring a research ecosystem that both fosters excellence and is sustainable. Arguing for the importance of this and bringing together those working to improve research culture locally, nationally and internationally has never been more important.

The NCRC is now firmly established as part of the research culture landscape in the UK and has established a genuine community of practice – in particular through its annual conference which continues to go from strength to strength. It has also fostered the sharing of ideas and best practice across institutions and advocated for appropriate evaluation of research culture activity.

We need to be able to argue for the pragmatic – as well as moral – reasons for promoting a positive research culture; the NCRC plays a vitally important part in this."

MARCUS MUNAFO
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
and Provost

UNIVERSITY OF BATH
Co-founder of the UK
Reproducibility Network
Chair of the NCRC Advisory Board





Whilst research culture is a critical component of Warwick's research strategy, the challenges associated with culture improvement are often experienced sector-wide.

This led to the creation of the National Centre for Research Culture (NCRC) at the University of Warwick, which was established in 2023 to support and respond to shared challenges.

Since its inception, the NCRC has continued to grow through a diverse portfolio of activities which seek to foster opportunities to connect, collaborate and co-create across the research culture ecosystem.

Vision

A thriving global research culture shaped by inclusive, collaborative, and creative communities.

Mission

To provide a convening space that supports the sharing and dissemination of 'best practice' in research culture through connection, collaboration, and co-creation, both within and beyond the UK higher education sector.

The NCRC's mission is delivered through a range of flagship activities designed to inspire transformative change. These include the annual International Research Culture Conference (IRCC), the Research Culture Enablers Network (RCEN), and the Conversation Seminar Series, which are presented in this section.

In 2024, an Advisory Board was established with both external and internal representation, including: Prof. Marcus Munafo (UKRN co-founder and University of Bath) (Chair); Dr Yolana Pringle (Vitae); Dr Ken Emond (British Academy); Amy Godfrey (ECR, University of Warwick); Prof Kate Sang (Heriot Watt University); Dr Steven Hill (Research England). Prof Cat Davies (University of Leeds) also joined the board in 2025. As critical friends, the board provides external perspectives and advises on the future strategic development and direction of the NCRC.

"It has been a real pleasure working with the National Centre for Research Culture (NCRC). Midlands Innovation recently produced an overview of the research culture activity across our partnership of eight universities, and the NCRC's support was invaluable. Their insight into regional research culture initiatives enriched and strengthened the story we were able to tell.

The NCRC embodies the spirit of collaboration and openness that underpins Midlands Innovation's own approach. Their active engagement in our regional forum for sharing best practice has helped connect and amplify efforts across the Midlands. Crucially, the NCRC recognises that strengthening research culture is not a competitive endeavour, but a collective one – and they truly lead by example in fostering that spirit of shared learning for the benefit of the whole research community."

DR HELEN TURNER
Midlands Innovation Director



2,577

LinkedIn Followers

5.1 International Research Culture Conference

" I really benefitted from having attended the conference. I found the experience enriching, edifying, stimulating, and inspiring."

(IRCC24)

" It was a really great conference. I think the best I've been to in terms of schedule, logistics, captivating speakers, and a welcoming environment. Thank you! "

(IRCC2025)

Established in 2023, and now in its third year, the International Research Culture Conference (IRCC) is recognised as an annual, flagship research culture event. It provides a convening space to connect, explore, debate and actively collaborate with colleagues from across the wide research culture ecosystem.

Inclusivity across roles, sectors and people is a guiding value, underpinning opportunities to foster meaningful conversations, share best practice, learn together, and develop communities of practice. Delivery of the conference has continued to evolve in response to the needs and demands of the community, ensuring a dynamic, responsive and innovative event for all.

Over the last few years, the event has welcomed a range of speakers, including:

- Dr Nikolay Ogryzko, UKRI: Supporting people and teams
- Dr Ian Hancox, University of Warwick: The Sector Progress Catalysed by the Technician Commitment
- Professor Marcus Munafo, Co-Founder UK Reproducibility Network: Transparency, Trustworthiness and Research Culture: Lessons from Open Research
- Shomari Lewis-Wilson from the Wellcome Trust: Addressing how to scale research culture initiatives effectively.
- Louise Dunlop from the UK Committee on Research Integrity: Exploring the central role of integrity in shaping research culture.
- Dr Maisha Islam from the University of Southampton: Discussing the importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in research environments.

By 2025, interest in the event had grown substantially, with a record number of abstract submissions as illustrated in our infographic. In response to this clear appetite for dialogue and innovation, we delivered a compelling and diverse programme of activities that included voices from across disciplines, sectors, and geographies.

Delegates also enjoyed two plenary sessions, delivered by:

- Steven Hill from Research England: Frameworks for research cultures – learning from the UK's pilot REF assessment.
- Prof Cat Davies from the University of Leeds: Reflections on what works after serving four years as Dean of Research Culture.

Building on the global participation of delegates, and reflecting the global relevance of research culture, the international dimension of the conference was also strengthened through a dedicated international speaker panel and discussion:

Beyond Borders: Exploring Global Perspectives on Research Culture
Professor Kirstie Haywood, University of Warwick (Session Chair); Professor Sibusiso Moyo, Stellenbosch University, South Africa; Professor Grace Mulcahy, University College Dublin, Ireland; Dr Steven Hill, Research England; Kris Kathiravel, Monash University, Australia.

Documenting evidence of Research Culture Initiatives
An added bonus of the conference is the opportunity for delegates to publish their research culture work. This has been captured in a Research Culture Special Issue of a peer-reviewed journal, Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal. This seeks to ensure there is a permanent, free to access platform for sharing best practice.

Planning for the IRCC2026
The IRCC will continue to evolve in response to developments across the research culture ecosystem.

Each iteration of the conference brings new ideas and deeper community engagement, ensuring that it remains a leading forum for shaping inclusive, responsible, and forward-thinking research environments.

In 2026, the conference will be across two days
Monday 21st September (online), and Wednesday 23rd September (in-person).

International Panel Speakers at IRCC25.



International Research Culture Conference



B

2023

35 abstracts

150 in-person delegates

250 online delegates

13 countries represented

36 presentations

15 posters



C

2024

90 abstracts

250 in-person delegates

250 online delegates

24 workshops

24 countries represented

35 presentations

31 posters



D

A



2025

120 abstracts

300 in-person delegates

280 online delegates

9 workshops

27 countries represented

24 presentations

38 posters

25 research culture carousels

A–D.
Photos from the International Research Conference.

5.2 Research Culture Enablers Network

Recognising the work of our community

The Research Culture Enablers Network (RCEN) was launched in September 2023 to sustain momentum following on from the first International Research Culture Conference.

At the heart of the network is a commitment to elevate the conversation on research culture and co-create practical solutions to shared challenges. Through open exchange and collective reflection, the network aims to identify gaps, generate insights, and drive meaningful sector-wide change.

From left to right: Sarah Masefield (University of York), Rika Nair (University of Warwick), Amy Mayfield (Lancaster University) and Cathal Rogers (The University of Manchester).



The network meets every two months online for sector updates and presentations, with members also working in groups to advance specific research culture challenges. Between meetings, collaboration continues through an active MS Teams space and a **LinkedIn community** of more than 1,600 members, providing opportunities to discuss emerging priorities across the sector.

Bringing together research culture experts from over 100 institutions, RCEN represents a diverse community of colleagues who are driving and embedding culture change across higher education, research institutes, NHS organisations, and cultural institutions. The network's membership reflects the breadth of roles involved in shaping research culture: Research Culture Managers, Officers, and Heads of Research Culture, who lead institution-wide initiatives; Academic Leads for Research Culture, who provide strategic direction; EDI specialists, who promote belonging, fairness, and psychological safety; Research Integrity, Ethics, and Open Research professionals, who strengthen transparency and good practice; Researcher Developers, who enhance skills and career development for researchers and postgraduate students; and Public Engagement and Knowledge Exchange professionals, who build bridges between research and wider communities.

This diversity of perspectives enables RCEN to take a joined-up approach to improving research culture, recognising that lasting change requires collaboration across disciplines, professions, and sectors.

For the 2025–2026 academic year, RCEN has launched three working groups that build on the network's collective expertise: Research Culture Data Capture and Evaluation, co-led by Professor Kirstie Haywood, aims to strengthen evidence-based approaches and ensure consistency in how progress is monitored and reported. Developing Recognition and Reward for Good Research Culture, co-led by Dr Rika Nair, seeks to champion inclusive practices that acknowledge and value the wide range of contributions to a positive research culture; and Collective Advocacy and Collaboration with Funders, co-led by Vicky Strudwick, focuses on amplifying sector voices and supporting constructive dialogue between institutions, funders, and policymakers. RCEN was highly commended at the ARMA Awards in the Research Culture category, recognising its significant contribution to the research management community and demonstrating its growing sector-wide reach and impact.

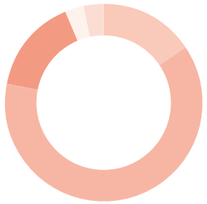
" Being part of RCEN has been really valuable. It's more than just a space to meet colleagues from other universities – it's a place where people can share what works, what doesn't, and where we can learn from each other's experience. Recently, I've been involved in the set-up of targeted working groups within the network, which will allow us to more actively focus on specific challenges and coordinate collective action.

Having that sector-wide perspective is crucial, because many of the issues we face – from career precarity to reward and recognition, inclusion and open research – can't be solved in isolation. RCEN provides both the practical support of peer exchange and the momentum of collective advocacy. "

DR HANNA GROOTHUIZEN ***(She/Her)***
Central Research Culture Manager (Health Faculties)

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON





Safe, value driven community

15.6%	Strongly agree
62.5%	Agree
15.6%	Neither
3.1%	Disagree
3.1%	Strongly disagree



Cross-institution and cross-sector connections

25%	Strongly agree
53.1%	Agree
12.5%	Neither
6.2%	Disagree
3.1%	Strongly disagree

5.3 NCRC Conversation Series



Launched in 2024, the NCRC Conversation Series is an open, online forum facilitated by the University of Warwick. It provides a platform for individuals and organisations working on research culture initiatives to regularly share their experiences, insights, and outcomes.

Sessions are free to attend and open to anyone interested in research culture, including researchers, research enablers, technicians, research developers, funders, and policymakers. The series is delivered by colleagues from across the research ecosystem, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and expertise. Formats have varied from seminars to workshops and discussions, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across the sector.

7

online events

267

attendees

" Really thought-provoking session that was engaging and interesting."

ANONYMOUS

100%

good or excellent feedback

Previous events

Date	Title	Speaker
09 July 2024	Building Our Community's Understanding of Wellbeing in Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Research Spaces	Dr Elena Riva University Of Warwick
27 September 2024	Supporting the Technical Community through the National Technical Careers Pathways Lab	Sarah Allen Itss Dr Ian Hancox University Of Warwick
07 November 2024	Diversifying Leadership: A Persona-Based Conversation to Shape Inclusive Research Culture	Alys Kay University Of Liverpool
17 December 2024	Failing Forward: How do we destigmatise failure in the research environment?	Nicola Simcock University Of Newcastle
19 February 2025	Tackling Bullying and Harassment – the part we all play	Craig Elmer-White University Of Glasgow
06 May 2025	Foundations for Success: The Supervisor and PGR Partnership Agreement	Lina Al Jabbar Southampton University
31 May 2025	Towards a National Open Research Culture, with a Training Community of Practice	Joseph Corneli Oxford Brookes University Steve Boneham, University Of Newcastle



" The NCRC conversation series are a really useful way of learning what others are doing and giving you food for thought for your own institutions practice."

LUCY PARNALL
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

06—External Engagements and Collaborations

The research culture team maintains active collaborations and engagements with a diverse array of communities across the sector, a selection of which is presented below.



April 2024

Contributed session on Interdisciplinary Research Culture during EPSRC visit

Stellenbosch-Warwick Seed Fund awarded to support mobility between Warwick's early career PATHWAY Programme participants and Stellenbosch's SUNRISE mid-career researcher progression programme

June 2024

Collaboration with Northeast Research Culture Managers to deliver interactive 'Research Culture Islands' networking activity at ARMA Conference

NCRC exhibit at ARMA Conference

Panel discussion on EDI at Cardiff University

Dec 2024



Presented to Keele University on Research Culture implementation

April 2025

Building Confidence in Research Integrity training delivered for ARMA

June 2025

Contributions to ARMA Conference: piloting a collaborative research culture board game and facilitating a panel on current challenges and opportunities in research culture for Research Managers and Administrators.

Presentation at the Integrated Clinical Academic Training West-Midlands retreat

Aug 2025

Monash Warwick Alliance Professional Services Collaboration Fund and Stellenbosch-Warwick Joint Seed Fund award £10,548/$10,964/R98,245 to Monash, Stellenbosch and Warwick research culture teams to develop an International Consortium for Research Culture

Jan 2024

Rika Nair joins PRISM committee



May 2024

Research culture training delivered for the national PRISM Network

Sep 2024

Hosted visit from Elsevier's Research Evaluation team

Hosted Midlands Innovation Group Breakfast Meeting

First NCRC Advisory Board meeting held

Hosted first in-person/hybrid RCEN road mapping workshop

Invitation to the Guild of European Universities Gender and Diversity working group meeting to share perspectives on diversity in research culture

Part of research Integrity Concordat consultation workshop hosted by UKCORI

Delivered 'Supporting Research Culture'

March 2025

Delivery of research culture training for ARMA in collaboration with Andrew Moss (ARMA SIG Champion)

Participation in a panel at mid-career workshop hosted by Keele University and School of Advanced Study, University of London



May 2025

Presentation at Midlands Innovation Open Research Week 2025



July 2025

Participation in Russell Group working group on Clinical Academics - round-table discussion to discuss the role of universities in NHS workforce training

Research Culture workshop delivered at the Higher Education Technician Summit 2025

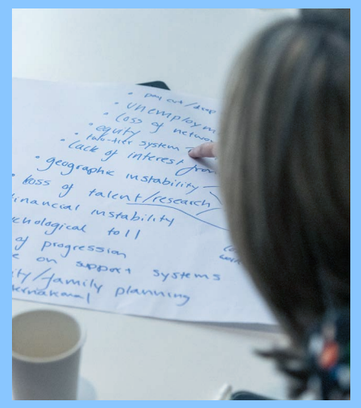
Involvement in Equity and Inclusion in Research Funding Forum's Positive Action Working Group at King's College, London

Sep 2025

Collaboration with Teesside University, Durham University, and Imperial College London announced for £4.5M project 'Research Professional Futures' funded by Research England.

Delivered 'Supporting Research Culture' training for ARMA

07—Looking Ahead



Looking ahead, our future priorities build on the breadth of initiatives outlined in this report, including the delivery of externally funded projects and the continuation of key programmes of work.

In addition to sustaining this momentum, we are focused on deepening institutional engagement, expanding collaboration, and embedding long-term structures that support a thriving and inclusive research culture. The refreshed Research Culture Roadmap will guide this next phase, ensuring alignment with community needs and strategic goals. Our key priorities are outlined below.

Priority 01 Co-creating a refreshed Warwick Research Culture Roadmap (2026-2031)

Building on the evidence of innovation and excellence in research culture across Warwick, it is timely to co-create a community-informed and responsive strategic vision, or 'roadmap', for what 'good' research culture at Warwick looks like.

Supported by Elizabeth Adams from Scafell Coaching Ltd., we have sought to consult widely with the Warwick community to better understand research culture challenges and priorities, actions which could enhance research culture, and how progress could be tracked to demonstrate change and share best practice.
To achieve this, we:

01 convened and engaged a Research Culture Strategy Group (a collective of key stakeholders from across the institution) to help shape the focus and direction of the developing roadmap. Three dedicated workshops took place between June and October 2025.

02 ran two workshops to gather broader input from colleagues at all career stages from across the community (June-July 2025).

03 launched an online research culture survey in the Summer of 2025 to capture the views of colleagues from across the community. We received more than 700 completed responses. The findings highlighted areas of common experience and shared priorities; where particular challenges are faced by individual groups; and highlighted the need for continued and targeted community engagement to further inform our understanding.

" We are focused on deepening institutional engagement, expanding collaboration, and embedding long-term structures that support a thriving and inclusive research culture."

The results from these activities will inform the development of the new research culture roadmap (2026-2031), set to launch in Spring 2026. Four over-riding themes will guide the roadmap:

- Community and connections
- Freedom to grow and explore
- Inclusivity and thriving on difference
- Openness, integrity and responsibility

A detailed action plan will align to each theme, underpinned by a theory of change. As part of our commitment to sustained community engagement, we will provide regular updates against key activities, seeking feedback to ensure that the roadmap and action plan continues to evolve.

To build on the momentum of these activities, we are launching the Research Culture Enablers at Warwick (RCEN@Warwick) - a new network that will act as a driving force for advancing research culture across the institution. The RCEN@Warwick will help colleagues from across the institution to connect, collaborate and co-create – to coordinate activity, share practice, and amplify impact.

Priority 02 Grassroots and Strategic Funding

We will continue to invest in grassroots initiatives through the Enhancing Research Culture Fund. This will support individuals and teams to lead locally relevant, inclusive, and creative activities, driving culture change from the ground up. This funding has been instrumental in enabling community-led approaches that reflect the diverse needs across our research ecosystem. In parallel, funding will be allocated to strategic priority areas identified through the community engagement activities underpinning development of the roadmap. These include grant support and development; valuing diverse contributions to research; and building meaningful connections across disciplines and roles.

Priority 03 Research Culture Week

We will host Warwick's first Research Culture Week in 2026, providing a platform to showcase initiatives, share learning, and foster cross-institutional dialogue. During this week we will also host a research celebration event, celebrating the diverse contributions of all those involved in research. The whole week will serve as a reflective space to assess progress, surface new ideas, and strengthen community ownership of research culture. Crucially, the Research Culture Week will align with the launch of the new Research Culture Roadmap (2026-2031), acting as a springboard for its implementation and helping to embed its strategic priorities across the University.

Priority 04 Development of the International Consortium for Research Culture

Informed by wide-ranging conversations with international colleagues, and growing awareness of the importance of enhancing research culture on a global stage, the research culture team led two successful, linked applications to the Stellenbosch-Warwick and Monash-Warwick seed funds to co-found the development of an International Consortium for Research Culture. The Consortium was launched at the International Research Culture Conference on 17 September 2025, inviting colleagues from across the globe to contribute to their thinking to the development of this initiative. An international online workshop to co-create the vision and mission for the Consortium is planned for 24 November 2025. This will be followed by an in-person event at Stellenbosch in April 2026. This shared understanding will inform the creation of an initial action plan for Consortium activity and proposals for future sustainability. It is anticipated that the findings from the first year of the Consortium's activity will be shared and further explored at the IRCC in 2026.

Priority 05 International Research Culture Conference (IRCC)

We will continue to support and develop the International Research Culture Conference (IRCC) as a flagship event for global collaboration and knowledge exchange. The IRCC has quickly become a vital platform for bringing together researchers, professional services staff, funders, and policymakers from across the world to share insights, challenges, and innovations in research culture. In response to delegate feedback and the evolving nature of research culture future iterations of the conference will place greater emphasis on practical outcomes, collaborative problem-solving, and showcasing scalable initiatives. Warwick remains committed to hosting and evolving this event as a cornerstone of its research culture work through the National Centre for Research Culture at Warwick.



From left to right: Rika Nair; Adele Kenny; Vicky Strudwick; Caroline Meyer; Kirstie Haywood; Marie Sams; Carole Harris; Navdeep Bains – University of Warwick

08—Contact

Enhancing research culture is an evolving journey made up of many interconnected parts. Successfully navigating this requires ongoing collaboration, openness, and sustained engagement across our community. We know that meaningful change happens when we listen, adapt, and act together.

Our activities will continue to grow and evolve in response to your feedback and involvement. We'd be delighted to hear your thoughts on our work and what research culture means to you at Warwick.

Please do get in touch!

- Email researchculture@warwick.ac.uk
- University of Warwick Research Culture web pages
- Email NCRC ncrc@warwick.ac.uk
- Join the Research Culture Enablers Network
- RCEN Research Culture Knowledge Exchange
- National Centre for Research Culture LinkedIn