

# The Academy: Cultivating Excellence in Research Staff

## Headlines and key numbers from the Research Staff Development Team

*August 2024 – July 2025*

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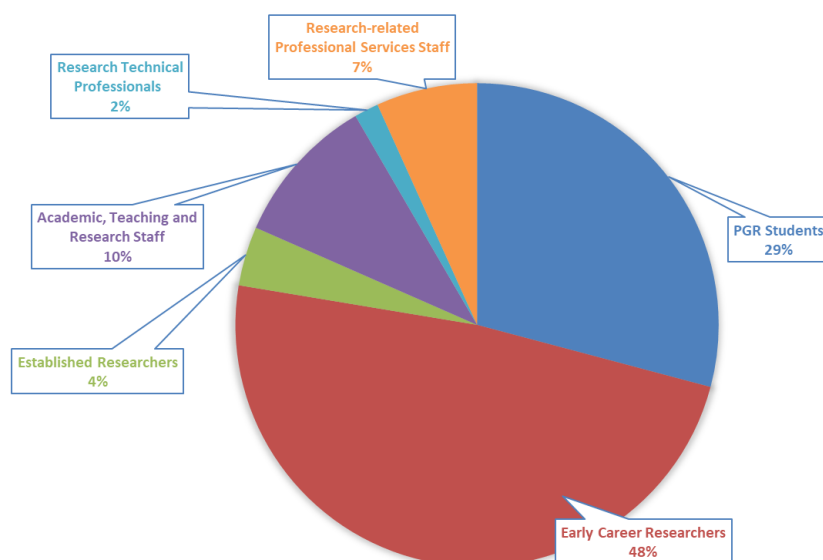
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### Introduction

This document provides an overview of how the Researcher Development and Culture team – through the Research Staff Development programme – have fostered innovative, ambitious and inclusive development opportunities that embody the University values and align with [Liverpool 2031](#), across the strategic pillars and cross-cutting themes. Our work is shaped by our obligations set out in the Researcher Development Concordat and [HR Excellence in Research Award](#), which we have successfully held since 2011, and which is an element of the Research and Impact pillar of Liverpool 2031. We offer a diverse programme of development opportunities to the ~1,500 staff who research (including ~1000 on academic research-only contracts and ~500 principal investigators) and ~250 research-enabling professional services staff. In addition, ~350 PGRs have engaged with our activities, highlighting our inclusive programme and commitment to creating a borderless research community.

## The People and Culture Theme

Our team has facilitated **63 hours** of development for research staff, with **830** registrations for these activities and a **63%** attendance rate (**519** attendees).



Of the participants attending our development activities, 48% defined themselves as early career researchers; 29% defined themselves\* as postgraduate researchers; 14% defined themselves as established, academic, clinical and/or teaching and research staff; 7% defined themselves as professional services staff; and 2% described themselves as research technical professionals.

\*Participants self-reported their role at registration. All participants could select up to 2 different role types

The **University Research Staff Association** that our team oversees, continues to be a thriving representation of our **inclusive research culture**. Our activities are co-created with our [Research Staff Association Steering Committee](#), which includes a **diverse** representation of research staff across all faculties, and offers a **unique** perspective on the development needs of research staff.

- **Over 120 individuals** have attended research staff coffee mornings this year, enabling them to meet new colleagues, expand their networks and enrich their experience of the University of Liverpool's research culture in an informal setting.
- **30** postdoc buddies (19, 9 and 2 from the Faculties of Health and Life Sciences, Science and Engineering and Humanities and Social Sciences, respectively) participated in the [RSA Buddy Scheme](#).
 

"A highlight of the buddy scheme for me was the opportunity to connect with someone in a supportive and welcoming environment. It was great to share experiences, exchange advice, and build confidence while navigating new challenges together." – Postdoc who took part in the RSA and Fellows Buddy Scheme
- **72** PGRs (17, 39 and 16 from the Faculties of Health and Life Sciences, Science and Engineering and Humanities and Social Sciences, respectively) and **29** postdocs (17, 4 and 8 from the Faculties of Health and Life Sciences, Science and Engineering and Humanities and Social Sciences, respectively) in the [PGR-Postdoc Buddy Scheme](#), building an inclusive research community at Liverpool that embeds the importance of responsible and inclusive mentorship in our early career researchers.
 

"Starting off with some great advice on what it means to be a PhD student at Liverpool University right from the get go is invaluable." – PGR who took part in the PGR-Postdoc Buddy Scheme

- **Over 50** attendees (30%, 27% and 35% from the Faculties of Health and Life Sciences, Science and Engineering and Humanities and Social Sciences, respectively) at the annual Research Staff Conference, [Built to Last: Developing resilience for a sustainable career](#).

"The sessions were pitch-perfect for me. All activities and sessions dovetailed really neatly. I particularly enjoyed Anthony Hollander and Georgina Endfield's sessions as they provide an overview of the University in relation to researchers that I don't get anywhere else." – Research Staff Conference 2024 attendee

## The Research and Impact Pillar

We delivered **97 hours** of development activities in 2024-25 to enhance the delivery of **ground-breaking research that changes the world for the better** via [Making an Impact](#), [Academic Writing Month](#) and the University's inaugural [Fellows Development Programme](#). This included **collaborations** from teams from across the University, including those from RPI; the Heseltine Institute; Human Resources; Open Research; Sustainability; Libraries, Museums and Galleries; and the Organisational Development and Academic Development teams from within The Academy.

There were **294 attendees** to the **63** sessions delivered as part of [Making an Impact 2025](#). Of these sessions, **six** were available to external audiences and an additional **four** were open to Sumy State University. The [Making an Impact Framework](#) was updated to link more explicitly with the seven perspectives of knowledge exchange activity outlined in the [Knowledge Exchange Framework](#). The programme included **9** independent workshops, bootcamps, masterclasses, and panel discussions, both online and in-person; **50** individual 1:1 career coaching sessions for all academic staff from postdocs to research fellows to principal investigators (PIs); and **4** tours of different university sites.

Participants included 43% defined themselves as early career researchers; 25% who defined themselves\* as PGRs; 26% defined themselves as established, academic, clinical and/or teaching and research staff; and 6% defined themselves as professional services staff.

"I found the program highly practical. I also really appreciated the interactive format of the sessions, especially the breakout rooms. It provided a great opportunity to engage with colleagues from different institutions. The participants shared practical tips, relevant tools, and even links to AI platforms."

Further detail about Making an Impact, including registrations by faculty are available [here](#).

\*Participants self-reported their role at registration. All participants could select up to 2 different role types

The [Research Fellows Development Programme](#) launched for all research fellows at the University in November 2024; the programme webpage has **over 1000 hits** since its launch. We have delivered over **20 hours** of development tailored for research fellows, with an attendance of **80** fellows across the year.

We created a new self-directed [Research Fellow Toolkit](#) for new fellows. This toolkit embeds the University values in a learning catalyst tool that supports new fellows.

We launched the University's first annual [Research Fellows Showcase](#), themed **Collaboration for Impact**, with **51** attendees, enabling the VC and University of Liverpool fellows and fellows from the wider university community to showcase their research across the institution; connect with other researchers and developed their own collaboration and leadership skills.

We supported the first cohort of the VC and University of Liverpool Research Fellows by providing **9 hours of group coaching** in their first year. This gave them a sense of belonging as a cohort and provided opportunities for them to share their experiences starting as a fellow at Liverpool.

[Academic Writing Month](#) took place in November 2024 with six workshops, delivering **10.5 hours** of activity, with **48 attendees**. Our team updates the [Writing Resources for Researchers](#) online collection annually. Further, we ran two Research Staff Writing Retreats through 2024-25, for a total of **14 hours** and **12 attendees**.

## The Global Experience Pillar

The team is focused on **building capacity and knowledge** in staff and **enabling them to fulfil our ambition to be recognised as a global Top 100 university**. As such, we are committed to supporting the professional development of our existing partners, including opening our activities to them, where applicable, to enable effective partnerships to flourish. There have been:

- **Over 20 hours** of activities that were focused on building partnerships, including with academics, business, and third sector
- **10** activities that were open to the public and University partners
- **42** attendees joining workshops from **five UK and international HEIs**, including Sumy State University, Saint Paul University Ottawa, University of Nottingham, University of Dundee and the Academy of Live Technology.

## The Place and Innovation Pillar

Following their success receiving the **Volunteer of the Year 2024** Award for their support of the **Paper Cup Project**, the Researcher Development and Culture team in partnership with the Research Staff Association Steering Committee organised a **Charity Wellbeing Walk** for the Paper Cup Project that raised **£117.50** with a scenic walk exploring the Liverpool docks.

## Contribution to University Charters and Commitments

We embed research staff representation across the Concordat Steering Group, which oversees work for the University's **HR Excellence in Research Award** from the European Commission. Further, in support of the University's Race Quality Charter, we monitor attendee and speaker

characteristics to ensure that we are providing participants with opportunities to hear from a diversity of voices and about a variety of experiences.

We gather data about working conditions, research culture, career aspirations and career development opportunities for research staff and principal investigators at Liverpool through the biennial **Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS)**, which informs our programme delivery and activities, as well as contributing valuable information for the People, Culture and Environment element of REF. Through this survey, we also donated £449 to our **LivtoGive** charities in 2025 via matched donations for each completed survey response.

## Embedding Strategy 2031 Values in Our Work

**Ambitious:** We deliver high-impact, strategically aligned annual development programmes that empower researchers to pursue excellence and build sustainable, world-changing careers.

**Collaborative:** Our work is co-created with the Research Staff Association and delivered in partnership with teams across the University and external institutions, fostering interdisciplinary working and shared expertise across the research community.

**Inclusive:** We offer development opportunities to research active and research-enabling staff at all career levels, creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all.

**Innovative:** We design original and forward-thinking programmes that encourage creative approaches to research, leadership, and career development.

**Responsible:** Our commitment to ethical practice is reflected in our stewardship of the University's Researcher Development Concordat, our integration with key University charters and commitments, and our data-informed approach to improving research culture and working conditions.

## AI Disclaimer

In alignment with the University's Guidance on [the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence by students and staff in learning, teaching, and assessment](#); our ethically-grounded approach to Researcher Development and Culture; and commitment to transparency and academic integrity principles, AI assistance has been sought to help refine the language and presentation of this report. However, the research, analysis, conclusions, and substantive content are entirely our own work.

## Appendix 1. Breakdown of registrations by faculty and job role

Faculty	Registered
Central Services	37
Health and Life Sciences	376
Humanities and Social Sciences	211
Science and Engineering	230
Not disclosed	105
<b>Total</b>	<b>959</b>

Role	Registered*
PGR Student (i.e., currently undertaking doctoral/ PhD research)	349
Early Career Researcher (e.g., post-doctoral researchers, research assistants, research associates, and early career research fellows)	327
Established Researcher (e.g., research group leaders, principal investigators, senior research fellows)	35
Academic, Teaching and Research Staff (e.g., lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor)	103
Clinical Research Staff	4
Research Technical Professional	9
Research-related Professional Services Staff (i.e., research enablers)	56
Not disclosed	261
<b>Total</b>	<b>1114</b>

\* Participants self-reported their role at registration. All participants could select up to 2 different role types hence the difference in totals between the two tables.