

Research Staff Association Buddy Scheme – 3rd Round

April 2023



Introduction

Following the successful rounds of the Research Staff Association (RSA) Buddy Scheme in Spring and Autumn 2022, the RSA conducted a third round in Spring 2023. The Buddy Scheme offers postdocs and early career researchers (i.e. staff on research only contracts) the chance to meet new colleagues, expand their networks and enrich their experience of the University's research culture in an informal setting. It is an opportunity to meet peers at similar career stages across all faculties, to build connections outside of their research group and to enhance their professional, research and social frames of reference.

The process

The 3rd round of the Buddy Scheme followed the process used for the two previous rounds. The scheme was advertised via the RSA weekly e-bulletins and the University of Liverpool RSA twitter account. For the 3rd round flyers (Appendix Figure 1) were printed and posted around the Campus and a University digital signage was created (Appendix Figure 2). Further information was available via the [RSA webpages](#), which linked to a simple expression of interest form for research staff to complete. The questions on the form requested name, department, email address and reason(s) for wanting to take part in the scheme.

The expression of interest form was available between 1st and 22nd February 2023. Each applicant was matched with two to three other postdocs or ECRs, resulting in eight groups of three or four people. Each group included participants from a mix of faculties. All buddies were emailed the names and email addresses of the buddies in their group on the 27th February and groups were asked to arrange to meet by 21st March, either in person or online. The meeting guidelines were to respect the meeting preferences of all participants and to keep the tone of the meeting informal, supportive, and respectful. A reminder to the buddies to arrange their meeting was sent (via email) on the 14th of March.

The participants

29 colleagues signed up to take part in the Buddy Scheme. The spread across faculties is reported in Figure 1.

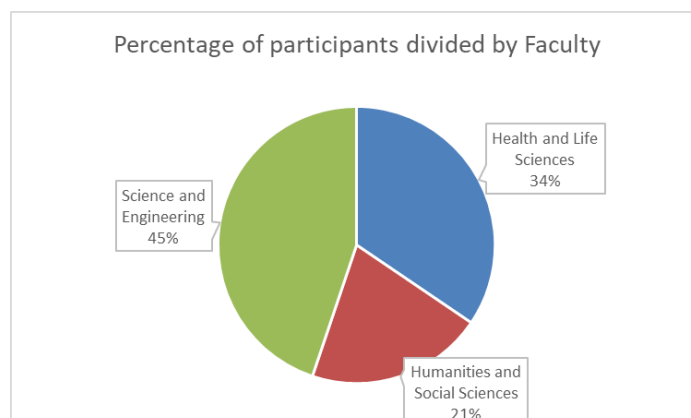


Figure 1. Percentage of participants across faculties that took part in the third edition of the Buddy Scheme.

The reason for participating in the Buddy Scheme were mostly related to the wish of making new connections and share perspectives and ideas with other researchers working at the University of Liverpool (see Appendix Table 1).

Evaluation

At the end of the scheme, participants were asked to complete a short, online, evaluation survey. A first email asking for feedback about the scheme was sent out on the 24th of March, a reminder was also sent on the 14th of April asking feedbacks before the 21st of April. 15 participants (52%) completed the survey by the deadline of 21st April 2023. Of the participants who completed the survey, 13 (87%) met with their buddies within the 3-week window. Meetings took place in person (over coffee or lunch). The 2 participants (13%) that did not meet with their buddies stated that in one case they could not find a suitable time to meet within the 3-week window and in the other case they failed to contact each other, or they did not received replies.

80% of those who completed the survey found their meeting to be a positive experience, answering 'good' or 'very good'. 20% of respondents reported their meeting experience as 'fair' (Figure 2 & Appendix Table 2).

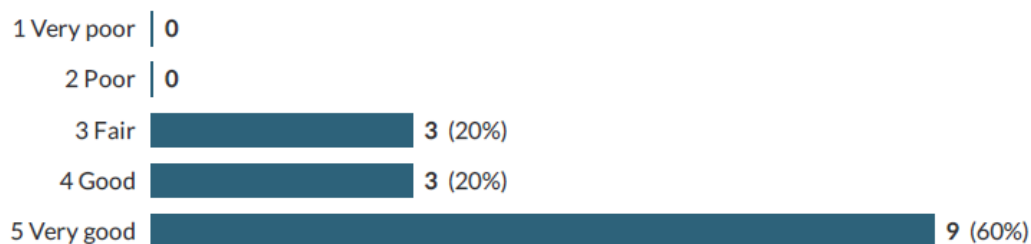


Figure 2. Graph showing participants rating of their meeting.

Reported highlights of the scheme were connecting with people from across the University from different backgrounds and different research areas. Respondents also enjoyed meeting colleagues from similar research areas, meeting new and interesting people, meeting people at a similar career stage and exchanging views on life as a researcher (Appendix Table 3). Respondents suggested that the scheme could be improved by having several rounds with different matchings to allow the opportunity to meet more people. It was also suggested that having smaller buddy groups might make it easier to arrange meetings.

Conclusion

This 3rd round of the RSA Buddy Scheme built on the success of the pilot events and was of great value to the participants. The 4th round of Buddy Scheme will take place in Autumn 2023, as a joint scheme in which the RSA will work together with the University's PGR Development Network and offer a cross postdoc-PGR buddy scheme.

Appendix



THE RESEARCH STAFF ASSOCIATION

PRESENTS

BUDDY SCHEME

FOR POSTDOCS AND EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS



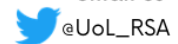
If you want to expand your network, connect with new people and feel part of a wider research community...
...all you have to do is to scan the QR code below!

How it works

- complete the form using the QRcode
- you will be matched with 2/3 researchers
- we will provide email addresses to contact one another
- you will get in touch with your buddies to organise your meeting



Follow us on twitter to stay updated or email us



@UoL_RSA

You have until the 22nd of February to sign up!



ResearchStaffAssociation@liverpool.ac.uk

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE ACADEMY

Figure 1. Flyer developed for the third round of the Buddy Scheme and posted around the faculties and the University Campus.

THE RESEARCH STAFF ASSOCIATION PRESENTS "BUDDY SCHEME"

If you want to expand your network, connect with new people and feel part of a wider research community SIGN UP (before the 22nd of February) for the Buddy Scheme!

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/uol-rsa/buddy-scheme/>

Brought to you by the Academy

THE ORIGINAL REDBRICK

Figure 2. University digital signage developed for the third round of the Buddy Scheme.

Table 1. Answers of participants when asked “What would you like to get out of the scheme?” in the expression of interest form.

Meet new people outside my Institute
Meeting researchers at the University working in similar areas. Learning how to navigate the University of Liverpool systems. Meeting international researchers.
I would like to either meet people with similar research interests or meet people who would help me navigate the first few years of research career building. My research interest is slightly oddly placed in my department so it would be helpful to connect to anyone outside of my institute with similar interests. Thank you!
Meet people with similar interests, discuss career progression, exchange useful information and provide support when needed.
Meet new people
I would like to meet people from different institutes or faculties
I just would like to meet people. I'm open to both possible collaborations and just expanding my perspective
To meet people with similar research interests but perhaps from different a School to share different perspectives/ideas/ways of working
Meet new people either from my institute or from different institutes
I wish to meet people who's working in the similar research field but from different faculties
I would like to find a partner for conducting an interdisciplinary research, seeing my research area from another perspective, and providing peer support. Therefore I prefer to be included in a buddy group with a researcher interested on my research area but preferably from another discipline
I am new to UoL and Liverpool so I would like to match up with buddy of any background.
I would like to meet new people
I'd like to meet people with similar research interests as I've had little opportunity to do so far, but am open to 'buddies' from outside my field

I would like to get to know someone in another School but within the same Faculty to share ideas.
I would like to meet people from different institutes and faculties.
Meet people with similar research interests or a similar point in their career
I am a new employee, working as a research assistant. I am currently looking to grow my network and learn more by meeting researchers with interest in business, trading, finance, stock markets and psychology. I am constantly working on improving my time management skills so that I can make time for working for a side income in the future. Perhaps, my future goal for the next 5 years would be to secure a funded Phd in clinical and health psychology or a related field. It is a bit overwhelming starting this journey as a researcher in a completely new. Hence, some support, guidance and chat with a Buddy would be a nice start. This is. a great initiative indeed!
I would like to connect with people outside of my specific research area and expand my network.
Similar research area and get insights in my work from more experienced people.
Just to find out more connections in UK
To meet other researchers from across the university - happy to meet anyone from any faculty
Meet people with research linked to similar interests, like gender, sexuality, disability, social movements, feminist/inclusive methodologies; Meet people who could share their experiences with (very early) ECRs, like myself
I started in December and it would be nice to get to know some other people - I'd like to make connections with people adjacent to my discipline, in case there's an opportunity to collaborate and learn about funding opportunities and research seminars in other departments that I could attend and build up my network, so staff in English, Geography, Archaeology, Law etc. I'm guessing this is anyone under the banner of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences! But I'm happy to meet others too - thank you!
Meet with peer postdocs
I'd like to meet other PhD students at UoL since I am a visiting student
I would like to make connections with other researchers at UoL to expand my network and be part of the wider community of researchers.
Would like to meet both people with similar research interests and those from other disciplines

Table 2. Participants' answers when asked "how did it go? Please provide information on how many times you met, whether you met online or face to face (or both) and did all members of your group attend?"

We met in person and all group members attended
It was a pleasant experience, we had lunch together
I met with one other member once for lunch, we had already met a few times previously for other things. The other group member largely works remotely and was on vacation.
It went very well. We met for coffee and had an hour-long chat.
We were all able to meet, and will meet again in the next few months.
it was a very nice in-person lunch and chat
One of the members had to attend another meeting and couldn't join us. It was just three of us out of four but, it was worth the break. I got new insights into subjects which were very different to my field. We started by talking about our work but soon started discussing some general topics like "Liverpool", "covid", etc.
We met face to face, the meeting went very well. Agreed to arrange another meeting.
It was nice, but a bit awkward. I'm not sure that we will meet again.
It went very well. Yes, every member of the group attended.
We met face-to-face once for a coffee/lunch on campus. This was really nice to meet and get to know each other - some group members were from similar disciplines, others quite different but it was still interesting to hear about others' research and share ideas. All members attended and we have said we will meet again in future.
We met once and face to face. We booked in to the VGM for a coffee.

Table 3. Participants' answers when asked "What was the highlight of the buddy scheme for you?"

Meeting colleagues face to face in a social setting and hearing about their very diverse areas of research
It is a good way to meet new people
It was great to get to know someone better
It was wonderful meeting people with shared experiences. I had overlaps in interests with both of them, and we were all of indian origin but very different experiences. We also gave advice to the newest member to the University about Liverpool life
find new contacts
Nice friendly group. Easy to speak with.
really nice to meet people outside of my department
The highlight for me was when we started discussing general topics, a bit away from research work. It was a much-needed break for me, otherwise, PhDs get a bit lonely and stressful at times.
The highlight was to meet buddies who are at various stages in their academic career, share my experience of being an early career researcher and learn about their career paths.
The idea of buddy scheme is good but in my point of view is not implanted very well. Post-doc is different from PhD or other post-grades, ever since the start of the post-doc, they will start filled with meetings, trainings and conferences. Therefore, when the buddy scheme is coupling more than 2 people, the clash of schedule timing become more and more significant, especially when they are not from the same department. For example, I am paired up with 3 other buddies and we cannot find an hour slot for 4 of us to meet up in the 3 week slot.

I wanted to meet new people and probably collaborators

It is nice.

Meeting colleagues from different schools was very nice

Meeting others from outside of my own School that I otherwise may never have come into contact with. Sharing research ideas and networking.

I enjoyed meeting staff members from across the university and at different stages in their career.